Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender People

1. **What Does “Transgender” Mean?**

   Transgender people are individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is sometimes or always different from the gender assigned to them at birth. Literally, they “trans”—cross or go beyond—gender lines.

2. **Who Are Transgender People?**

   Transgender people include female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs or transsexual men), male-to-female transsexuals (MTFs or transsexual women), crossdressers (the term preferred to “transvestites”), drag queens and kings, and individuals who adopt a range of genderqueer identities and labels.

3. **What Does “Genderqueer” Mean?**

   A relatively new term, “genderqueer” is used by many transgender people, especially transgender youth, who identify as neither male nor female, as both, or as somewhere in between, and who often seek to blur gender lines.

4. **How Are Transsexual Individuals Different from Crossdressers?**

   Transsexual individuals feel that their gender identity does not coincide with the gender they were assigned at birth. They may undergo hormone treatments and gender confirmation surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or can afford to do so. Although crossdressers wear clothes that are considered by society to be inappropriate for their gender, they do not want to change their birth gender and generally do not alter their bodies through hormones or surgeries.

5. **Are Transgender People Gay?**

   Being transgender is about gender identity and expression, not sexuality—these are different, though not entirely unrelated, concepts. For example, transgender people are often perceived by society as lesbian or gay, and thus are discriminated against in similar ways.

6. **How Are Transgender People Discriminated Against?**

   Like gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, transgender people face discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations and services. They are also potential targets for hate crimes and incidents: verbal harassment, threatening telephone calls and emails, and acts of violence committed by the same people who hate lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Transgender people, though, are much more likely to fall victim to discrimination and hate crimes than non-transgender LGB individuals, because they often possess physical or behavioral characteristics that readily identify them as transgender. They are also often denied health care, including access to hormones and gender confirmation surgeries.
The Legal and Political Rights of Transgender People

**Hate Crimes and Hate Crime Laws**

- Over the last two decades, more than one person a month on average has been reported to have been killed in the U.S. because of their perceived gender identity. Many more murders are not reported or are not classified as anti-transgender hate crimes.
- While 46 states have hate crimes laws, only 12 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) and the District of Columbia include the category of gender identity or expression.
- Only 8 states (California, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, and Washington) currently have laws that ban harassment against students in public schools based on their gender identity or expression.

**Anti-Discrimination Laws**

- More than 130 municipalities protect the rights of gender-diverse people, from large metropolises (including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, San Diego, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh) to small cities (including New Hope, PA [population 2,252] and Huntington Woods, MI [population 6,151]). (More info. from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: www.thetaskforce.org/issues/transgender)
- Ohio, Idaho, and Tennessee deny transsexual people the right to change the “sex” designation on their birth certificates, while courts in Texas and Kansas have refused to recognize the new birth certificates of transsexuals.

**Anti-Discrimination Policies**

- Since 1996, more than 410 colleges and universities have added “gender identity/ expression” to their nondiscrimination policies, including the Ohio State University, the University of California, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Massachusetts, Knox College, and DePauw College. (More info. from the Transgender Law and Policy Institute: www.transgenderlaw.org)
- More than 275 of the Fortune 1,000 corporations have added “gender identity/expression” to their nondiscrimination policies, including Aetna, American Airlines, Apple Computers, AT&T, Citigroup, Ford, General Motors, Google, IBM, Lucent Technologies, JP Morgan Chase, NCR, Nike, PepsiCo, and Xerox. (More info. from the Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org/issues/workplace.asp)

**Medical Care**

Most private medical plans, the Medicaid statutes of 26 states, and federal Medicare explicitly exclude coverage for transsexual surgeries and related treatments, including the cost of hormones, based on the misguided belief that such procedures are cosmetic and therefore unnecessary.