

**Massachusetts Law Relating to
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity***
Compiled by the GLBT Youth Support Project

Sexual Orientation Law	<p>In 1989, Massachusetts became the second state in the country to pass a law making discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal. The law prohibits discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation (discrimination because a person is, or is perceived to be, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual).</p> <p>The law bans discrimination in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▼ Employment (excluding settings with less than six employees and religious institutions) ▼ Housing (excluding landlords of two family homes who live in the building) ▼ Public Accommodation
Family Law	<p>Custody of a child may not be revoked based on the sexual orientation of a parent. Same-sex individuals and couples can adopt and can be foster parents.</p>
Marriage Rights	<p>In 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that nothing in the Constitution limited marriage rights to male/female couples. Same-sex couples living in Massachusetts were able to legally marry beginning in May 2004.</p>
Hate Crimes Law	<p>It is a violation of a person's civil rights to threaten, intimidate or coerce them based on a number of protected categories, including sexual orientation.</p>
Student Rights Law	<p>In 1993, the law that protects students from discrimination based on race, sex, religion, creed and national origin was amended to include sexual orientation.</p>
Transgender Rights	<p>Cambridge (1997), Boston (2002), and Northampton's (2005) non-discrimination ordinances include gender identity and gender expression. The state has no parallel clause.</p>

* For additional resources on laws protecting GLBT people in Massachusetts and throughout the United States, please go to <http://www.hcsm.org/glys>



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