

https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Conversion_therapy.html

Conversion therapy (also known as **reparative therapy**) is a range of treatments that aim to change sexual orientation from [homosexual](#) to [heterosexual](#). Such treatments have been criticized for being [pseudo-scientific](#).^{[1][2][3][4][5]} Conversion therapy has been a source of controversy in the United States and other countries.^[6] The [American Psychiatric Association](#) has condemned "psychiatric treatment, such as reparative or conversion therapy which is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the [a priori](#) assumption that the patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation."^[7] It states that, "Ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation."^[8] It also states that political and moral debates over the integration of gays and lesbians into the mainstream of American society have obscured scientific data about changing sexual orientation "by calling into question the motives and even the character of individuals on both sides of the issue."^[7] The highest-profile contemporary advocates of conversion

therapy tend to be [fundamentalist Christian](#) groups and other right-wing religious organizations [\[9\]](#) and the therapy is derided by critics as "pray the gay away". The main organization advocating secular forms of conversion therapy is the [National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality](#) (NARTH), which often partners with religious groups.[\[9\]](#) Psychologist Douglas Haldeman writes that conversion therapy comprises efforts by [mental health](#) professionals and [pastoral care](#) providers to convert lesbians and gay men to heterosexuality by techniques including [aversive treatments](#), such as "the application of electric shock to the hands and/or genitals," and "nausea-inducing drugs...administered simultaneously with the presentation of homoerotic stimuli," masturbatory reconditioning, visualization, social skills training, [psychoanalytic therapy](#), and spiritual interventions, such as "prayer and group support and pressure."[\[10\]](#)

American medical and scientific organizations have expressed concern over conversion therapy and consider it potentially harmful.[\[7\]\[11\]\[12\]](#) The advancement of conversion therapy may cause social harm by disseminating inaccurate views about sexual orientation.[\[11\]](#)

The ethics guidelines of major mental health organizations in the United States vary from cautionary statements to recommendations that ethical practitioners refrain from practicing conversion therapy (American Psychiatric Association) or from referring patients to those who do ([American Counseling Association](#)).^[7]^[13] In a letter dated February 23, 2011 to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Attorney General of the United States stated "while sexual orientation carries no visible badge, a growing scientific consensus accepts that sexual orientation is a characteristic that is immutable".^[14]

In 2012, the [Pan American Health Organization](#) (the North and South American branch of the [World Health Organization](#)) released a statement cautioning against services that purport to "cure" people with non-heterosexual sexual orientations as they lack medical justification and represent a serious threat to the health and well-being of affected people, and noted that the global scientific and professional consensus is that homosexuality is a normal and natural variation of [human sexuality](#) and cannot be regarded as a pathological condition. The Pan American Health Organization further called on governments, academic institutions, professional

associations and the media to expose these practices and to promote respect for diversity. The World Health Organization affiliate further noted that gay minors have sometimes been forced to attend these "therapies" involuntarily, being deprived of their liberty and sometimes kept in isolation for several months, and that these findings were reported by several [United Nations](#) bodies. Additionally, the Pan American Health Organization recommended that such practices be denounced and subject to sanctions and penalties under national legislation, as they constitute a violation of the ethical principles of health care and violate [human rights](#) that are protected by international and regional agreements.[\[15\]](#)