

## Conversion Therapy for LGBTQ+ Individuals

In light of the case of *Chiles v. Salazar* that is currently under consideration by the Supreme Court of the United States, the Association for Counseling Sexology and Sexual Wellness (ACSSW) affirms its responsibility to protect the well-being and rights of clients, particularly those in the LGBTQ+ community. This statement makes clear ACSSW's position on conversion therapy and underscores our unwavering commitment to ethical standards in counseling, regardless of legislative or judicial determinations.

ACSSW, in alignment with the American Counseling Association (ACA), unequivocally opposes the practice of conversion therapy<sup>1</sup>. Our opposition is rooted in the ethical principles that guide our profession and is not contingent upon the current or future legal status of conversion therapy in the United States. Conversion therapy, along with other efforts to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, is fundamentally incompatible with the values of respect, dignity, and affirmation that the counseling profession upholds.

Conversion therapy lacks a foundation in credible scientific evidence, and assertions that such interventions can produce beneficial outcomes for clients remain unsubstantiated. A substantial body of peer-reviewed research demonstrates that conversion therapy is not only ineffective but also poses significant risks to the mental health and well-being of recipients<sup>2,3</sup>. Clients subjected to these practices report increased rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. These findings are consistent across multiple studies and professional organizations, reflecting a consensus that conversion therapy is harmful and unsupported by empirical evidence.

Central to the ethical practice of counseling are the principles of non-maleficence—committing to do no harm—and respect for client autonomy. Conversion therapy directly violates these tenets. By promoting interventions that disregard a client's authentic identity and expose them to psychological harm, practitioners breach their ethical duty to protect and empower those they serve.

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<sup>1</sup> American Counseling Association. (n.d.). *Conversion therapy statement: Position statement*. <https://www.counseling.org/about/values-statements/conversion-therapy>

<sup>2</sup> American Medical Association. (2025). Issue brief: Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (so-called "conversion therapy"). <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/conversion-therapy-issue-brief.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> American Psychological Association. (2009). *Report of the APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation*. <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexual-orientation>

We call upon all counselors, educators, policymakers, and members of the public to join us in advocating for the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals. ACSSW remains steadfast in its commitment to ethical practice and opposes any attempt to legitimize or reintroduce conversion therapy under the guise of therapeutic intervention. We urge the broader counseling community to reject practices that undermine client well-being and to support policies that safeguard the rights and dignity of all individuals. No legal decision can alter our commitment to our ethical principles, or our advocacy for the health and dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals.