

The Youth Mental Health Protection Act prohibits mental health providers from engaging in, or referring a patient to, sexual orientation conversion therapy when such person is under eighteen years of age.

2017 Youth Mental Health Protection Legislation & Sponsors:

- **Senate Bill 435** - Led by Senator Ryan Weld & co-sponsored by Senators Miller, Ojeda, Palumbo, Swope, Takubo, Trump, Woelfel, Boso, Facemire and Romano
- **House Bill 2650** - Led by Delegate John Shott & co-sponsored by Delegates Fluharty, Hamilton, Walters, Hill, Lane, C., Higginbotham, Westfall and Blair

While we cannot know the precise number of youth who have been subjected to these practices within West Virginia, experts believe that up to one-third of LGBT youth experience attempts to change their identity, including by therapists. This legislation will:

- Protect youth from being coerced into treatments which are ineffective and which can lead to depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, and suicide.
- Prevent parents from being taken advantage of by deceptive agents of the conversion therapy industry.
- Help ensure that LGBT young people receive mental health care that is ethical and in line with medical standards.
- Not affect religious or non-licensed counseling.

Conversion therapy is dangerous and discredited. So-called “conversion therapy,” sometimes referred to as “reparative therapy,” “ex-gay therapy,” or “sexual orientation change efforts,” includes a range of dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a person’s sexual orientation, including efforts to change gender identity or expression.

Conversion therapy is based on false claims. These harmful practices are based on the false claim that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or (LGBT) is a mental illness that should be cured. In fact, this view has been rejected as scientifically invalid by the American Psychiatric Association and every major mental health group. Unfortunately, young LGBT people may be coerced and subject to these harmful practices, which put youth at risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide.

Conversion therapy is not an accepted medical practice. Conversion therapy has been denounced by every mainstream medical and mental health association, including the American Medical Association and American Psychological Association.

The American Psychological Association, “advises parents, guardians, young people, and their families to avoid sexual orientation change efforts that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder...”

The American Medical Association, “opposes, the use of ‘reparative’ or ‘conversion’ therapy that is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the assumption that the patient should change his/her homosexual orientation.”

This bill will protect LGBT youth from harmful conversion therapy. The Youth Mental Health Protection Act will protect LGBT youth from dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing one’s sexual orientation, including efforts to change gender identity or expression. The bill will prevent licensed mental health care providers in WV from practicing conversion therapy on youth under the age of 18.