

CRC Amends Resolution to Include Sexual Orientation

by Cynthia Janes

The Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council (CRC) Board of Directors has amended the resolution that establishes the Council, to include sexual orientation. By amending the resolution, the Board is stating formally that sexual orientation-related discrimination is one of the categories of cases the CRC will investigate.

"As far as the Council is concerned, [sexual orientation] has the same weight as sex, race, age, religion, color, nation origin, or handicap. Cases of sexual orientation [discrimination] would be investigated the same as these categories. So if someone were to bring us a complaint alleging that they were fired because they were homosexual, we would attempt to investigate that.... We would go out and investigate it and try to find remedy," explained Executive Director Bob Smith.

Smith outlined the process by which complaints are investigated. The process begins with the person who feels wronged coming to the CRC and talking to one of two intake officers. The intake officers get the detailed information about what happened, determine whether or not it's a bona fide complaint, and not, for example, just a personality conflict. The

CRC then sends out a letter of inquiry to the alleged discriminator (e.g., an employer) asking for an appointment for an investigation.

"When we investigate, if we find cause (meaning that there is sufficient evidence that discrimination has occurred), we attempt to conciliate it; if we don't find cause we let both parties know and close the complaint." Smith continued, "If we find cause and they are unwilling to conciliate, then in those instances where we can, we hand it off to EEOC (Economic Employment Opportunity

Commission)."

But EEOC, a federal agency, has no jurisdiction in cases involving lesbians and gay men, since no federal laws specifically protects our rights.

The CRC handles cases of discrimination in housing and employment. Smith said that they would also attempt to investigate cases of harassment, threats, intimidation or violence, although such cases are not specifically spelled out in the resolution. If they cannot help, CRC tries to refer the person to an appropriate agency, such as the police or SBI, Smith said.

Regarding confidentiality, Smith said, "all our information is confidential unless the person wants to share the information himself or herself."

The CRC keeps statistics on how

many cases of each type and category of people it handles, and twice a year (late November and May) reports those figures to the City Council and the County Board of Commissioners, Smith said. Their reports will now include the numbers of cases brought in by gay men and lesbians.

Commenting on the action taken by CRC, Lillian Powell, chair of Coalition for Progressive Action, said, "We feel that this is an accomplishment, but only a first step in addressing this issue with the City Council and County Board of Commissioners. Our ultimate goal is passage of a resolution which establishes public policy of non-discrimination, in which sexual orientation would be a protected category.

Powell added, "It is essential that gay men and lesbians bring cases of discrimination to the attention of the CRC, so that our cases are resolved, if possible, and if not possible, at least recorded. ▽"

Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council Article II. OBJECTIVES

To centralize the individual community resources by combining the private, governmental and voluntary efforts in a community attack to solve human problems as they relate to racial, ethnic, religious and class relationships; to provide information and opportunities for open discussion, and action to solving the sensitive problems involved in intergroup relations; to secure steady progress in Asheville and Buncombe County toward employment on merit, without regard to race, ethnic origin, religious belief, class, sexual orientation, or disability to create a community in which the dignity and worth of each individual is respected on his own merits; and to bring under a coordinating leadership, all the organizations that are working to solve human relations problems, and to make sure they are doing what is relevant to the situation. (emphasis added)



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- Not on any antivirals (e.g., AZT)*
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- Free blood tests (including T-4 cell)
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*upon entry into the study

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