



# Conversion “therapy” Ban Engagement Report

Christina Kendrick, Neighborhood and Community Relations  
Department

612-673-3952

[Christina.Kendrick@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Christina.Kendrick@minneapolismn.gov)

Justin Lewandowski, OutFront Minnesota

[justin@outfront.org](mailto:justin@outfront.org)

Cat Salonek, OutFront Minnesota

[cat@outfront.org](mailto:cat@outfront.org)

# Informed Policy Development

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The city of Minneapolis is drafting an ordinance to ban the dangerous and disproven practice of conversion "therapy". There is consensus among medical and mental health professionals and organizations and others; that attempting to change a person sexual orientation or gender identity lack any scientific basis and are in fact ineffective and even worse can cause harm to the person subjected to this treatment. The UCLA School of Law (Williams Institute) in a 2018 report estimated that across the United States, 698,000 LGBTQAI+ adults received some form of conversion therapy and of that number, 350,000 were under the age of 18 when they did. In states that now ban conversion therapy, over 6,000 youth under the age of 18 will be spared from any form of this practice from licensed health care professionals.

Led by Councilman Cunningham and Council Vice President Jenkins, the city has brought together a workgroup of city staff and community partners including youth serving organizations and members of the faith community. The workgroup has met monthly since June of this year and concluded that engaging community was critical to ensure the ordinance language was effective enough to withstand challenge; yet written in a way to mitigate any unintended consequences, especially in the development of the process of reporting and enforcement.

## **Methodology:**

The workgroup established a community engagement subcommittee who met and developed a strategy of outreach and engagement which includes both in person connections and an opportunity to for community to participate electronically. These efforts are led by OutFront Minnesota (Minneapolis) with assistance from city staff and community partners. The subcommittee worked through a process to:

- Prioritize targeted outreach
- Understand what level of experience and knowledge community has about conversion "therapy"
- Identify gaps in education and awareness
- Respond to community concerns about the ordinance language, the process of reporting and the city's enforcement efforts
- Get the pulse of community's desire for the City of Minneapolis to pursue this ordinance

A survey tool was developed using a series of nine questions, not including demographic and other identifier questions, to gather information to inform the above goals (appendix A). To date there have been over seven community events attended by OutFront and other partners, where attendees had an opportunity to answer these questions. The online survey tool was disseminated to multiple networks, encouraging them to not only participate themselves but to also send out to their networks. This has resulted in 591 online responses and 254 in-person documented responses (appendix B).

Each method of outreach and engagement data sets will remain separate but integrated cohesively in reporting and determining recommendations for the ordinance language, process for reporting and enforcement and the awareness and education campaign development. The online survey required a response to each question to move through the survey. The “in-person” responses did not, therefore there may be some questions left unanswered. Therefore, each “data set” is aggregated and synthesized separately.

**Online Data Highlights (n= 591):**

- Age range was from 1933 – 2005
- Including clergy, 25% identified as people of faith
- 53% respondents identified as mental health professionals
- Other common names for conversion “therapy” are
  - Reparative “therapy”
  - “Pray the Gay Away”
- 61% of respondents have been told that being LGBTQ+ can be changed
- 24% experienced this practice themselves or knew of someone who had
- 40% of respondents didn’t know who they could tell or ask for support either for themselves or others
- 98% of respondents feel there is a need for this ordinance

**In-Person Highlights (paper documentation of responses n= 254, includes “no response”):**

- Age range was from 1943 – 2008
- Including clergy, 14% identified as people of faith
- 4% respondents identified as mental health professionals
- Other common names for conversion “therapy” are
  - “Exgay therapy”

- “Sexual orientation change efforts”
- 43% of respondents have been told that being LGBTQ+ can be changed
- 22% experienced this practice themselves or knew of someone who had
- 70% of respondents didn’t know who they could tell or ask for support either for themselves or others
- 88% of respondents feel there is a need for this ordinance

The subcommittee also felt the accounts of personal stories and sentiments about this type of practice supports the position of many medical/mental health practitioners - that this practice is not only invalid, but indeed harmful. The resounding concern around the ordinance language is that it can withstand challenge and that the process for reporting and enforcement is clear, uncomplicated and protective of those reporting violations.

