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Creating a Life/Domestic Partner Registry

Background

- Four states plus the District of Columbia permit gay and lesbian couples to register as domestic partners and receive rights under state law.
- **More than 75 cities and counties in 25 states have established domestic partner registries** that permit gay and lesbian couples, who are typically prohibited from marrying, to receive recognition of their committed relationships.
- In Pennsylvania, both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have domestic partner registries. New Jersey does not have a domestic partner registry but allows same-sex couples to enter into civil unions. Maryland does not have a domestic partner registry but does provide certain benefits to statutorily defined domestic partners.

Why create a domestic partner registry?

- **This is an important way to provide committed gay and lesbian couples**, who cannot gain legal recognition of their relationships under most state laws, **with a way to receive recognition of their relationships.**
- **Couples who register as domestic partners can receive specific, tangible benefits, including the right to visit a partner in health care facilities.**
- **Registering as a domestic partner** can provide proof of a committed relationship that may, for example, allow a couple to gain private benefits through an employer that recognizes committed relationships. **This makes it easier for private employers to determine when employees are in a committed relationship and should qualify for partner benefits that may be provided by the employer.**

How can we know domestic partners are really in a committed relationship?

- Other jurisdictions that have enacted domestic partner registries generally require some proof of a committed relationship, which can include a statement by the couple and documentary proof of an interdependent relationship (e.g. a joint bank account, joint lease).