

QIC LGBTQ2S Glossary

The National Quality Improvement Center (QIC) on Tailored Services, Placement Stability and Permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) Children and Youth in Foster Care has created this glossary as a resource for the QIC-LGBTQ2S Local Implementation Sites (LIS), partners, and consultants. Even though we are providing these definitions, the best practice remains to ask youth how they self-identify and ask about language that makes them feel safe. If they choose to avoid self-identifying terms, honor their decision—doing so will clearly indicate to children and youth their right to be who they are and to be safe. Please visit our reference page for original sources.

Agender: A person who does not identify with any particular gender or who identifies without gender.

Ally: A person or organization that actively aligns and uses their resources to support individuals and communities with a specific issue; here, an individual who openly supports and affirms the rights and dignity of people with diverse SOGIE may be considered an ally.

Androgynous: A gender expression that has both masculine and feminine elements.

Anti-Gay Bias: Hatred, discrimination or aversion to lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, people perceived to be LGB, or those associated with person who are LGB. Often referred to as Homophobia.

Anti-Transgender Bias: Hatred, discrimination or aversion to transgender, gender variant, or gender diverse people, people perceived to be as such, or those associated with persons who are transgender, gender variant, or gender diverse. Often referred to as Transphobia.

Asexual: A person who does not have sexual desire or attraction. This does not mean the person is not having sex, nor does it mean they do not want to have relationships.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as other genders.

Cisgender: A description for a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth align (e.g., a person identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth by a doctor).

Cisgender Privilege: The implicit and explicit privileges that cisgender people exercise. These privileges include, but are not limited to, the ability to use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation or arrest. The privileges also encompass freedom from questions about one's anatomy (often by strangers) and the freedom from frequent misgendering. Cisgender people also enjoy a presumed "validity" as a man/woman/human and this validity is not based on surgical procedures or how well one "passes" as a man/woman/human, etc.

Coming out: The process of acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity to oneself and/or individuals in one's life; often incorrectly thought of to be a one-time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process.

Cross Dress: To cross-dress is to wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of another gender.

Diverse SOGIE: A more inclusive term to describe all people who identify as having diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and/or Gender Expression (SOGIE).

Drag queen/drag king: Someone who dresses and performs as the opposite gender for entertainment purposes. Often embodies a theatrical or exaggerated version of masculinity or femininity; does not necessarily self-identify as transgender.

Feminine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of women.

Gay: A term used to describe a man who is attracted to another man; this term may also be used by women attracted to another woman.

Gay-straight alliance/Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA): Formal organization of LGBTQ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of LGBTQ people, usually developed in the context of creating change in educational institutions and environments.

Gender expression: The ways in which an individual communicates their gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc.; not an indication of sexual orientation.

Gender fluid: An individual whose gender identity may continually change throughout their lifetime. These individuals may not feel confined within the socially and culturally expected gender roles and in fact may identify differently from situation to situation.

Gender identity: One's internal, personal sense of their gender. Gender identity is best represented as a spectrum and an individual may move around this spectrum. Some terms that are associated with this spectrum are man, woman, gender fluid, genderqueer, trans, transgender and two-spirit, although these are not the only terms. Some individuals may identify as both man and woman, neither man nor woman, or non-binary.

Gender neutral: Anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

Gender nonconformity: Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do not conform to the expectations of society and culture. Also referred to as gender variant, gender diverse, or gender creative.

Gender role: Culturally or socially determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of an individual based on their assigned sex at birth or perceived sex.

Genderqueer (also gender queer): An umbrella term some people use to describe themselves when their experience of their gender identity falls out of the binary of male or female.

Heterosexism: A dominant notion that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is superior, better, and preferred.

Heterosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; sometimes referred to as being straight.

Heterosexual Privilege: The privileges that heterosexual people have because of heterosexism. Being heterosexual carries with it privileges that may be explicit or implicit such as the right to marry, adopt children, be a foster parent, fair employment etc.

Homosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to a person(s) of the same gender with which one identifies. Although some individuals may identify with this term, it is now a dated term that has negative connotations and can be considered derogatory.

Intersectionality: The study of how various identities including gender, race, class, ability, and sexual orientation interact and contribute to multiple form of discrimination and systematic social inequality.

Intersex: A general term constructed to describe variations of sex characteristics. This could include mixed chromosomes, elements of both male and female reproductive systems, or genitalia that do not appear clearly male or clearly female at birth. For example, a baby born with a vagina and testes.

Lesbian: A term used to describe a woman who is attracted to other women.

