

Definitions of Key Terms

1. **Sexual orientation:** An enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual **attraction** that one feels toward men, women, or both. May also, but does not necessarily, refer to a person's **identity** or the **sexual behaviors** based on those attractions.
 - *Scientists are still not sure what determines sexual orientation, but research suggests that it is likely due to some combination of genes, prenatal hormones, and early childhood experiences.*
 - *APA and most other associations of mental health professionals consider same-sex sexual and romantic attractions, feelings, and behaviors as normal and positive variations of human sexuality.*
 - *A recent systematic review by APA of the peer-reviewed journal literature concluded that efforts to change sexual orientation are unlikely to be successful and involve some risk of harm.*
2. **Sex:** A person's biological designation on a continuum from male to female. A child is usually assigned one designation at birth on the basis of the child's external genitalia.
3. **Gender:** The culturally determined roles, behaviors, activities, and psychological attributes that a particular society considers appropriate to being male or female.
 - *"Sex" is biological*
 - *"Gender" is social*
4. **Gender identity:** A person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being a male, a female, in-between, neither, or something other.
 - *Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation—one's gender identity does not imply anything about whom a person might be attracted to. People commonly confuse the two. A transgendered person can be of any sexual orientation. Conversely, a person struggling with sexual orientation may or may not also have gender identity issues.*
5. **Gender expression:** Attributes and behaviors that communicate our gender identity to others, such as clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, way of speaking, and social roles.
 - *Some people choose to express themselves in non-gender conforming ways for a variety of reasons.*
6. **Transgender:** A person whose self-declared gender identity is not consistent with his/her sex assigned at birth.
 - *Developmental and prevention issues for transgendered people are complex and not very well studied, especially with youth.*

- *Suggest that it is best to respectfully ask the person how they prefer to be addressed and publicly known.*
- *Many helping strategies for transgender youth are the same as for gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth. However, transgender youth may have some very distinct issues, including unique medical and pharmaceutical needs, legal problems, more serious employment discrimination, and homelessness. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in this workshop to address such complex gender identity issues. If anyone wants more information, refer them to the Center for Excellence for Transgender HIV Prevention at <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu>*
- *Other self-identifying terms for transgender may include female, male, trans-woman or trans-man, transsexual, cross-dresser, bi-gender, gender queer, gender questioning, male-to-female (MtF), or female-to-male (FtM).*

Additional terms:

- **Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to both men and women. This sexual orientation may be fixed and stable, or may be used (particularly by adolescents) before one's sexual orientation is recognized and accepted. Not generally considered offensive.
- **Dyke:** Historically a derogatory term, but reclaimed by some lesbians for use only within the lesbian community.
- **Coming out:** An ongoing process of disclosure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others.
- **Cross-dresser:** A person who wears clothing of the opposite sex for any one of a variety of reasons. The great majority are biological males, most of whom are sexually attracted to women. "Transvestite" is an outdated term that many consider pejorative.
- **Down low:** A colloquial term to describe a man who is publicly heterosexual and privately has sex with other men.
 - *If the participants want to discuss this topic, you can share the findings of recent research in Dr. Kevin Fenton's article in the manual. To summarize, CDC epidemiologists who have studied the phenomenon conclude that:*
 - a. HIV transmission indeed occurs this way...*
 - b. ...but it is not a major contributor to the HIV epidemic in the United States.*
 - c. Most heterosexual women are much more at risk from heterosexual men who have multiple partners or use injectable drugs.*
- **Drag queen/drag king:** A biological male or female who sometimes expresses an opposite sex persona, primarily to perform or entertain. They may or may not identify as transgender, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- **Faggot:** A pejorative term for a gay or effeminate man.
- **Gay:** A person who is mostly attracted to people of the same sex. Can refer to males only or to both males and females. Not considered offensive unless intended as a slur.
- **Heterosexism:** The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that this sexual orientation is superior.
- **Heterosexual:** A person who is mostly attracted to people of the opposite sex. Not considered offensive.
- **Homophobia:** Dislike of or bias against LGBT people, which may be exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, bullying, or acts of violence. The term can cause offense if used unwisely in an accusatory manner.
- **Homosexual:** A person who is mostly attracted to people of the same sex. The term is historically associated with a medical model of sexual orientation when being gay was considered "deviant" and a mental illness, so some people find the term objectionable or avoid its use.
- **Internalized homophobia:** Incorporation of negative societal views of homosexuality into an LGBTQ person's self-concept.

- *“Some aspects of gay-related stress are chronic and internal in nature, involving internalization of society's stigmatization of homosexuality. Many GLB individuals share society's negative attitudes regarding homosexuality to some extent because they were raised with a general expectation by family and society that they would be heterosexual and because they were raised to evaluate homosexuality negatively. These negative attitudes toward homosexuality, frequently termed internalized homophobia, create dissonance and conflict.” (Rosario, 2002)*
- **Lesbian:** A woman who is mostly attracted to other women. Not considered offensive unless intended as a slur.
- **Lifestyle:** A person's chosen pattern of living as expressed in his or her activities, interests, and opinions. The term is not accurate as a description of LGBTQ people's lives because: 1) the implication that sexual orientation is a superficial, conscious choice is wrong; and 2) there are no common activities, interests, or opinions among those who are LGBTQ.
- **Outing:** The public disclosure of another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's permission or knowledge.
- **Queer:** Historically, a derogatory term for homosexuality, but reclaimed by the LGBT movement to refer to itself in a positive way (especially by youth).
- **Sexual minority:** Shorthand for anyone who does not conform to heterosexual norms in attraction, identity, behavior, or expression. Some people dislike the term because of its subtle connotation of inferiority.
- **Sexual preference:** A term that is commonly but mistakenly used as a synonym for sexual orientation. The term is not accurate because of its connotation that sexual orientation is a conscious choice. Many LGBT people are offended by its use.
- **Straight:** Another term for heterosexual, not considered offensive. Some say they are “straight but not narrow.”
- **Transsexual:** A person who lives, or is in transition to live, as a person of another sex than the one he or she was assigned at birth. The transition process often consists of changes in clothing style, selection of a new name, and the request that people use the correct pronouns to refer to the person's new identity. The person may or may not seek surgery or hormone therapy to increase congruity between his/her physical features and preferred sex.
- **Intersex** - The condition of being born with genitalia that is difficult to label as male or female. Formerly known as "hermaphrodite."
- **Cisgendered** - Having a gender identity that society considers appropriate for the sex one was assigned at birth
- **Pansexuality** - The potential for sexual attraction towards persons of all gender identities and biological sexes.
- **Gender Binary** - The social construction of gender in most societies in the world where gender is a dichotomy between male and female.
- **Genderqueer** - a catch-all term for gender identities other than man and woman, thus outside of the gender binary

- **Gender Identity Disorder/Gender Dysphoria** - the diagnosis for persons who experience significant discontent with the sex they were assigned at birth and/or the gender roles associated with that sex
- **Gender variant/Gender nonconforming/Gender atypical** - people who exhibit behaviors or traits that are not traditionally associated with their biological sex
- **Ze** - Gender neutral pronoun that can be used instead of he/she.
- **Zir** - Gender neutral pronoun that can be used instead of his/her.
- **Transphobia** - Fear or hatred of transgender people
- **Transitioning** - The process by which transgender people present themselves in a way that is consistent with their gender identity; this process may or may not include sex reassignment surgery (SRS).
- **Harm reduction** - an approach to risk reduction that aims to help people to be “safer” by replacing high-risk behaviors with lower-risk behaviors