

Policy and Position Statements on Conversion Therapy

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, *Practice Parameter on Gay, Lesbian, or bisexual Sexual Orientation, Gender Nonconformity, and Gender Discordance in Children and Adolescents*, 51 J. Am. Acad. Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 957 (2012), available at <http://www.guideline.gov/content.aspx?id=38417#Section420>.

Clinicians should be aware that there is no evidence that sexual orientation can be altered through therapy, and that attempts to do so may be harmful. There is no empirical evidence adult homosexuality can be prevented if gender nonconforming children are influenced to be more gender conforming. Indeed, there is no medically valid basis for attempting to prevent homosexuality, which is not an illness. On the contrary, such efforts may encourage family rejection and undermine self-esteem, connectedness and caring, important protective factors against suicidal ideation and attempts. Given that there is no evidence that efforts to alter sexual orientation are effective, beneficial or necessary, and the possibility that they carry the risk of significant harm, such interventions are contraindicated.

American Academy of Pediatrics, *Homosexuality and Adolescence*, 92 Pediatrics 631 (1993), available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/92/4/631.full.pdf>.

“Therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation.”

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, *AAMFT Position on Couples and Families* (2009), available at http://www.aamft.org/imis15/content/about_aamft/position_on_couples.aspx.

“[T]he association does not consider homosexuality a disorder that requires treatment, and as such, we see no basis for [reparative therapy]. AAMFT expects its members to practice based on the best research and clinical evidence available.”

American Counseling Association, *Ethical Issues Related to Conversion or Reparative Therapy* (2013), available at <http://www.counseling.org/news/updates/2013/01/16/ethical-issues-related-to-conversion-or-reparative-therapy>.

“The belief that same-sex attraction and behavior is abnormal and in need of treatment is in opposition to the position taken by national mental health organizations, including ACA. The ACA Governing Council passed a resolution in 1998 with respect to sexual orientation and mental health. This resolution specifically notes that ACA opposes portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation. . . . In 1999, the Governing Council adopted a statement ‘opposing the promotion of reparative therapy as a cure for individuals who are homosexual.’ . . . [T]he ACA Ethics Committee strongly suggests that ethical professional counselors do not refer clients to someone who engages in conversion therapy or, if they do so, to proceed cautiously only when they are certain that the referral counselor fully informs clients of the unproven nature of the treatment and the potential risks and takes steps to minimize harm to clients. . . . This information also must be included in written

informed consent material by those counselors who offer conversion therapy despite ACA's position and the Ethics Committee's statement in opposition to the treatment. To do otherwise violates the spirit and specifics of the ACA Code of Ethics."

American Medical Association, *Health Care Needs of Gay Men and Lesbians in the United States*, 275 J. Am. Med. Ass'n 1354 (1996), available at <http://www.amsa.org/programs/barriers/jama96.pdf>.

"Aversion therapy (a behavioral or medical intervention which pairs unwanted behavior, in this case, homosexual behavior, with unpleasant sensations or aversive consequences) is no longer recommended for gay men and lesbians. Through psychotherapy, gay men and lesbians can become comfortable with their sexual orientation and understand the societal response to it."

American Psychiatric Association, *Position Statement on Therapies Focused on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation (Reparative or Conversion Therapies)* (2000), available at http://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Advocacy%20and%20Newsroom/Position%20Statements/ps2000_ReparativeTherapy.pdf.

"Psychotherapeutic modalities to convert or 'repair' homosexuality are based on developmental theories whose scientific validity is questionable. Furthermore, anecdotal reports of 'cures' are counterbalanced by anecdotal claims of psychological harm. In the last four decades, 'reparative' therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure. Until there is such research available, [the American Psychiatric Association] recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm.

The potential risks of reparative therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient. Many patients who have undergone reparative therapy relate that they were inaccurately told that homosexuals are lonely, unhappy individuals who never achieve acceptance or satisfaction. The possibility that the person might achieve happiness and satisfying interpersonal relationships as a gay man or lesbian is not presented, nor are alternative approaches to dealing with the effects of societal stigmatization discussed.

Therefore, the American Psychiatric Association opposes any psychiatric treatment such as reparative or conversion therapy which is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that a patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation."

American Psychoanalytic Association, *Position Statement on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or Gender Expression* (2012), available at http://www.apsa.org/About_APsaA/Position_Statements/Attempts_to_Change_Sexual_Orientation.aspx.

"As with any societal prejudice, bias against individuals based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression negatively affects mental

health, contributing to an enduring sense of stigma and pervasive self-criticism through the internalization of such prejudice.

