

TRANS 101

What is a 'transgender'?

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe anyone who is gender different: someone born of one gender, but having either a casual affinity for clothing, and/or affectations of the opposite gender; or someone with an innate identification as the opposite gender. Transgenders can range from female impersonators, to crossdressers, to transsexuals - both male to female, and also female to male.

Are all transgendered people transsexual?

No. Many transgenders are crossdressers - people who identify as the gender of their birth, but who occasionally wear clothing or act as the opposite gender. Crossdressers are people who virtually never feel the need to actually become, or live as the opposite gender.

Are all transgendered people just homosexual?

No. In fact, sexuality among transgenders is a microcosm of the entire sexual spectrum of society at large. The majority of crossdressers are, in fact, heterosexual; often married with children and grandchildren.

Do all transsexuals change their sexuality on hormones?

Some do, some do not. Sexual orientation can be very fluid among transgendered people. Some may change their orientation during or after transition, while others remain attracted to the same gender they were attracted to prior to transition.

What is 'intersexed'?

Simply put, intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersexed people are born with "sex chromosomes," external

genitalia, or internal reproductive system that are not considered "standard" for either male or female

Do transgendered have families?

Yes, many do. A majority of crossdressers have wives and often children. Though many transsexuals experience the break-up of families, there are numerous instances of wives who stayed with their former husbands, even after the surgery, and became legally married lesbians. Several FTM transsexuals marry and have children as well. It's remarkable testament to people who "love the person" instead of the image.

Are transgendered people prone to sexual perversion or pedophilia?

No. This is unsubstantiated and misinformed 'fact' that is used to falsely discredit transgenders. Human nature often views someone who is different or exotic as potentially a threat, and thus suspect. It is always based on lack of, or very limited exposure to actual individuals of that group.

Are all transgendered people either agnostic or atheist?

No. There are an overwhelming number of publicly transgendered that are chased out of, or encourage not to attend many congregations. While many of these individuals become embittered, and eschew further dealings with the church; a sizable number of them find other congregations that are more understanding in which to continue practicing their faith. A portion of transgenders practice their faith by reading scripture privately - away from more personally negative or derogatory influences. Some transgenders are also among involved in the clergy [one example: Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark - a transsexual ordained as a Reverend Mother by the Catholic Church] Because one is transgendered, does not mean they are anti-Christian - it only means they are viewed as such by others who wish to believe that.

Are all transgendered people like the ones on Jerry Springer?

No. The only real transgenders on that show are the most sensational, over-the-top folks they can find. It draws the ratings. The show has also gone so far as to hire actors to play these 'transsexual' characters. The average transgender is too mundane to appear on their show.

Why do transgendered people need job protection?

Employers are (as a rule) extremely averse to hiring and accommodating someone they don't understand. It's similar to what many racial minorities have experienced for years. If hiring of these individuals were commonplace, there would be no need. But far too many transgenders are not hired strictly because of their gender identity status, and employers currently have no incentive to hire them.

Some Definitions

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Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, crossdressers, androgynous people, genderqueers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender is a broad term and is good for health and social care providers to use.

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man (see also "FTM").

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also "MTF").

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

Transsexual: A term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Often, but not always, transsexual people alter their bodies through hormones or surgery in order to make it match their gender identity.

Cross-dresser: A term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender.

Transvestite: A term for a cross-dresser that is considered derogatory by many.

Genderqueer: A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. Genderqueer is an identity more common among young people.

Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from the societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth.

Bi-gendered: One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.

Two-spirit: The definition of a two-spirit person varies across the Native American cultures in which they appear. In general, two-spirit people are born one sex, and end up fulfilling the roles assigned to both sexes, or other roles reserved for two-spirit people. Some people consider two-spirit a term that can refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, while others think it is best used only for transgender people.

Fakaleiti: A fakaleiti is a Tongan man that dresses and lives as a woman. In many Tongan families, if several children have been born and they are all boys, one of them will be dressed as a girl and do girls' chores, such as housecleaning. As the fakaleiti grows up, he may decide to continue to live the rest of his (her?) life as a girl or woman. An adult fakaleiti will usually wear western, rather than traditional Tongan, women's clothes. If one sees a young Tongan woman in a miniskirt or revealing dress, chances are that, rather than being a native who has been corrupted by the ways of American or European fashion, the young woman is really a fakaleiti.

FTM: A person who has transitioned from "female-to-male," meaning a person who was assigned female at birth, but now identifies and lives as a male. Also known as a "transgender man."

MTF: A person who has transitioned from "male-to-female," meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but now identifies and lives as a female. Also known as a "transgender woman."

Passing: A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender they self-identify as. For example, a transgender man (born female) who most people see as a man.

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one's body to make it conform to a person's gender identity. This may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) or "bottom surgery" (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. "Sex change surgery" is considered a derogatory term by many.

Sexual Orientation: A term describing a person's attraction to members of the same sex or different sex. Usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.

Transition: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents (e.g. driver's license, Social Security number, birth certificate) to reflect their new gender.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female.

Drag Queen: generally used to accurately refer to men who dress as women (often celebrity women) for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also used as slang, sometimes in a derogatory manner, to refer to all transgender women.

Drag King: used to refer to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

Transgender is an "umbrella" term used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, and is used to refer to many types of people, including transsexual people; crossdressers; androgynous people; genderqueers; and other gender non-conforming people whose appearance or characteristics are perceived to be gender atypical. In its broadest sense, "transgender" encompasses anyone whose identity or behavior falls outside stereotypical gender expectations.

