

Efforts to Undermine a Youth’s Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity Can Cause Significant Harm

Identity development is a critical aspect of adolescence. Efforts to undermine a young person’s identity, including their Sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) can cause significant harm to their health and wellbeing. “Conversion Therapy” defined as the practice of efforts aimed at changing an individual's SOGI to heterosexual or cisgender norms, places children and adolescents at serious risk of harm.

Decades of research show these efforts do not work and instead increase depression, trauma, and suicide risk, with especially severe consequences for transgender and gender-diverse youth. Whether carried out by parents, religious leaders, or licensed providers, attempts to suppress or change a young person’s identity cause lasting damage and violate ethical standards of care in multiple major fields. The evidence is clear: protecting children and youth requires rejecting SOGI change efforts and affirming young people for who they are.

Exposure to conversion efforts doubles suicide risk	Adults exposed to sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts at any point in their lives report significantly higher psychological distress and twice the odds of attempting suicide. Source: Turban et al., 2020
All major medical and mental health associations oppose SOGI change efforts	“Conversion therapy” is universally opposed as harmful by major medical organizations, including, but not limited to, the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry , American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy , American Medical Association (AMA) , American Psychiatric Association , and the American Psychological Association (APA) .
Harm occurs regardless of intent or who conducts the practice	SOGI change efforts cause harm whether carried out by parents, caregivers, religious leaders, child welfare professionals, licensed providers, or other community members. Intent does not lessen impact. Source: SAMHSA, 2023
Attempting to force change in youth causes lasting, measurable harm	Young people whose parents attempted to change their sexual orientation, at home, through therapists, or via religious leaders, face three times the risk of severe depression and suicide attempts. The harm persists into adulthood, including lower educational attainment, reduced income, and diminished life satisfaction. Source: Ryan et al., 2020

Call to Action

We urge readers to get more information through [HRC | The Lies and Dangers of Efforts to Change SOGI](#) or read [LGBTQ+ people share their personal conversion therapy stories](#) to understand how these practices impact long-term wellbeing.

This resource was created by the [National SOGIE Center](#), [Unicorn Solutions](#), [LAMBDA Legal](#), [FREDLA](#), [National Center for Youth Law](#), [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#), and the [Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation](#).