**Recommendations:**

To date the recommendations are as follows:

- An awareness and education campaign are just as valuable of a deliverable as the ordinance, if not more
- Development of a website that not only houses the ordinance, process for reporting, explanation of penalty, etc. but includes awareness and education information, along with resources for youth, family and community
- Ensure ordinance language is clear and includes opportunity to describe the actions of the practice to avoid getting caught up in the "name game"
- Clearly articulate the process for reporting a violation, and explain the level of protection(s) for the person(s) reporting
- Ongoing engagement, awareness and education is needed as this work evolves beyond the passage of the city’s ordinance

**Conclusion:**

“Conversion therapy,” often 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, or efforts to change a person’s gender identity or expression. These harmful practices are based on the false claim that being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) is a mental

illness that should be cured. The United Nations has even gone so far as to classify these practices as torture. Unfortunately, many LGBTQ+ Minnesotans are still coerced and subjected to these harmful practices, which put them at risk for serious harms such as depression, substance abuse, and suicide. Minneapolis is right in addressing this harmful practice in our city, with the hope that other municipalities will join this effort and stand up to protect our youth and vulnerable communities.

# CONVERSION THERAPY BAN SURVEY

OutFront Minnesota is working to engage thousands of our community members and neighbors around banning conversion therapy in Minnesota municipalities and statewide. Our goal is to increase public knowledge about conversion therapy and its impact. We also hope to hear from community members who have experienced conversion therapy personally or know others who have experienced conversion therapy.

Conversion therapy has been denounced by every mainstream medical and mental health association, including the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Conversion therapy is based on the false claim that being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) is a mental illness that should be cured. Unfortunately, LGBTQ people are often coerced and subjected to these harmful practices, which puts them at risk for serious harms such as depression, substance abuse, and suicide.

In the 31 states that still allow conversion therapy, 16,000 LGBTQ youth will be subjected to this debunked, harmful practice each year. In the 19 states that have banned conversion therapy, 10,000 LGBTQ youth will be spared from this practice each year.

Minnesotans have the chance to continue leading on LGBTQ rights by passing municipal bans on conversion therapy and pushing the state legislature to pass the "Mental Health Protections Act," which would ban conversion therapy across the state of Minnesota.

Your participation in this survey is extremely helpful. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete it!

## Conversion Therapy Ban Survey

Contact Information: Your personal information will not be shared, and will not be public with the survey. Your survey responses will be a part of an anonymous aggregate.

First Name

Last Name

Gender

Sexual Orientation

Race

Ethnicity

Street Address

Postal Code

City

State/Province

Email (this will be used to confirm your submission)

Mobile Phone

## Public Engagement Survey

What pronouns do you use?

- They/Them/Theirs
- Ze/Hir/Hirs
- Zie/Zim/Zis
- She/Her/Hers
- He/Him/His
- Another Option(s)

In what year were you born?

Do you identify as any of the following? If so, check which apply.

- Grad Student
- College Student
- High School Student
- Middle School Student
- PreK-12 Educator
- College Professor
- Person of Faith
- Clergy
- Mental Health Provider
- Other

Prior to this survey, had you heard of conversion therapy?

- No
- Yes
- Not sure

Have you or someone you know experienced conversion therapy?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Have you heard another name or term used for conversion therapy?



What do you know about conversion therapy?

Have you or someone you know ever been told that you can change your sexual orientation or gender identity? If so, by whom

If someone in your life was experiencing conversion therapy, who do you think they might tell or ask for support? Write "I don't know" if unsure.

How do you think you might find out if someone you know was experiencing conversion therapy? Who would you tell or ask for support? Write "I don't know" if unsure.

Do you feel there is a need to ban the practice of conversion therapy?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Is there anything you think we need to be aware of as we develop the language of the ordinance/legislation banning conversion therapy?

What do you want people to know about conversion therapy?