Psychoanalytic technique does not encompass purposeful attempts to ‘convert,’ “repair,” change or shift an individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such directed efforts are against fundamental principles of psychoanalytic treatment and often result in substantial psychological pain by reinforcing damaging internalized attitudes.”

American Psychological Association, *Resolution on Appropriate Affirmative Responses to Sexual Orientation Distress and Change Efforts* (2009), available at <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/sexual-orientation.pdf>.

“Therefore be it resolved that the American Psychological Association affirms that same-sex sexual and romantic attractions, feelings, and behaviors are normal and positive variations of human sexuality regardless of sexual orientation identity;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association reaffirms its position that homosexuality per se is not a mental disorder and opposes portrayals of sexual minority youths and adults as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association encourages mental health professionals to avoid misrepresenting the efficacy of sexual orientation change efforts by promoting or promising change in sexual orientation when providing assistance to individuals distressed by their own or others’ sexual orientation;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association concludes that the benefits reported by participants in sexual orientation change efforts can be gained through approaches that do not attempt to change sexual orientation;

...

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association advises parents, guardians, young people, and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder and to seek psychotherapy, social support and educational services that provide accurate information on sexual orientation and sexuality, increase family and school support, and reduce rejection of sexual minority youth;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association encourages practitioners to consider the ethical concerns outlined in the 1997 APA Resolution on Appropriate Therapeutic Response to Sexual Orientation (American Psychological Association, 1998), in particular the following standards and principles: scientific bases for professional judgments, benefit and harm, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity[.]”

American School Counselor Association, *The Professional School Counselor and LGBTQ Youth* (2014), available at <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/about-asca-%281%29/position-statements>.

“The professional school counselor works with all students through the stages of identity development and understands this may be more difficult for LGBTQ youth. It is not the role of the professional school counselor to attempt to change a student's sexual orientation or gender identity. Professional school counselors do not support efforts by licensed mental health professionals to change a student's sexual orientation or gender as these practices have been proven ineffective and harmful (APA, 2009). School counselors provide support to LGBTQ students to promote academic achievement and personal/social development. Professional school counselors are committed to the affirmation of all youth regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and work to create safe and affirming schools.”

American School Health Association, *Quality Comprehensive Sexuality Education* (2007).

“[T]he American School Health Association . . . expects that comprehensive sexuality education in schools will be scientifically accurate and based on current medical, psychological, pedagogical, educational and social research . . . [and recommends] that teachers be well-trained and competent to teach sexuality education as defined by . . . insight into and acceptance of their own personal feelings and attitudes concerning sexuality topics so personal life experiences do not intrude inappropriately into the educational experience.”

National Association of Social Workers, *“Reparative” or “Conversion” Therapies for Lesbians and Gay Men* (2000), available at <http://www.naswdc.org/diversity/lgb/reparative.asp>.

“[P]roponents of reparative and conversion therapies, such as the most commonly cited group NARTH, claim that their processes are supported by scientific data; however, such scientific support is replete with confounded research methodologies. . . . [Reparative and conversion therapies] **cannot and will not change sexual orientation**. Aligned with the American Psychological Association's (1997) position, NCLGB believes that such treatment potentially can lead to severe emotional damage.” (emphasis in original)

National Association of Social Workers, *Policy Statement: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues* (2005), available at <http://www.socialworkers.org/da/da2005/policies0505/documents/lgbissues.pdf>.

“Taken to the extreme, homophobia in social workers and other practitioners can lead to the use of conversion or reparative therapies, which are explicitly condemned by NASW. . . . NASW reaffirms its stance against reparative therapies and treatments

designed to change sexual orientation or to refer practitioners or programs that claim to do so.”

Pan American Health Organization: Regional Office of the World Health Organization, *“Cures” for an Illness That Does Not Exist: Purported Therapies Aimed at Changing Sexual Orientation Lack Medical Justification and are Ethically Unacceptable* (2012), available at http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=17703.

“‘Reparative’ or ‘conversion therapies’ have no medical indication and represent a severe threat to the health and human rights of the affected persons. They constitute unjustifiable practices that should be denounced and subject to adequate sanctions and penalties.”

Just the Facts Coalition (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of School Administrators, American Counseling Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, Interfaith Alliance Foundation, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Social Workers, national Education Association, School Social Work Association of America), *Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel* (1999), available at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/just-the-facts.pdf>.

“The most important fact about ‘reparative therapy,’ also sometimes known as ‘conversion’ therapy, is that it is based on an understanding of homosexuality that has been rejected by all the major health and mental health professions. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Association of Social Workers, together representing more than 477,000 health and mental health professionals, have all taken the position that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and thus there is no need for a ‘cure.’”