



February 23, 2022

NASW-TX Continues to Oppose any Efforts to Redefine Child Abuse to Include Gender Affirming Care

The National Association of Social Workers – Texas Chapter (NASW-TX) stands opposed to any efforts to change the definition of child abuse to include “gender affirming care” as referenced in the Texas Attorney General’s non-binding opinion KP-0401 released on February 18, 2022, as well as Gov. Abbott's February 22, 2022 letter to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Commissioner "directing" DFPS to investigate such accusations. These continued attempts to change the definition of child abuse are in direct opposition to social work values, principles, and our Code of Ethics and pose danger to transgender youth and their families.

NASW/TX reminds licensed social workers that this is a non-binding legal opinion and they still have professional discretion on mandatory reporting. No rules on reporting were changed through this opinion, nor through the Governor's letter.

As mental health professionals working in a variety of settings, social workers are called to care for all Texans. Redefining child abuse to include gender affirming care would endanger how mental health professionals serve people in the LGBTQ community. The social work Code of Ethics provides a framework for how social workers empower and support the self-determination of all people, as well as engage in conversations about identity. Those conversations within a therapeutic or any social work relationship should never be defined as child abuse.

This position aligns with our previous advocacy actions regarding this policy issue:

- We signed on to a joint letter supporting gender affirming care as evidence-based care for transgender youth in November 2019.
- We publicly testified against legislation that would have redefined child abuse to include gender affirming care during the 87th Legislative Session in 2021.
- We submitted multiple joint letters to DFPS and the Governor’s Office during August 2021 in response to this issue.

NASW-TX continues to urge Texas leadership to heed the advice of the legal, medical and mental health professional communities about how these proposed actions would endanger youth and families while negatively impacting the licensed professionals who serve as mandatory reports of child abuse. This non-binding legal opinion does not require DFPS to implement modifications to its current practices and rules which guide the investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect in Texas. We therefore ask the DFPS leadership team to stand in support of all Texas children and families by rejecting this harmful and discriminatory opinion.