## **Conversion Therapy Ban Online and In-Person Engagement “Survey” Results**

## **Conversion Therapy Ban Online Survey Results**

**Total Number of Submissions: 591**

### **Age Range:**

1933 to 2005

### **Student Submissions:**

Middle School Students: 1

Highschool Students: 36

College Students: 65

Grad Students: 34

### **Educator Submissions:**

K-12: 47

College Professors: 32

### **Mental Health Professionals: 53**

### **People of faith: 128**

**Clergy: 19**

### **Other Titles:**

Physicians

Social Workers

Mother of A Trans Child  
Domestic Violence Intervention  
Attornies  
Nurse  
"Blue-Collar" worker  
Security Officer  
Disabled Persons  
Union Leaders

**Other identified names for conversion therapy:**

Reparative therapy  
Pray the gay away  
Conversion therapy camps  
The gay cure  
Exgay Therapy  
Torture  
Sexual orientation change efforts  
Electroshock therapy  
Conversion shock therapy

**Have you ever been told that being LGBTQ can be changed?**

Yes: 360 (61%)

**Prior to this survey had you heard of conversion therapy?**

No: (1%)  
Unsure: (.002%)  
Yes: (98%)

**Have your or someone you know experienced conversion therapy?**

No: 337 (57%)  
Unsure: 120 (20%)  
Yes: 144 (24%)

**Do you feel there is a need for this ordinance/ban?**

No: 8 (1%)  
Unsure: 4 (.006%)  
Yes: 579 (98%)

**Personal stories and testimony**

"I was in 11th grade in high school when I first heard about it. I first looked into to try to "not be gay" anymore. I tried some of what I now know are some of the more common practices on myself; berating myself every time I thought about a girl, telling myself I was wrong to have those feelings."

“I have fought to undo the gaslighting my children and I experienced and still experience through domestic violence and I cannot imagine the damage done to someone by undermining their entire reality of sense of self.”

“My friend felt alone and basically gave up on real therapy and lost family & some friends in the process.”

“I never tried formal conversion therapy but tried some of their techniques on myself. I feel lucky to be alive, and a productive member of society.”

“My friend is very religious and shamed around her son. Her son was sexually abused, and she believes that this is why he is gay. She found a lot of google documentation to support her views that this is not something he was born with. She tortured her son for years trying to change him instead of getting him the therapy he deserved.”

### **What we want people to know about conversion therapy**

“I think part of the process of "conversion therapy" is that individuals become isolated and would find it difficult to identify or talk with people who could support their feelings, and let them know that "conversion therapy" is a pure hoax.”

“It is difficult for persons experiencing conversion therapy to reach out for help because they tend to blame themselves earlier in the process. It is generally only after an extended time that they realize their worsening condition is caused by the therapy.”

“Although it is hard for victims to share their stories, I believe hearing voices from those who have been harmed is our most powerful way of communicating how these practices affect real people's lives.”

“It drastically increases suicide risk, it actively harms self image and self love/esteem. It increases the risk of substance abuse (and by the transitive property, overdose), depression, anxiety, and shows no benefit to the people enduring it.”

“Violence against our LGBTQ communities is not only physical. The sheer mountain of mental and emotional pressure on our lives and our bodies to simply exist is massive and it weighs on us every day. Conversion therapy is often packaged to queer people as mental health treatment. We need to expose this practice for what it is.”

“It is a weapon. Just like we try to keep dangerous chemicals and sharp objects and loaded guns away from young children for their safety, we need to keep this practice away from children and any other person that would be vulnerable to such coercion.”

“Every reputable medical association on the planet condemns this so called "therapy" as harmful.”

“Parents making the decision to put their child through conversion therapy don't understand the long-term damage they're causing. Even if the child consents, that child can't understand what they're consenting to. As a teenager, I desperately wanted conversion therapy but had no idea what it would do to me in the long term.”

**Is there anything you think we need to be aware of as we develop the language of the ordinance/legislation banning conversion therapy?**

Craft language that does not suggest that all people of faith support "conversion therapy." Include positive religious support for the ban in addition to psychological.

Any "ban" should include not only regulatory teeth, but also a private right of (civil) action. Be straightforward. How to implement and enforce the ban is the complex part. A significant fine is one option. Public education is another. Consider a more significant lobbying effort amongst physicians.

Full demonstrate that there is scientific basis conversion therapy. It is found to be harmful. No proof it has ever truly changed the orientation of anyone. Emphasize the negative mental health impacts. Demonstrate proof that shows it doesn't work.

Explicitly include why underage and not over 18. I think it's most important to focus on people who are under 18, who have no ability to leave a situation where they're being forced into conversion therapy. It would be great for all conversion therapy to be banned, but the most vulnerable group should be (protected).