Masculine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of men.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively either boy/girl, or man/woman. People who identify their gender as non-binary may feel they have more than one gender, don't identify with a specific gender, or something else altogether.

Out: Openly acknowledging one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; may be partial (that is, out to some people and not to others).

Outed: When someone else accidentally or deliberately reveals another's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, usually without permission.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to people regardless of sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

Queer: Historically, this was a derogatory slang term used to identify people with diverse SOGIE. It is now a term that some people with diverse SOGIE are reclaiming and embracing as a symbol of pride that represents all individuals who fall outside of the gender and sexual orientation "norms." It should be noted that it is not acceptable for someone who does not have diverse SOGIE to call someone queer unless the person indicates that is their preferred identity language.

Questioning: Being unsure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Same gender loving: A term created by the Black and African-American SOGIE diverse community and used by some people of color who see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms more connected to a white lesbian or gay identity.

Sex assigned at birth: The sex assigned at birth by a doctor; based on physical anatomy and hormones. Designations include male, female or intersex and is also referred to as assigned sex at birth.

Sexism: Discrimination and unfair treatment based on sex or gender in which advantage is usually afforded to men and not women.

Sexual Orientation: Describes the emotional, romantic, and/or physical feelings of attraction-usually over a period of time; it is distinct from sexual behavior.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe their gender identity using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including but not limited to transgender. The term "trans" is often used as shorthand.

Transition: A term used to describe the process of moving from one sex/gender to another. Transition can include personal, medical, and legal steps like 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 are up to the person transitioning.

Two-Spirit: A term used by some Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders; often considered part man and part woman or wholly man and wholly woman; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans. Depending on the tribe, there may be different definitions. Some tribes consider Two-Spirit a term similar to diverse SOGIE. Others may not recognize the term at all.

Updated Trans Terminology

Inappropriate/Outdated	Reason	Respectful Practice
“transgendered” (adjective)	You would not say someone is "gayed" or "lesbianed," therefore you would not say a person is "transgendered."	Transgender: “Jake is a transgender teen.” Or “Jake is a trans teen.”
“a transgender,” “transgenders” (noun)	Transgender is not a noun. “Jake is a transgender” is not only grammatically incorrect, but offensive.	A transgender person, transgender people (see above)
misgendering- labeling a person as a gender different from the one with which they identify OR assuming someone’s pronouns based on appearance/gender expression	Self-identification is key- the only way you know someone’s pronouns is by hearing it from them. Just because someone has long hair, a high-pitched voice, and wears feminine-looking clothing does not mean they go by “she/her.”	Use the pronouns a person uses to describe themselves. If you don’t know, ask! “What are your pronouns?” Or, use neutral “they” to refer to them until you learn their pronouns so as to not make assumptions based on whether you perceive someone as masculine or feminine.
deadnaming- asking what someone’s name “used to be” prior to transition, or referring to it as their “real name”	Sometimes cisgender people use a trans person’s deadname to call it their “real name;” this is offensive and can out a trans youth.	Use the name the youth has asked you to use.
“real man/real woman” “used to be” a girl/boy “turning into” a girl/boy	These phrases imply the trans person’s identity is invalid or that their gender identity wasn’t always who they are. A trans person may take steps to transition their body to align with their gender identity, but they are not “turning into” someone else. They have always been that gender.	You don’t need proof of someone’s identity to affirm it; just refer to them in the present how they identify now.
“male-to-female” or “female-to-male”	While technically not outdated, these terms focus on the transition and not the person.	If a young person was assigned male at birth but identifies as a girl you can just say “trans girl”
“transsexual”	An older term; still used by some people who have changed or seek to change their bodies through medical interventions. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word transgender.	It is best to ask which term a person prefers and not assume someone identifies as “transsexual” because they are transgender.
“passing”	A derogatory way to describe that someone “looks like” the gender they identify with. There are a lot of bias/expectations mixed up in “passing” – some people in the community use this term as a goal but it’s not for those outside of the community to use.	Nothing- there’s no need to comment on how masculine or feminine a person is.
“sex change,” “sex reassignment surgery,” “gender reassignment surgery”	Here, the word “sex” is a stand-in for the word “gender,” but gender doesn’t really change when someone undergoes an operation- because they have already identified like said gender.	gender affirming surgery, genital reconstruction surgery, genital reassignment surgery
asking personal questions	It’s not anyone else’s business to know specific personal information regarding a person’s trans identity or how they navigate the world as a trans person. Most of the time, questions in this arena are not going to be relevant.	Think, “Is this relevant information that I need to know?” If not, don’t ask. If it is, think, “what is the most professional & appropriate way I can ask this?”

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