

Abuse Prevention Act Amended

Carla

With the signing into law of S-131 in April, lesbians and gay men are now legally entitled to obtain Abuse Prevention Orders. (The law takes effect July 1).

Previously excluded from the definition of "household members," a few lesbians were granted orders by some judges in Vermont who interpreted the law more liberally, but this was rare. Now, the definition of "household members" is "persons living together or sharing occupancy and persons who have lived together in a sexual relationship." Not only does this mean that lesbians and gay men may obtain restraining orders, it also means they don't necessarily have to come out to do so.

The law defines abuse as one or more of the following acts between household members:

- Attempting to cause or causing physical harm;
- Placing another in fear of imminent physical harm;
- Abuse to children.

Persons seeking abuse prevention orders are encouraged to contact their local domestic violence program. Orders may also be obtained on your own through the Family Court, where clerks can assist with filling out forms. If anyone experiences discrimination in using this process, contact the Human Rights Commission and/or the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. ▼

Dykes To Watch Out For

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