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Education, Health and Religious Organizations Unite to Keep Students Safe

WASHINGTON—A diverse coalition of 13 national organizations has joined in a renewed effort to protect the safety and emotional well-being of students, including those who are at higher risk because of their sexual orientation. The group of education, health, mental health and religious organizations today released “Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel.”

The publication serves as a guide for employees who confront sensitive issues involving gay, lesbian and bisexual students. It is intended to help school administrators foster safe and healthy school environments, in which all students can achieve to the best of their ability. “Just the Facts” includes the most recent information from professional health organizations, as well as up-to-date information on the legal responsibility of school officials to protect students from anti-gay harassment. “Just the Facts” has been mailed to all 16,000 public school superintendents in the United States.

The coalition issued the following joint statement:

“The opportunity for students to learn is diminished when they do not feel safe or supported at school. In addition to assault and harassment, gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience high rates of emotional distress, suicide attempts and substance abuse. These factors hinder their emotional and social development, as well as their ability to succeed in school. It is our responsibility to provide accurate and factual information. We believe this publication will be a valuable tool to help educators, administrators and others concerned with caring for America’s students.”

Members of the coalition are the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Psychological Association, the American School Counselor Association, the American School Health Association, the Interfaith Alliance Foundation, the National Association of School Psychologists, the

National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Education Association and the School Social Work Association of America.

First formed in 1998, the coalition produced the original version of “Just the Facts” to respond to concerns that school personnel were receiving inaccurate information on the issue of sexual orientation. The updated publication reflects the coalition’s continuing concern about the safety and well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

(Full text of the booklet is available at
<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbc/publications/justthefacts.pdf>)

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world’s largest association of psychologists. APA’s membership includes more than 148,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

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