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Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams

Agender (adj.) – Describes a person who identifies as having no gender.

Ally (noun) – A person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people.

Aromantic (adj.) – An orientation that describes a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in forming romantic relationships.

Asexual (adj.) – Describes a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. Asexuality is not the same as celibacy.

Assigned sex at birth (noun) – The sex (male or female) assigned to a child at birth based on external anatomy. Also referred to as birth sex, natal sex, biological sex, or sex.

Bigender (adj.) – Describes a person whose gender identity is a combination of two genders.

Binding (verb) – The process of tightly wrapping one's chest in order to minimize the appearance of having breasts. This is achieved through use of constrictive materials such as cloth strips, elastic or non-elastic bandages, or specially designed undergarments.

Biphobia (noun) – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexual people or those who are perceived as such.

Bisexual (adj.) – A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of their own gender and people of other genders.

Bottom surgery (noun) – Colloquial way of describing gender affirming genital surgery.^{[1][2]}

Cisgender (adj.) – A person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth correspond (i.e., a person who is not transgender).

Coming out (verb) – The process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexual orientation or gender identity (to come out to oneself) and shares with others (to come out to friends, etc.).

Cross-sex hormone therapy (noun) – The administration of hormones for those who wish to match their physical secondary sex characteristics to their gender identity.

Disorders of Sex Development (DSD) (noun) – Group of conditions where the reproductive organs and genitals do not develop as expected. Some DSDs include Klinefelter Syndrome and Androgen Sensitivity Syndrome. Sometimes called differences of sex development or intersex.

Drag (verb) – The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically. Performers are called Drag Kings/Queens.

Gay (adj.) – A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of their own gender.

("Gay" can be used regardless of gender identity, but is more commonly used to describe men.)

Gender affirming surgery (GAS) (noun) – Surgeries used to modify one's body to be more congruent with one's gender identity. Also referred to as sex reassignment surgery (SRS) or gender confirming surgery (GCS).

Gender binary (noun) – The idea that there are only two genders, male and female, and that a person must strictly fit into one category or the other.

Gender dysphoria (noun) – Distress experienced by some individuals whose gender identity does not correspond with their assigned sex at birth. Manifests itself as clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning. Included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

Gender expression (noun) – The way a person acts, dresses, speaks, and behaves (i.e., feminine, masculine, androgynous). Gender expression does not necessarily correspond to assigned sex at birth or gender identity.

Gender fluid (adj.) – Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. The person may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more one gender some days, and another gender other days.

Gender identity (noun) – A person's internal sense of being a man/male, woman/female, both, neither, or another gender.

Gender non-conforming (adj.) – Describes a gender expression that differs from a given society's norms for cisgender males and females.

Gender role (noun) – A set of societal norms dictating what set of behaviors are considered acceptable or desirable.

Genderqueer (adj.) – Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary. Other terms used include gender variant, gender expansive, etc.

Heteronormativity (noun) – The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

Heterosexual (straight) (adj.) – A sexual orientation that describes women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to men, and men who are emotionally and sexually attracted to women.

Homophobia (noun) – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of lesbian or gay people or those who are perceived as such.

Intersectionality (noun) – The idea that identities, shaped by social categories (like race, class, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender), create overlapping and interdependent experiences of power, access, discrimination, and advantage or disadvantage.

Intersex (noun) – Synonymous to the term disorders or differences of sex development, though intersex is also used as an identity term by some community members and advocacy groups.

Lesbian (adj., noun) – A sexual orientation that describes a woman who is emotionally and sexually attracted to other women.

Men who have sex with men/Women who have sex with women (MSM/WSW) (noun) – Categories that are often used in research and public health settings to collectively describe those who engage in same-sex sexual behavior, regardless of their sexual orientation. However, people rarely use the terms MSM or WSW to describe themselves.

Minority stress (noun) – Chronic stress faced by members of stigmatized minority groups caused by external, objective events and conditions, expectations of such events, the internalization of societal attitudes, and/or concealment of one's sexual orientation.

Outing (verb) – Involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Pangender (adj.) – Describes a person whose gender identity is comprised of many genders.

Pansexual (adj.) – A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of all genders.

Polyamorous (adj.) – Describes a person who has or is open to having more than one romantic or sexual relationship at a time, with the knowledge and consent of all their partners.

QPOC (noun) – Queer Person/People of Color.

Queer (adj.) – An umbrella term used by some to describe people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as more fluid and outside of societal norms. Due to its history as a derogatory term, the term queer is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBT community.

Questioning (adj.) – Describes an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Same gender loving (SGL) (adj.) – A term used as an alternative to the terms gay and lesbian. SGL is more commonly but not exclusively used by members of the African American/Black community.

Same-sex attraction (SSA) (noun) – A term used to describe the experience of a person who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Individuals using this term may not feel comfortable using the language of sexual orientation (i.e., gay). It is used most commonly in religious communities.

Sexual orientation (noun) – How a person characterizes their

emotional and sexual attraction to others.

Social stigma (noun) – Negative stereotypes and social status of a person or group based on perceived characteristics that separate that person or group from other members of a society.

Structural stigma (noun) – Societal conditions, policies, and institutional practices that restrict the opportunities, resources, and well-being of certain groups of people.

Top surgery (noun) – Colloquial way of describing gender affirming surgery on the chest.

Trans man/transgender man (noun) – A transgender person whose gender identity is male may use these terms to describe themselves.

Trans woman/transgender woman (noun) – A transgender person whose gender identity is female may use these terms to describe themselves.

Transfeminine (adj.) – Describes people who were assigned male at birth, but identify with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.

Transgender (adj.) – Describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth do not correspond. Also an umbrella term to include gender identities outside of male and female.

Transition (noun) – For transgender people, this refers to the process of coming to recognize, accept, and express one's gender identity. Usually this is when a person makes social, legal, and/or medical changes, such as changing their clothing, name, sex designation, and using medical interventions. Also termed the gender affirmation process.

Transmasculine (adj.) – Describes people who were assigned female at birth, but identify with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity.

Transphobia (noun) – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender or gender non-conforming people or those who are perceived as such.

Transsexual (adj.) – Generally seen as outdated and offensive, sometimes used in medical literature or by some transgender people to describe those who have transitioned through medical interventions.

Tucking (verb) – The practice of hiding one's genitals with tape, tight shorts, or specific undergarments.

Two-Spirit (adj.) – A contemporary term that connects today's experiences of LGBT Native American people with the traditions from their cultures.

Outdated Terms to Avoid

We recommend replacing these words with the suggested terms provided.

Berdache

Hermaphrodite

Homosexual

Sexual preference

Transgendered/A transgender/Tranny

Sex Change

See **two-spirit**

See **intersex/disorders of sex development**

See **gay or lesbian**

See **sexual orientation**

See **transgender**

See **gender affirmation surgery**

*This version is adapted from the definitions developed and reviewed by the National LGBT Health Education Center (lgbthealtheducation@fenwayhealth.org), as well as from glossaries published by the Safe Zone Project and the UCLA LGBT Resource Center.