



Gender Identity and Gender Expression Definitions and FAQ

DEFINITIONS

Sex: A term referring to physical gender signifiers used to assign gender at birth and to reinforce gender throughout life, including genitalia, gonads, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics. As such, it assumes a gender binary and proscribes gender according to biological criteria.

Birth Assigned Gender: The declaration by doctors of what one's gender is based upon what one's genitalia appear to be at birth. One is then expected to grow up and exist within a certain set of gender roles "appropriate" to one's assigned gender.

Gender: The collection of traits, behaviors, and characteristics that are culturally associated with maleness or femaleness. Gender traits considered masculine or feminine could differ from culture to culture or in different historical periods.

Gender Identity: A person's internal self-awareness of being either male or female, masculine or feminine, or something in between.

Gender Expression: The external behaviors and characteristics (i.e. dress, mannerisms, social interactions, speech patterns, etc.) that a person displays in order to indicate their gender identity. *It may not always be safe for a person to express their gender identity if it does not match their sex.*

Transsexual: The clinical term used to describe people who experience a conflict between their physical sex and their gender identity. For example, a person born with a female body but with primarily a male gender identity is a transsexual male. Because the term has clinical roots, it is widely used to describe the subset of people who wish to alter, are altering, or have altered their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. We have used transsexual in this way, while recognizing that there is no one course of medical treatment that is necessary for a transsexual individual.

Transition / Gender Transition: Transition or gender transition describes the long, complex process of altering a person's birth-assigned sex to match his or her gender identity. Gender transition can include hormone therapy, presenting full-time in the gender corresponding to one's gender identity, and, in some but not all cases, sex reassignment surgery (SRS) – also known as gender confirming surgery.

Gender Confirming/Sex Reassignment Surgery: Although many people (and courts) focus exclusively on genital surgery, there are in fact a number of surgical procedures encompassed by

the umbrella term sex reassignment surgery, including genital surgery, breast augmentation or reduction, and hysterectomy.

FAQ

What Does “Transgender” Mean?

A “transgender” person is someone whose self-identity and/or expression doesn’t conform or transgresses traditional notions of “male” and “female.” Their gender identity and/or expression differs from their gender as assigned at birth.

Who Are Transgender People?

Transgender people include female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs or transsexual men), male-to-female transsexuals (MTFs or transsexual women), crossdressers (the term preferred to “transvestites”), drag queens and kings, and individuals who adopt a range of genderqueer identities and labels.

What Does Genderqueer Mean?

A relatively new term, “genderqueer” is used by many transgender youth who do not identify as either male or female and who often seek to blur gender lines. They often will use third gender pronouns (ze/hir). Ze is used instead of he/she and hir is used instead of his/her.

How Are Transsexuals Different from Crossdressers?

Transsexuals feel that their gender identity does not coincide with the gender they were assigned at birth. They may undergo hormone treatments and gender confirmation surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or can afford to do so. Although crossdressers wear clothes that are considered by society to be inappropriate for their gender, they do not want to change their birth gender and generally do not alter their bodies through hormones or surgeries.

What does it mean “to transition”?

For a person whose gender identity doesn’t coincide with their birth assigned gender they may transition to the opposite sex/gender. People transition from male to female (MtF) or female to male (FtM) by taking hormones and/or having surgery. The surgeries are referred to as gender confirming surgeries or sexual reassignment surgeries.

What is the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation?

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being a man or a woman, a boy or a girl. Sexual orientation is someone's sexual attraction to others who may be of the opposite sex, the same sex, or either sex. Like other people, transgender people can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Generally speaking, their gender identity - not their physical sex status - determines their sexual orientation.

How Are Transgender People Discriminated Against?

Like gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, transgender people face discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations and services. They are also potential targets for hate crimes and incidents: verbal harassment, threatening telephone calls and emails, and acts of violence committed by the same people who hate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Transgender people fall victim to discrimination and hate crimes because they often possess physical or behavioral characteristics that readily identify them as transgender. They are also often denied health care, including access to hormones and gender confirmation surgeries.