

12 March 2014

To CAMFT Leadership,

On behalf of Gaylesta, The LGBTQ Psychotherapist Association, we would like to file a formal complaint regarding one of your Chapter Presidents. On Friday, March 7, Kevin Bergen, President of the Long Beach Chapter of CAMFT, allegedly used the CAMFT's email list to send an email blast to CAMFT members. The purpose of this email was to tout Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) as a "sound and therapeutic intervention." The email also accused another CAMFT member of ethics violations. Furthermore, the email urged the recipients to vote against those CAMFT board candidates who had supported the petition, suggesting that they too had violated "sound ethical principles" and were acting to take away the "freedom of MFTs."

The authors of the email blast refer to a publication by the American Psychological Association (APA), the "Report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Response to Sexual Orientation" from 2009, and they failed to mention the APA's 2012 "Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Lesbians, Gay, and Bisexual Clients." SOCE fails with respect to "soundness" in these reports by being based upon long-dismissed theories of sexual development that conflate sexual orientation and gender identity concepts, as well as dredging up antiquated causal notions of family dynamics. It fails with respect to being an advocated therapeutic technique due to (a) there being more compelling evidence of it as a source of harm rather than of benefit to those clients who receive it, and (b) the lack of appropriate informed consent as to evidence of its harms/benefits, efficacy, and available alternate therapies. In no case does the APA advocate the use of SOCE with minors in the Task Force report, and in fact it presents arguments against such practices and suggests interventions which are actually more consistent with the purview of MFTs (specifically, family-based interventions). Minors are under particular pressures such that "informed consent" is even more dubious a construct when it comes to both experiences of and the internalization of social stigma. We go into such detail given the misrepresentation of the work of a respected professional organization in this email.

There is much evidence to support the legal basis of SB1172 and of SOCE as an unethical practice. CAMFT is well aware that Gaylesta endorsed and supported SB1172. The bill's objective was to prevent licensed therapists in California from using SOCE with minors. As you likely know, the bill passed in both houses of the state legislature and was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in September 2012. Since then, it has been facing court battles and is awaiting a decision from the US Supreme Court as to whether they will hear the case. During the drafting of the bill, CAMFT's leadership refused to take a supportive stance. Through a few iterations of the bill, CAMFT's final position on SB1172 was to remain "neutral." This unfortunately reflects a growing list of issues where LGBTQ concerns have not been positively addressed by CAMFT leadership. CAMFT would greatly benefit by taking a more proactive stance against SOCE. Specifically, you should not be offering memberships to or allow mailing list use by those who practice these methods with minors.

Here are some ways you could help assure CAMFT's membership as well as Gaylesta's membership that you are planning to address this issue:

1. Investigate Kevin Bergen's use of CAMFT's email list for promotional purposes, and if

affirmative, remove him from his leadership position.

2. Offer all members who received the email blast a public apology.
3. Make a clear statement condemning the use of SOCE with minors.
4. Institute a clear policy on the use of CAMFT email lists and what the consequences are for misuse.
5. Investigate the members who signed the email blast and revoke the membership of any who practice SOCE with minors.

CAMFT needs to protect its membership and the public from members who are using membership benefits to promote and practice SOCE.

We look forward to receiving a prompt response to our complaint.

Deborah Cooper and Jay Paul  
Co-Presidents, Gaylesta, Inc.