

Glossary of Terms

Understanding and Supporting Transgender Clients and their Families

Sex

The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Identity

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices (see non-binary and/or genderqueer below.)

Gender Expression

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation

Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman. (Also known as *Sexual Identity*)

Examples of Sexual Identity Labels:

- Aromantic*
- Asexual*
- Bicurious*
- Bisexual*
- Demiromantic
- Demisexual
- Gay*

- Graysexual/Gray
- Heterosexual*
- Lesbian*
- Pansexual*
- Queer*
- Questioning*
- Straight*

*Starred terms are most common.

Transgender (adj.)

An umbrella term used to describe those who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender- nonconforming people, transsexuals*, crossdressers*, and so on. People must self-identify as transgender for the term to be appropriately used to describe them. (American Counseling Association, 2010)

NOTE: Not all transgender people can or will go through a medical transition, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures.

Trans

Used as shorthand to mean *transgender* or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella.

Transsexual (adj.)

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries. Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term a person prefers.

Cross-dresser

While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term *cross-dresser* is typically used to refer to men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. Those men typically identify as heterosexual. This activity is a form of gender expression and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers do not wish to permanently change their sex or live full-time as women. Replaces the term "transvestite". NOTE: Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women,

cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the person. Do not use the word "transvestite" at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

Transition

Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase "sex change"

Gender Dysphoria

The psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which replaced the outdated entry "Gender Identity Disorder" with *Gender Dysphoria*, and changed the criteria for diagnosis. The necessity of a psychiatric diagnosis remains controversial, some transgender advocates believe the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in the DSM is necessary in order to advocate for health insurance that covers the medically necessary treatment recommended for transgender people.

AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth)

A term used to identify someone who was assigned female by their doctor at the time of their birth. (American Counseling Association, 2010).

AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth)

The term is used to identify someone who was assigned male by their doctor at the time of their birth.

FTM (Female to Male)

Describes someone transitioning from female to male. (American Counseling Association, 2010)

MTF (Male to Female)

Describes someone transitioning from male to female.

Androgynous

Individuals who identify as having a gender expression that is indistinguishable as specifically masculine or feminine.

Non-binary

Denoting or relating to a gender or sexual identity that is not defined in terms of traditional binary oppositions such as male, female, homosexual or heterosexual. (Oxford University Press, Oxford English Dictionary 2021)

Gender fluid

Referring to individuals who may present as having a presentation that does not rely on a set gender expression, rather, a free-flowing expression that changes based on emotionality and sentiment about gender. Someone who does not have a fixed gender.

Gender non-conforming

The term is used for behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance. (American Counseling Association, 2010)

Genderqueer or "Queer"

The term is used by some people who may or may not identify as transgender, but who identify their gender as somewhere on a continuum beyond the binary male/female gender system. (American Counseling Association, 2010)

Cisgender

A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as," and is therefore an antonym of "trans-." A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say *non-transgender people*.

Misgender

To refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify. (Oxford University Press, Oxford English Dictionary 2021)

Terms to Avoid

- Biological male/female
- “Born” as male/female
- “Real” man/woman
- “Male to female”
- Sex change
- Passing
- Transvestite
- Tranny
- He/she
- It

Common strategies to help alleviate dysphoria

- All standard coping skills to help alleviate distress
- Support groups with other trans individuals
- Showering with the lights off
- Using mens/womens products (perfume, soaps, makeup, clothing etc.)
- Art and creative expressions
- Voice training (deeper/higher)
- Binders
- Hormone therapy
- “Stand to pee”
- Packer

Exploration Questions

- What does being transgender mean to you?
- How did you first understand gender as a child?
- How did you experience gender in your family?
- How did you come to understand your gender identity?
- How do you identify in terms of gender identity?
- What has the coming out/transition process been for you?
- What thoughts, feelings, beliefs do you hold about gender?
- How do you feel about your birth gender?
- What gender do you wish people saw you as?
- How would you like to express your gender?
- What pronouns (like he/him or she/hers, or ze/zir or they/them) do you feel most comfortable using?
- When you imagine your future, what gender are you?

Writing Letters: Hormones & Surgery

- WPATH SOC7 Standards of Care
- One letter written by a mental health professional
 - A diagnosis of persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria
 - The capacity to make a fully informed decision to consent to treatment
 - Age of majority (if younger, parental consent is required, though this varies according to geographic region and health care policies) and
 - If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, that they are reasonably well controlled.

Local Gender Affirming Healthcare

- *NYU Langone Health*- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and Gender-affirming surgeries
- *Northwell Health*- HRT and Gender-affirming surgeries
- *Planned Parenthood*- HRT

*Insurance coverage available for services