It is important to understand that some people may identify as transgender but not fall into one of the subcategories discussed here. This publication attempts to identify many of the ways in which transgender individuals identify and express themselves, but this listing is in no way complete. Furthermore, it is particularly important to realize that many individuals, despite the fact that they may appear transgender to some, do not consider themselves to be transgender.

It is important that we not label people transgender based on our perceptions, but instead use the words they use to describe themselves. All people have a gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else. For most people, one's gender identity matches the sex assigned to them at birth—for example, a person born female typically identifies as a girl, and later, as a woman. For many transgender people, there may not be a match. All people also have a gender expression.

Gender expression refers to all of the ways that people express their gender (or gender identity) to the outside world, including through dress, appearance, and behavior. For many transgender people, their gender expression doesn't match what society thinks it should be. The following is an attempt to describe more specifically some of the ways of being transgender.

"All people have a gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else."

TRANSSEXUALS

Some transgender people are transsexual, identifying psychologically and emotionally as a gender different than their assigned sex at birth.¹⁴ Transsexuals may desire to modify their bodies through hormones and/or sexual reassignment surgery in order to bring their physical appearance into line with their gender identity.¹⁵ The process of identifying and living in one's new gender is called "transition," and it may or may not include surgery and/or hormone treatment. Many people who would like surgery to alter their bodies cannot afford it or are not medically able to have surgery. More information about surgery and hormone treatment appears [elsewhere](#):

"Transgender women" refers to transgender people who were born male but now live as women. **"Transgender men"** refers to people who were born female but now live as men. Note that not all people who transition from one sex to the other identify as transsexual. Transgender is a broad term that is good for providers to use.

CROSS-DRESSERS

Cross-dressers are people who dress in clothing stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who have no intent to change their gender. Typically, cross-dressers cross-dress on a part-time or limited basis.

ANDROGYNOUS PEOPLE, GENDERQUEERS, AND OTHER IDENTITIES

Androgynous people and those who identify as "genderqueer" typically have gender identities that are somewhere between what is stereotypically considered to be male and female. Other terms include "femme queens," "bois," "butch bois" or "drags." They may be born as male or as female, but identify as neither now—or as a bit of both. From a shelter perspective, people with these types of identities need both their privacy and safety needs met in respectful and sensitive ways.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE

"Gender non-conforming" refers to people whose gender expressions do not match stereotypes of how girls/women or boys/men are "supposed to" look and act. In reality, most people in general don't meet all gender expectations and stereotypes either; almost nobody is perfectly masculine or perfectly feminine. The reason gender nonconforming people are included in the list of transgender people is that there are some people who identify as transgender but are not transitioning gender, and do not consider themselves cross-dressers, androgynous, or genderqueer. Gender non-conforming people have an increased need for safety while in the shelters.

WHO ARE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE? THE BASICS

"Gender is an individual experience"

The definitions provided above are designed to make readers familiar with some basic concepts and terms often used to describe transgender people. Please understand that these descriptions are not complete. It is important to realize how much people can differ from one another when it comes to gender identity or expression. No two people experience their gender, gender identity, or gender expression the same way. Thus, staff may encounter someone who identifies as transgender in a way other than those mentioned in this section. For example, some Native Americans use the term "two-spirit" as the preferred term for a transgender person. Other people identify as "bi-gendered," the meaning of which is different for different people. Language and terms relating to gender identity and expression are constantly changing. This can seem daunting at first, but staff will learn in the next chapter that it is not really that difficult to treat all people with respect and dignity.

It is also important to realize that class, race, and religious differences may mean that the transgender people shelters encounter could have different classifications and different terminology for themselves. For example, some cultures do not draw a distinction between transgender people and gay and lesbian people like the distinction drawn in the box above. Rest assured, however, that the basics on how to treat transgender people respectfully and how to ensure they have safe shelter remain essentially the same. The next chapter discusses the policy of respect that will ensure that the shelter is able to treat all transgender people respectfully.

INTERSEX PEOPLE?

Intersex people are distinct from transgender people. People with intersex conditions are born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that are not considered "standard" for either male or female. Overall, there are at least 15 different medical causes of intersexuality, and only a small percentage of these cases result in ambiguous genitalia at birth. Other intersex conditions are learned of at the time of puberty, while still others appear later in life. Doctors perform surgery on one or two babies per 1,000 births in a misguided effort to "correct" ambiguous genitalia.

The Intersex Society of North America, along with other groups, has exposed the fact that these surgeries are harmful to many intersex people and that performing genital surgery on infants is often not in the best interests of the child. People with intersex conditions may be among shelter residents and have an increased need for privacy and safety, just as transgender people do.

Some intersex people identify as transgender if they were assigned one sex at birth but transition to the other later in life. Although not the focus of this publication, most of the recommendations in this publication will help intersex shelter residents be safer in shelters as well. For more information about intersex people, go to Bodies Like Ours, www.bodieslikeours.org, the Intersex Initiative of Portland, www.ipdx.org, Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org, or Queer Bodies, www.queerbodies.org (specific to youth).

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Many people are confused about the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression. Some people believe that all gay, lesbian and bisexual people are transgender, or vice versa. In fact, however, sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct concepts. Sexual orientation refers to a person's attraction to members of the same sex or different sex—whether a person is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual. On the other hand, gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female or something else. Everyone has both a sexual orientation and a gender identity. The fact that a person is transgender says nothing about their sexual orientation. A transgender person may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

"No two people experience their gender, gender identity, or gender expression the same way."

Online Resources:

<http://www.lydiasausa.com/>

<http://www.ftmi.org/>

resources for transitioning female to male transgenders medical journal available here for download

<http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu>
search word: transgender

<http://transhouston.com/>
A community building website for local Transgenders