



Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Patricia Lally, Director

## The Use of Conversion Therapy on Minors Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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### 1. What is conversion therapy?

Conversion therapy (also known as reparative therapy) are practices or treatments that attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, based on the discredited theory that being LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) is a defect or disorder.

Examples of conversion therapy include, but are not limited to:

- Shaming same-sex attractions.
- Making patients' behavior more feminine or masculine.
- Exclusively teaching heterosexual dating skills as the only acceptable form of dating or a superior form of dating.
- Inducing nausea, vomiting or paralysis while showing the patient same-sex erotic images.
- Having a patient snap a bracelet around the wrist when aroused by same-sex erotic thoughts.
- Using hypnosis to try to redirect desires.

If you are not sure if the practice or treatment you are reporting is conversion therapy, contact the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) at 206-684-4500 to talk about it. SOCR

### 2. What does this law prohibit?

This law makes providing conversion therapy to minors illegal even if the provider was not paid for the services.

### 3. When did this law take effect, and who enforces it?

SOCR began to enforce this law on October 3, 2016. To report possible violations, please call SOCR at 206-684-4500 or [click here to file a complaint](#). Reporting incidents as soon as possible is critical to getting an investigation started.

### 4. Where does this law apply?



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Anywhere within Seattle city limits.

## 5. Who is a minor?

Any person under the age of 18.

## 6. Is it illegal to offer deliver conversion therapy to adults?

No. Adults age 18 or older can seek any type of therapy they choose.

## 7. Why is conversion therapy for minors illegal?

Conversion therapy is emotionally and physically harmful, as well as ineffective in changing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Seattle has a compelling interest in protecting minors from serious harm caused by this practice.

## 8. Why should I report a violation?

It is important to report violations to prevent harm to youth.

## 9. Who is a provider?

A provider is any licensed medical or mental health professional. Individuals or institutions that are not licensed or certified to provide medical or mental health services are **not** subject to this law.

Examples of licensed medical or mental health professionals include:

- Licensed mental health counselors.
- Family therapists.
- Social workers.
- Physicians.
- Psychologists.
- Psychotherapists.
- Certified chemical dependency counselors.



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**10. Does the ordinance prohibit counseling services to people undergoing gender transition and/or services to people seeking support and understanding of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity?**

No. As long as the counseling does not seek to change a minor's sexual orientation or gender identity, it is not covered under the law. A provider is able to provide support and assistance to patients undergoing gender transition.

**11. Does the law apply to providers that are religiously affiliated?**

Possibly. The law applies if the provider is engaged in providing medical or mental health services. The law does not apply if the provider is acting solely as a pastor or minister.

**12. Does the law apply to teachers that advise students on many issues?**

Possibly. The law applies if the provider is engaged in providing medical or mental health services. The law does not apply if the provider is acting solely as a teacher. Teachers and others who come in contact with minors are encouraged to report violations to SOCR.

**13. How can I report a violation of this law?**

Contact SOCR by phone, [online](#), email or in person. You will need the name of the provider as well as the date and location where the violation took place. If you don't have all the information, call SOCR at 206-684-4500 to talk about it.

**14. Who can report a violation?**

Anyone who believes a violation has occurred can report it to SOCR. If you are not sure a violation occurred, contact SOCR at 206-684-4500 to talk about it.

**15. Can a minor report a violation without adults being involved?**



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Yes. A minor can report a violation without a parent, guardian, or other adult's involvement.

### **16. What are the consequences for violating this law?**

Providers found in violation of this law will be fined \$500 for the first violation and \$1,000 for each violation after that.

### **17. Can a person report a violation anonymously?**

Yes. However, for further enforcement action, the identity of the person reporting may need to be disclosed. SOCR's Director shall keep confidential the name and other identifiable information of a person reporting the violation, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable laws.

### **18. Will the police be involved?**

No. This is not a criminal claim; it is a civil claim.

### **19. What happens after I report the violation?**

SOCR will decide if an advisory letter will be sent to the provider prior to starting an investigation. An advisory letter notifies the provider of the law prohibiting conversion therapy. It may be sent in situations where facts are unclear. The name of the person who contacted SOCR will not appear in the advisory letter.

Example: SOCR receives an anonymous voice message reporting a violation of the law. The reporter gives the last name of the provider and an approximate location of the office but no other details. SOCR has limited information and no way to contact the anonymous reporter for additional information. An advisory letter to the provider would be appropriate in this situation.

If SOCR has all the information required, we will open an investigation. An investigation can include:



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- Interviewing the person who provided the report.
- Interviewing the minor.
- Interviewing the provider.
- Interviewing other witnesses.
- Requesting written information from the provider.
- Gathering documents from other sources.

SOCR will assess the information gathered and decide if a violation occurred. If SOCR decides a violation occurred, we will issue a citation.

## **20. What should I do if I receive a citation for providing conversion therapy?**

For those who receive a citation, there are two options to choose from. It is important to respond to the citation by choosing one of the options.

Option #1: The provider can pay the fine (either \$500 or \$1,000) listed in the citation and the record will show a finding that the provider committed the violation.

Option #2: The provider can request in writing a contested hearing from the Seattle Hearing Examiner. The request must contain the reason the violation did not occur or why the person cited is not responsible for the violation. Additionally, the provider must provide an address where the notice of hearing can be sent.