



May 24, 2023

Dear ASERVIC Members,

In response to what is being referred to as “conscience clause legislation” efforts across multiple states, it is important for ASERVIC to provide clarity on our position regarding these bills that are currently making their way through state legislatures, or related bills that may appear in the future. This is especially timely as religion is often cited as one source of moral decision-making in either developing these legislative bills or in voting on their adoption.

ASERVIC’s position remains consistent to prior years where debates have surfaced regarding the freedom of a counselor to refuse services to clients based upon conflicting values. When such laws conflict with the American Counseling Association (2014) Code of Ethics, codes that explicitly prohibit counselors from either refusing to serve clients or refer them based upon sincerely held values, counselors are still to refrain from such behaviors. Counselors should seek further supervision and education to effectively help clients regardless of such values differences in order to remain in good ethical standing with the American Counseling Association. As such, ASERVIC cannot condone or support discriminatory practices of any kind.

We are also aware of the legislation and hate crimes across the country targeted towards Black people, Jewish people, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. We know that Florida is one state where recent legislation and current events have targeted members of these groups. Given that our annual ASERVIC conference is to take place in DeLand, Florida, it is important for ASERVIC to provide clarity about its plans to host the conference and respond to the safety concerns members and conference attendees may have in traveling to the conference.



Thus, in response to the recent Travel Advisory warnings issued by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Equality Florida (an LGBTQIA+ advocacy group), the ASERVIC Presidents unanimously agree that if conference registrants do not feel safe and wish to withdrawal their registration from the conference, ASERVIC will honor their wishes and refund their fee. At the same time, we feel it is important to continue to hold the conference, not in support of discriminatory legislation that could be codified into law, but despite it, in order to stand in solidarity with counselors, educators, community leaders, and citizens who are impacted by such laws in the State of Florida, or beyond.

In conclusion, ASERVIC continues to aspire to be a place in which all people can learn how to meet the mental health needs of all people, inclusive of all identities. We remain excited about the opportunity to meet together, especially after years of physical distancing, to celebrate our diversity as human beings, and to offer each other care, empathy, expertise, challenge, and compassion across whatever religious or philosophical differences we hold.

For additional resources and information please visit:

<https://aservic.org/>

<https://www.counseling.org/>

<https://naacp.org/>

<https://www.eqfl.org/updated-travel-advisory-HRC>

Sincerely,

Jesse Fox, PhD ASERVIC President

Hannah Bayne, PhD ASERVIC President-Elect

Daniel Gutierrez, PhD ASERVIC Past President

Janeé Avent Harris, PhD ASERVIC President Elect, Elect