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STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
*and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health*

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## **State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health: Position Statement on Conversion Therapy**

**As mental health professionals, consumers, and advocates for the people of Minnesota, we, the members of the State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health, urge the Minnesota legislature to bring our state laws into alignment with the academic literature by banning the practice of "conversion therapy."**

On July 15, 2021, Minnesota Governor Walz issued [Executive Order 21-25](#) aimed at protecting Minnesotans from what is known as "conversion therapy." Paragraph 10 in Executive Order 21-25 states:

Responsible state boards and commissions, including but not limited to the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, the Board of Marriage and Family Therapy, the Board of Medical Practice, the Board of Psychology, the Board of Nursing, the Board of Social Work, the State Advisory Council on Mental Health, and the Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health, are strongly encouraged to evaluate conversion therapy practices in light of the overwhelming scientific consensus rejecting these practices and, to the extent necessary and permissible under existing law, develop rules prohibiting conversion therapy use by licensees.

The existence of "conversion therapy," sometimes referred to as "reparative therapy," is not a new concept in our society. The history of attempting to pathologize homosexuality has been present for over a century. However, with time and evolution, the mainstream of society has come to a consensus that homosexuality is not a mental illness. Medical and mental health professional organizations have stated for decades that attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or identity may not only be unsuccessful, but it may cause significant harm to that individual.

Proponents of "conversion therapy" have suggested that there are individuals for whom the intervention has been successful; it is possible this "success" is a result of a placebo effect where individuals perceive a change because they believe something is helpful even if the actual described intervention is not effective. It is difficult to reconcile these claims of effectiveness with the fact that there are also numerous examples in history where some of the most prominent leaders in the "conversion therapy" movement have, over time, rescinded their statements or renounced their claims of the effectiveness of the therapy. Some have even come out as gay themselves. Many of these individuals describe a background of faith with a judgement of shame placed upon individuals who did not identify as heterosexual.

It is also worth mentioning that the history of medical and mental health treatments is riddled with examples of therapeutic interventions that have been touted as being helpful for periods, which have since been discontinued due to their being disproven, ineffective, and/or due to the inordinate amount of harm these interventions inflicted upon the individual.

Our membership on the State Advisory Council on Mental Health and the Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health is comprised of mental health providers, consumers, and advocates from across the state of Minnesota. In our roles, we do not engage in regulation activities, but are charged with providing guidance and recommendations to the Governor, the Minnesota Legislature, and all state agencies on matters pertaining to



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the mental health of Minnesotans. In response to Governor Walz' executive order, the Minnesota State Advisory Council on Mental Health and the Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health reviewed literature related to the practice of conversion therapy, discussed the topic during meetings, and hosted a guest speaker knowledgeable about the topic of "conversion therapy." **Based on our research, we recommend a ban on the practice of "conversion therapy" on minors and vulnerable adults in Minnesota.**

Our perspective is in alignment with the statements and reflections made within [Executive Order 21-25: Protecting Minnesotans from "Conversion Therapy."](#) It is our belief that given the available information on "conversion therapy," it is in the best interest of our citizens to clearly identify the practice of attempting to alter an individual's sexuality or identity as misleading, potentially fraudulent, and harmful. Any potential benefit such an intervention may bring is outweighed by the potential harm it may inflict upon a person. We recommend reviewing the SAMSHA publication, [Ending Conversion Therapy: Supporting and Affirming LGBTQ Youth](#), for further guidance on understanding how to support youth who identify with the LGBTQ+ community and for further information on "conversion therapy."

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