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Title: Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on the Rights and Health Concerns of Sexual Minorities

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SUBJECT: 1976 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on the Rights and Health Concerns of Sexual Minorities of the Department of Health

Anthony Silvestre, Chairperson
Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities

FROM: Walter J. Lear, M.D., Executive Secretary
Advisory Committee on the Rights and Health Concerns of Sexual Minorities, Department of Health

The Advisory Committee on the Rights and Health Concerns of Sexual Minorities of the Department of Health, established by Dr. Leonard Bachman, Secretary of Health held its first meeting on December 15, 1977. The Committee will advise the Secretary and through him, the staff and programs of the Health Department.

The purposes of the Committee are: 1) To assist the Department to understand better the rights and special health concerns of sexual minorities; 2) To review Departmental policies and activities and, as appropriate, make recommendations for new and modified policies and activities which would address better the rights and special health concerns of sexual minorities, both those who are Departmental staff and those who are recipients of health services provided by, regulated by or funded by the Department.

The Committee's membership consists of a representative of each of the Department's five principal units, Dr. Walter J. Lear, ^{the} Secretary's representative to the Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities and four representatives of the gay community, one nominated by the Council and one nominated by the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus.

Dr. Bachman attended the first meeting of the Committee and actively participated in the discussion. The Committee's priority tasks are:

- A. To provide assistance primarily of a resource type, to the following units of the Department:
 1. The Bureau of Human Resources on the development of understanding in Department staff of the rights and special health concerns of sexual minorities,
 2. The Affirmative Action Office on handling complaints of discrimination from Department staff on the basis of sexual or affectional preference,
 3. The Division of Communicable Disease Control on the completeness and accuracy of Department staff's clinical information about VD in gay men,

4. The Bureau of Health Communications on the adequacy of educational materials about VD for gay men,
 5. The Bureau of Technical Assistance, Office of Quality Assurance on the development of understanding in Department-licensed health service providers of the rights and special health concerns of sexual minorities;
- B. To undertake a survey of the special health concerns of sexual minorities in Pennsylvania and, on the basis of the information collected, to prepare a pamphlet that would be appropriate for and widely distributed to physicians, nurses, hospitals and other health care providers;
- C. To keep informed of the decisions and activities of the Pennsylvania Council for Sexual Minorities and to develop Departmental input to the Council's decisions and activities which are relevant to the Department;
- D. To evaluate the prevalence and seriousness of the special health concerns of sexual minorities in Pennsylvania and, on the basis of this evaluation, to establish priorities for the work of the Committee in the subsequent year.

Ms. Sylvia Waters, Director of the Department's Affirmative Action Office and the representative of the Department's Deputy Secretary of Administration to the Committee, requested a training session on homosexuality for her staff. This was provided shortly thereafter by a two-member team, Ms. Marilyn Hewitt, a member of the Council and a gay man on the staff of the Department's Office of Quality Assurance.

Dr. Lear continued to play a leadership role in Gay Public Health Workers, a caucus of the American Public Health Association. At the October Annual Meeting of the Association, GPHW sponsored three successful scientific sessions, one on "Venereal Disease and Gay Men", one on "Gay Issues in Mental Health" and the third on "Lesbian Health Issues". This was the first time openly gay health workers presented papers on the health concerns of gay people at a major national health meeting. GPHW's current priority is the development of Professional Guidelines to assist mainstream health services to be responsive to the health needs of gay people, a central concern of the Department's Committee.

WJL:cam

cc: Leonard Bachman, M.D.
Committee Members