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HETEROSEXUAL-AFFIRMING THERAPY FACT SHEET

Are all homosexuals gay?

Being gay is a self-chosen identity. Not everyone with same-sex attractions (SSA) identifies as gay. These individuals who do not identify as gay believe they are inherently heterosexual and seek help to identify the specific reasons why they experience unwanted SSA. In therapy, counselors and psychologists ethically help clients identify causes of SSA and sensitively assist them as they resolve the underlying factors that lead to homosexual feelings. These individuals are your constituents, and seek protection for their religious rights to receive help and support to leave homosexuality, change sexual orientation, and/or remain celibate. Many individuals are conservative Christians and Jews and seek the fundamental human right to pursue help for their unwanted SSA through gender affirming programs, including counseling and heterosexual-affirming therapy, also known as sexual orientation change effort (SOCE) therapy.

Why are gay activists attempting to ban heterosexual-affirming therapy?

Gay activist organizations instruct their members to reject ex-gays and individuals with unwanted SSA who refuse to self-identify as gay primarily because these individuals do not conform to the myth that people are born gay. In 2008, the American Psychological Association stated: "Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors." Homosexuality has multiple causes and individuals experience it differently in their lives. Some individuals choose to seek counseling to help them resolve unwanted SSA, and this threatens the political agenda of gay activists.

Is heterosexual-affirming therapy different from any other psychotherapy?

No. Counselors who practice SOCE therapy are licensed and provide psychological services for a wide variety of issues, including unwanted SSA. Critics have falsely described SOCE therapy as an invalid or even dangerous form of therapeutic treatment, while others refer to it as an attempt to "pray away the gay" that relies on purely behavioral methods of aversion, distraction, and/or suppression. Such descriptions are false and do not reflect the work of licensed mental health practitioners who practice SOCE therapy. To understand what it is like to undergo counseling for unwanted SSA, read the *Diary of an Ex-Gay Man* at http://pfox.org/diary_exgay_man.html which chronicles the counseling sessions of a young man undergoing therapy for his unwanted SSA.

Are children denied access to full mental health care if heterosexual-affirming therapy is banned?

Yes. Children who have been molested by a same-sex adult and are confused about their sexual orientation as a result of the sexual abuse will be denied access to therapy simply because it is not gay-affirming. In effect, a child will be raped twice – first by the perpetrator and then again by the political environment, which refuses to treat the child unless he sees a gay-affirming therapist.

Is heterosexual-affirming therapy harmful?

Some gay activists suggest that SOCE therapy is inherently harmful and may cause a teenage client to become anxious, depressed, and/or commit suicide. However, there is not one single peer-reviewed scientific study that has researched the outcomes of minors that have undergone SOCE therapy, so all claims that SOCE therapy is harmful and ineffective are unfounded.

Legislation to ban SOCE therapy relies exclusively on policy statements from so-called mainstream mental and medical health organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA), who formed a Task Force in 2009 made up exclusively of gay-identified and gay-affirming psychologists. Not only did the Task Force refuse to include psychologists and licensed psychotherapists that actually worked with clients undergoing SOCE therapy and/or were former homosexuals, but all of the members of this Task Force had previously gone on the record as opposing SOCE therapy for philosophical and political reasons.

The APA Task Force report advised parents to avoid SOCE therapy for their children, and legislation to ban SOCE therapy chooses only to include the APA and other so-called mainstream mental and medical health organizations' opinions, while ignoring the recommendations from the American Association of Christian Counselors, National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), Catholic Medical Association, American College of Pediatricians, International Network of Orthodox (Jewish) Mental Health Professionals, and Christian Medical & Dental Associations, all who support a client's right to resolve unwanted SSA and for parents to decide what medical and mental health treatment is best for their family and children. Collectively, these organizations comprise over 50,000 licensed mental and medical health practitioners.

Is there any evidence to prove that heterosexual-affirming therapy is effective?

Yes, 100 years of research, in fact. In 2009, the NARTH performed a comprehensive review of SOCE literature and concluded that it is possible for some men and women to change from homosexuality to heterosexuality, and that efforts to change do not invariably result in harm. Additionally, a groundbreaking new book by Dr. James Phelan, entitled: "*Successful Outcomes of Sexual Orientation Change Effort Therapy: An Annotated Bibliography*" was released in 2014. This book cites 100 years of scientific research, revealing a comprehensive bibliographic review of the literature documenting success that shows that therapy has helped some clients resolve their unwanted SSA and experience heterosexual attractions.

Do parents force their children to undergo heterosexual-affirming therapy?

Some anti-ex-gay activists have made accusations that parents have forced their homosexual children to undergo SOCE interventions, which include camps that rely on aversive (i.e., electroshock) methods for conversion. Such claims are absolute myths and have been investigated and disproven, yet nonetheless are used as scare tactics to encourage legislators to pass bans on heterosexual-affirming therapy while allowing gay-affirming therapy to be practiced. Legislation to ban SOCE therapy threatens constituents' constitutional rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and their first amendment rights to see a counselor who helps them resolve unwanted SSA while remaining faithful to their deeply held spiritual beliefs. All parents, children, and families deserve the right to pursue their own self-determination and should not be forced to choose between their counselor and their faith values.