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**Legal Alert: Amendments to New York State Human Rights Law Protect
Domestic Violence Victims and Add Penalties**

Effective Monday, July 6, 2009, the New York State Human Rights Law expanded the category of individuals protected under the law to include “victim of domestic violence.” As a result, victims of domestic violence are protected against workplace discrimination.

The New York State Human Rights Law defines victims of domestic violence as a person who has suffered acts constituting a “family offense” as defined by the Family Court Act (for example assault or stalking). Domestic violence victims are already a protected class status under the New York City Administrative Code.

The New York State Human Rights Law has also been amended to increase the penalties for violations of the statute. In addition to economic and compensatory damages, the act also allows for a \$50,000 civil penalty to be paid for an illegal discriminatory act, and in the case of a willful, wanton or malicious act that fine doubles to \$100,000.

Employers should incorporate these amendments to the Human Rights Law into their anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance. Additionally, employers may want to implement procedures to ensure that employees are aware that anti-discrimination policies will now include a new protected class.

For more information about the New York Human Rights Law, including procedures, laws and regulations, please visit the New York State Division of Human Rights at <http://www.dhr.state.ny.us/>.

This alert is meant to provide general information only, not legal advice. Please contact Judith Moldover at Lawyers Alliance for New York at (212) 219-1800 x 250 or visit our website www.lawyersalliance.org for further information.

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