

Conversion Therapy

The purpose of this policy is to affirm the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' stance on 'Conversion Therapy'.

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors recognizes that "all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (United Nations, 1948). The New Zealand Association of Counsellors recognizes sexual diversity, including sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

Definition:

'Conversion Therapy', also known as 'Reparative Therapy', is a pseudoscientific practice or treatment that seeks to change, suppress, and/or eliminate an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity and, or gender expression, using psychological and/or spiritual interventions.

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors takes the following into consideration:

- "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." (American Psychoanalytic Association, 2012)
- "Almost half of the same/both-sex attracted students (47.7%) reported seriously thinking about attempting suicide and approximately one-in-five (18.3%) had attempted suicide in the last 12 months". (The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Results for Young People Attracted to the Same Sex or Both Sexes. Auckland, 2014)
- "Compared with LGBTQ young people who were not rejected or were only a little rejected by their parents and caregivers because of their gay or transgender identity, highly rejected LGBTQ young people were:
 - o 8.4x more likely to report having attempted suicide
 - o 5.9x more likely report high levels of depression." (San Francisco State University, 2010)
- "Scientific research does not support the efficacy of conversion or reparative therapy. Conversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction. There is no evidence that the negative effects of conversion or reparative therapy counterbalance any distress caused by the social stigma and prejudice these individuals may experience." (Canadian Psychological Association, 2015)
- Conversion "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 Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018)
- "The practice of conversion therapy, whether in relation to sexual orientation or gender identity, is unethical and potentially harmful." (UK Council for Psychotherapy, 2017)

Position:

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors does not condone or support therapeutic interventions, such as 'Conversion Therapy', that proactively aim to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors considers 'Conversion Therapy' to perpetuate social injustice and discrimination while also being ineffectual, potentially very harmful, and not grounded in legitimate therapeutic practice.

Members of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors will be considered in breach of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors Code of Ethics if they either provide or refer someone for 'Conversion Therapy'.

Any New Zealand Association of Counsellors member who is aware of another member who has provided or has referred a client for 'Conversion Therapy' is bound by clause 7.2(a) of the Code of Ethics ("Responsibility to NZAC") to take action in relation to this behaviour. Members of the public may also complain about a counsellor who was a member of the NZAC at the time the alleged behavior occurred, and is still a member, in accordance with the NZAC Complaints Process.

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References

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