



Minnesota moves toward banning 'conversion therapy' but it's still legal in many states

By [Harmeet Kaur](#), CNN

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'Boy Erased' looks at gay 'conversion therapy' 01:35

(CNN) — Minnesota is the latest state to move toward making so-called "conversion therapy" illegal.

It's one of 39 states to introduce bills on conversion therapy, a widely discredited practice that seeks to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Twenty-four states have introduced such bills just this year, according to The Trevor Project, a nonprofit organization named for the 1994 short film "Trevor" that works on suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth.

Lawmakers in the Minnesota's Democrat-controlled House voted last week on a measure that would ban mental health professionals from engaging in conversion therapy with anyone under the age of 18 or with vulnerable adults. The measure passed 72-53 as part of a larger bill about health and human services programs.

The bill has been introduced in the Senate but has not yet been voted on.

Here's a look at what conversion therapy entails and what states are doing about it.

Conversion therapy can take many different forms. It could be a licensed mental health professional sitting across from a "patient" on a couch or it could be a religious adviser trying to "pray the gay away," Sam Brinton, Head of Advocacy and Government Affairs for The Trevor Project and a survivor of conversion therapy, explained to CNN.

It could also involve physical aversion methods, such as shock therapy or snapping a rubber band on one's wrist to discourage same-sex attraction.



Related Article: 'Conversion therapy' hits the big screen while laws play out in states

Leading medical and mental health professional organizations denounce conversion therapy, noting that it poses significant risks to LGBTQ people, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior.

"Underlying these techniques is the assumption that homosexuality and gender identity are mental disorders and that sexual orientation and gender identity can be changed," the American Medical Association notes in a statement on its website. "This assumption is not based on medical and scientific evidence."

But it's still happening around the US

Approximately 698,000 LGBT adults in the US have received conversion therapy at some point in their lives, according to a [2018 study](#) by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law.



Related Article: 'A legal form of abuse': Conversion therapy is lurking in the shadows

Brinton says that people often wrongly assume that the conversion therapy is something that no longer happens. But the calls coming in to The Trevor Project indicate otherwise.

"We at the Trevor Project hear from a survivor of conversion therapy every single week," they said. "They genuinely call us because they're in crisis. They're worried they're going to be put back in conversion therapy, that their friends have gone through this, that they're in crisis."

These places have passed laws limiting the practice

California became the first state to ban conversion therapy in 2012, when it enacted a law limiting the practice for minors.

Since then, these other states and Washington, D.C., have followed with similar laws restricting the practice:

- California
- Colorado (pending the governor's signature)
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Washington, D.C.
- Hawaii
- Illinois

- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- Oregon
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Washington

Many cities in states that have not enacted conversion therapy bans have banned the practice at a local level, including Atlanta; Columbia, Missouri; and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Rep. Ted Lieu, a California Democrat, has introduced a bill in Congress that would ban conversion therapy nationwide, but so far no action has been taken on it.

These states have introduced legislation on conversion therapy

Legislation restricting conversion therapy has been introduced in these states, although in some cases that legislation didn't make it out of committee or was tabled for later:

- Arizona
- Florida
- Georgia
- Idaho
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Maine
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Utah
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

The bans don't solve everything

The Minnesota House bill, much like bills in other states, prohibits licensed mental health professionals from offering conversion therapy. But it doesn't limit religious leaders and institutions from doing so.

Brinton said the bills were a positive first step.

"Anything that says what you say from the pulpit can and should be limited is extremely hard to do," they said. "It's not the overarching goal for me to stop [conversion therapy] via religious organizations right away because what I

Clinton said that making conversion therapy illegal at the state level challenges its legitimacy, and in turn, will hopefully make parents less likely to consider the practice as an option for their child.

They added that LGBTQ people who are feeling hopeless or suicidal can [contact The Trevor Project here](#) to get help.

 

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