Living Language

LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer, and is the understood shorthand when referring to the larger community. Gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, & sex assigned at birth are separate, yet related, facets of identity, and should not be used interchangeably. These identifiers carry cultural weight and should be left up to each person to self-identify.

Sexual Orientation

The type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are (or are not) attracted to.

Lesbian– A female identified individual who is exclusively attracted to some female identified individuals.

Gay– A male identified individual who is exclusively attracted to some male identified individuals.

Bisexual– An individual who is attracted to both male and female identified individuals. Attraction does not need to be equally split between two genders.

Pansexual– An individual who is attracted to others regardless of biological sex and/or gender identity/expression.

Asexual– An individual who has a lack of or low interest in sexual activity or sexual attraction to others.

Gender Identity Terms

The internal sense of one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they identify with what they understand their options for gender to be.

Transgender– An umbrella term to describe a wide variety of identities and individual experiences. Typically, the term transgender (trans) is in reference to a person who’s gender identity is not in line with their sex assigned at birth.

Cisgender– An individual who’s sex assigned at birth aligns with their felt and/or experienced gender.

Agender – An individual who does not identify with a specific gender identity.

(Trans)Woman– A transgender person who identifies as a woman. MTF is also sometimes used to designate that the person was assigned male at birth, but lives and identifies as a woman. The prefix ‘trans’ is optional and is left up to the person to use.

(Trans)Man– A transgender person who identifies as a man. FTM is also sometimes used to designate that the person was assigned female at birth, but lives and identifies as a man. The prefix ‘trans’ is optional and is left up to the person to use.

Gender Fluid– An identity best described as a dynamic mix of genders. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of genders, but may feel one way more than others on some days and another way on different days.

Gender Queer– A term for individuals who have a gender identity that fits outside of the gender binary system all together.
**Transition** - The process of living into a person’s gender identity. This may include the process of coming out, addressing their identified name and pronouns, and adjusting their gender expression. For some, it may also entail **medical transition**, such as hormone replacement therapy, puberty blockers, and/or sex reassignment surgery.

**Gender Affirmation Care** - Health care, either mental health or physical health, that is related to aligning a person’s gender identity with their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Dysphoria** - A clinically diagnosable condition that is experienced by some transgender individuals. It describes the discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth. Individuals may feel this to varying degrees, from mild to severe. The type of gender affirmation care they seek may relate to the severity of their dysphoria.

**Transsexual** - A more outdated term that is used by some individuals who have gone through medical transition to align their body with their identified gender.

**Gender Expression Terms**

*The ways in which people communicate their gender through clothing, behavior, hairstyles, etc.*

**Gender Non-Conforming** - Individuals who have a gender expression that falls outside of the typical societal expectations of gender.

**Cross-dresser** - People who dress in clothing that is typically associated with members of the other sex, but do not identify as transgender.

**Femme/Masculine Presenting** - How a person performs their felt gender through appearance, mannerisms, speech, habits, behaviors, interests, etc. that falls somewhere on a spectrum of masculinity and femininity.

**Sex Assigned at Birth Terms**

*Biological and physiological characteristics that define human beings as male, female, or other, designated at birth by medical professionals.*

**Intersex** - A term used to denote a wide variety of conditions that could be described as atypical development of sex characteristics; including an individual born with both male and female, or indistinguishable variations in, genitals, gonads, and/or chromosomes. A person’s physical appearance may not at all vary from non-intersex individuals.

**General Terms**

**Queer** - A once derogatory word that has been reclaimed by some in the LGBTQ community as a powerful term of unity with others who identify within the LGBTQ+ community. It may relate to someone’s sexual orientation, their gender identity and/or expression, or may be wholly inclusive of all.

**Questioning** - An individual who is still exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and has not yet determined how they identify.

**Coming Out** - The process of self-identifying to yourself or others as a member of the LGBTQ community. This process is continual as individuals often “come out” in a variety of ways throughout their lifetime in various communities and contexts.