

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER (LGBT) RESOURCE CENTER**

Transgender terminology

Biological sex or sex: a term used historically and within the medical field to identify genetic/biological/hormonal/physical characteristics (including genitalia), which are used to classify an individual as female, male or intersex.

Cross-dresser: a person who, on occasion, wears clothing considered typical for another gender, but who does not necessarily desire to change their gender. Reasons for cross-dressing can range from a need to express a feminine or masculine side to attainment of erotic gratification. Cross-dressers can be of any sexual orientation. Many cross-dressers identify as heterosexual.

Drag king/drag queen: wearing the clothing of another gender, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may identify as drag kings (female in drag) or drag queens (male in drag) when performing gender as parody, art or entertainment.

FTM (female to male): a term used to identify a person who was assigned a female gender at birth (or who is female-bodied), and who identifies as male, lives as a man or identifies as masculine.

Gender: a social construct based on a group of emotional and psychological characteristics that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other. Gender can be understood to have several components, including gender identity, gender expression and gender role.

Gender identity: the inner sense of being a man, a male, a woman, a female, both, neither, butch, femme, two-spirit, bigender or another configuration of gender. Gender identity usually matches with one's physical anatomy but sometimes does not. Gender identity includes one's sense of self and the image that one presents to the world.

Gender identity disorder (GID) or gender dysphoria (GD): an intense, continuous discomfort resulting from an individual's sense of the inappropriateness of their assigned gender at birth and resulting gender role expectations. Also, a clinical psychological diagnosis that offends many in transgender communities but is often required in order to receive medical

services such as hormones and surgery. Keep in mind that gay and lesbian people were considered mentally ill until 1973.

Genderqueer/fluid gender: a term used by some people who may or may not fit on the spectrum of trans, or be labeled as trans, but who identify their gender and sexual orientation to be somewhere on the continuum in between or outside the binary gender system altogether.

Gender reassignment surgery (GRS) / sexual reassignment surgery (SRS): the surgery or surgeries that medically alter someone's body, especially in regards to genitalia or secondary sex characteristics. Sought to attain harmony between one's body and one's gender identity.

Gender role: the social expectation of how an individual should act, think and feel, based upon one's assigned gender, the social expectation that an individual must be defined as a man or woman.

Hormone therapy: administration of hormones to develop characteristics of a different gender than the one that was assigned. This is a process, possibly lifelong, of taking hormones to change one's internal body chemistry. Hormone therapy is safest when administered by a medical professional and after discussion of potential health risks.

Intersex: a person born with an anatomy or a physiology that differs from cultural ideals of male and female. Intersexuals may be born with "ambiguous genitalia: and/ or experience hormone-production levels that vary from those of culturally "ideal" females and males.

MTF (male to female): a term used to identify a person assigned a male gender at birth (or who is male-bodied) and who identifies as a female, lives as a woman or identifies as feminine.

Non-op (non-operative): a term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-variant individuals who have not attained and may not desire to attain gender reassignment surgery. For many individuals, self-identification and self-expression alone achieve harmony between one's body and one's gender identity.

Post-op (post-operative): A term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-nonconforming individuals who have completed gender reassignment surgery, and/or other surgeries to change their bodies to more closely match their gender identity.

Pre-op (pre-operative): a term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-nonconforming individuals who have not completed gender reassignment surgery but who desire to and are seeking that as an option.

Transgender or Trans: a term used to describe those who transgress social gender norms; often as an umbrella term to include transsexual, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, cross-dressers, etc. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

Transition: the period during which a trans person begins to live more fully as their true gender, this can include the period of full-time living required before gender reassignment surgery. After transitioning and surgery, some transsexuals identify only as a man or as a woman.

Transphobia: the irrational fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles, often expressed as stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and violence. Frequently directed at those perceived as expressing the gender in transgressive way, those who defy stereotypical gender norms or those who are perceived to exhibit nonheterosexual characteristics regardless of their actual gender identity or sexual orientation.

Transsexual: someone who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the belief that their assigned gender is inappropriate. This person may then take steps to adapt or change their body, gender role and gender expression to achieve what they know their true gender to be.

Reference:

Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC). (2005). Bending the mold: An action kit for transgender youth.