

What is So-Called 'Conversion Therapy'?

Conversion Therapy, also referred to as "reparative therapy," is the practice of attempting to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. Techniques can range from shaming to extreme electroshock treatments or institutionalization to "counseling" services based on pseudoscience. These discredited practices are based on the false claim that being LGBTQ is a mental illness that needs to be cured – a view with no scientific basis.

Is 'Conversion Therapy' Legal in South Carolina?

Twenty states and the District of Columbia have passed laws protecting minors from conversion therapy, but the practice remains legal in most states, including South Carolina. Studies by the [UCLA Williams Institute](#) suggest that over 700,000 LGBTQ people have undergone conversion therapy during their lifetime.

Why Did Columbia, SC Vote to Protect Minors from 'Conversion Therapy'?

In the summer of 2021 the city of Columbia, SC [enacted a local ordinance](#) prohibiting licensed, professional therapists from practicing 'conversion therapy' on people under the age of 18. Columbia joined dozens of cities or counties – and twenty states – across the country with similar bans. The ordinance does not impact religious institutions and does not govern the actions of churches or faith leaders.

Does 'Conversion Therapy' Work?

No, it does not work. The practice is not only ineffective, but it is also dangerous, inflicting emotional and psychological trauma on children that can follow them for the rest of their lives. The aftermath of this supposed treatment can include caregiver rejection, houselessness, suicidality, and a whole host of survival behaviors that can put a person's physical safety and mental health at risk.

Who Has Denounced 'Conversion Therapy'?

'Conversion therapy' been [rejected](#) by every leading professional medical and mental health association, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers.

It has also been denounced by the founders of ex-gay ministries. In 2014, nine former "ex-gay" leaders signed an open letter denouncing conversion therapy as "ineffective and harmful" and calling for an end to it. In 2019, McKrae Game, founder of Hope for Wholeness which was based in South Carolina and known as one of the nation's most prominent conversion therapy centers, disavowed the practice, stating that, "the very harmful cycle of self shame and condemnation has to stop."