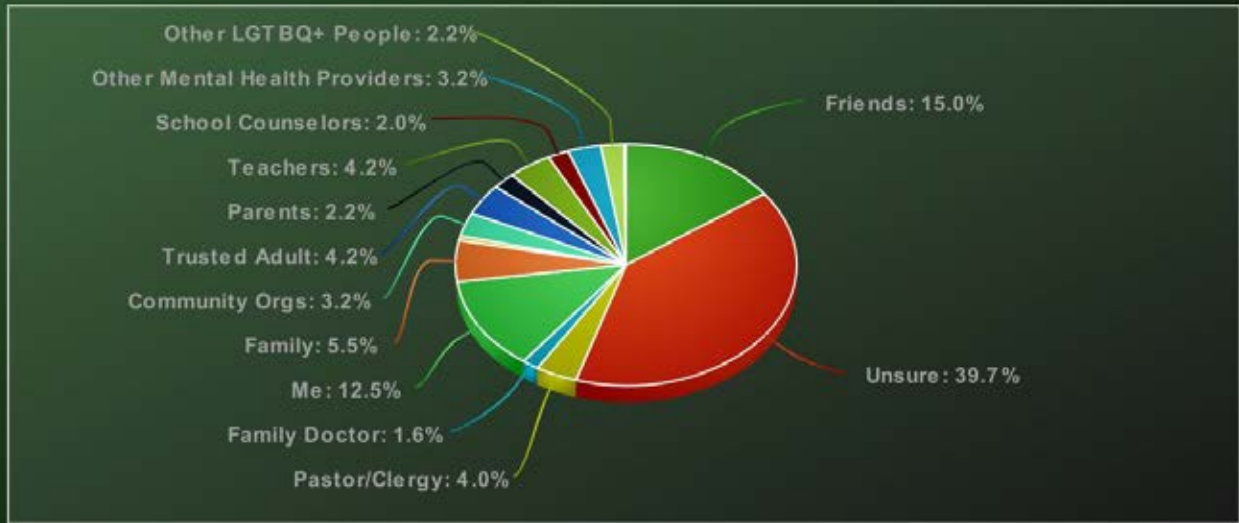
Be sure to include transgender and gender non-conforming people as potential targets of conversion therapy. Use plain language for people with disabilities and non-native English speakers. Make sure that especially kids know it is okay to stand up for themselves, who can they report to.

I think it would be good to include the NASW code of ethics and any other board ethics to show how this is not congruent with treating the whole person and the first rule of "do no harm" as a clinician. I view it as a form of medical malpractice. I think it's important for people to know they have options for proper mental health care.

Billing practices, making certain that no therapist, social worker, or school counselor or any counselor can bill for anything that may fall under conversion therapy.

**If someone in your life was experiencing conversion therapy who do you think they might tell or ask for support? (Online)**

OFM Survey Results



- Friends
- Unsure
- Pastor/Clergy
- Family Doctor
- Me
- Family
- GSA
- Community Orgs
- Trusted Adult
- Parents
- Teachers
- School Counselors
- Other Mental Health Providers
- Other LGBTQ+ People
- Police

meta-chart.com

**Conversion Therapy Ban Paper Survey Results**

**Total Number of Submissions: 254**

**Age Range:**

1943 to 2008

**Student Submissions:**

Middle School Students: 7

Highschool Students: 22

College Students: 52

Grad Students: 13

**Educator Submissions:**

K-12: 15

College Professors: 9

**Mental Health Professionals: 11**

**People of faith: 32**

**Clergy: 3**

**Other Titles:**

Physicians  
Social Workers  
Attornies  
Nurse  
Community Member  
Faith Leader

**Other identified names for conversion therapy:**

Reparative therapy  
Pray the gay away  
Conversion therapy camps  
Exgay Therapy  
Sexual orientation change efforts  
Electroshock therapy

**Have you ever been told that being LGBTQ can be changed?**

Yes: 110 (43%)



**Prior to this survey had you heard of conversion therapy?**

No: (1%)  
Unsure: (1%)  
Yes: (98%)

**Have you or someone you know experienced conversion therapy?**

No: 143 (56%)  
Unsure: 57(22%)  
Yes: 57(22%)

**Do you feel there is a need for this ordinance/ban?**

No: 4 (2%)  
Unsure: 4 (2%)  
Yes: (88%)

