

Transgender Packet

Transgender Terminology

Crossdressers: Individuals who, regardless of motivation, wear clothing, makeup, etc. that are considered by the culture to be appropriate for another gender but not one's own (preferred term to "transvestites").

Drag or In Drag: Wearing clothing considered appropriate for someone of another gender.

Drag Kings and Drag Queens: Female-bodied crossdressers (typically lesbians) and male-bodied crossdressers (typically gay men), respectively, who present in public, often for entertainment purposes.

En Femme: A term in the male crossdressing community for expressing a more "feminine" personality and displaying more "feminine" gender behavior while crossdressing.

FTM Individuals: Female-to-male transsexual people, transsexual men, transmen, or transguys—individuals assigned female at birth who identify as male. Some transmen reject being seen as "FTM," arguing that they have always been male and are only making this identity visible to other people (instead, they may call themselves "MTM").

Gender: The social construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture. It involves gender assignment (the gender designation of someone at birth), gender roles (the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone's gender), and gender identity (how someone defines their own gender).

Genderism: The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender or gender-typical people and subordinate and disparage transgender and gender-diverse people.

Gender Expression: How one chooses to express one's gender identity through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc.

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

Gender Identity Disorder (GID): The classification for transsexuality in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th Edition, Text Revision, 2001). Most transsexual people strongly object to being considered mentally ill, arguing that it is a completely inaccurate diagnosis and serves to dehumanize and pathologize them. However, some transsexuals in countries such as Canada and Holland support GID being recognized as a mental disorder, because it enables them to have their gender reassignment surgeries covered by government health insurance (gender reassignment surgeries are rarely covered in the U.S.).

Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS): Surgical procedures that change one's body to conform to one's gender identity. These procedures may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) and "bottom surgery" (altering genitals). For female-to-male transsexual individuals, GRS involves a bilateral mastectomy (chest reconstruction), panhysterectomy (removal of the ovaries and uterus), and sometimes a phalloplasty (construction of a penis) and scrotoplasty (formation of a scrotum) or a

metoidioplasty (restructuring the clitoris). For male-to-female transsexual individuals, GRS consists of optional surgical breast implants and vaginoplasty (construction of a vagina). Additional surgeries might include a trachea shave (reducing the size of the Adam's apple), bone restructuring to feminize facial features, and hair transplants. Sometimes GRS is referred to as "gender confirming surgery," to recognize that one's gender does not change—it is only being made visible to others.

Gender Variant, Gender Diverse, or Gender Non-Conforming: Alternative terms for transgender, meaning one who varies from traditional "masculine" and "feminine" gender roles.

Genderqueer Individuals: People who identify as neither male nor female, as both, or as somewhere in between, and who often seek to blur gender lines. It is a particularly common identity among transgender youth. Among the dozens of more specific "genderqueer" terms are transboi, boydyke, third gendered, bi-gendered, multi-gendered, andro, androgyne, and gender bender.

Hir: A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of "her" and "him."

Intersex People: People whose sex chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, and/or genitalia are determined to be neither exclusively male nor female. About one in 1,500-2,000 children are born visibly intersex (preferred term to "hermaphrodites").

MTF Individuals: Male-to-female transsexual people, transsexual women, transwomen, or transgrrls—individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female. Some transwomen reject being seen as "MTF," arguing that they have always been female and are only making this identity visible to other people (instead, they may call themselves "FTF").

Second Self: A term in the male crossdressing community for an individual's alternative gender preference. Male crossdressers express their second self through wearing "feminine" clothing and expressing "feminine" characteristics.

Sie or Ze: A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of "she" and "he."

Trans or Transgender People: Most commonly used as an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is sometimes or always different from the gender assigned to them at birth. Transgender people include transsexuals, crossdressers, drag queens and kings, genderqueers, and others who cross traditional gender categories.

Transitioning: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. It may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, and altering legal documents.

Transsexual People: Individuals whose gender identity is different from their assigned gender at birth. Transsexual people often undergo hormone treatments and gender confirmation surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or are able to do so.

Two Spirit People: A Native American/First Nation term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. It is commonly used to describe anatomical women who took on the roles and/or dress of men and anatomical men who took on the roles and/or dress of women in the past (preferred term to "berdache"). The term is also often used by contemporary LGBT Native American and First Nation people to describe themselves.

How Might the Needs of Transgender People Differ from the Needs of Non-Transgender Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) People?

- They may identify as heterosexual, so may not be dealing with sexual identity issues. However, they will likely be seen by society as lesbian or gay because of the stereotype that transgender people are lesbian or gay or because of appearances. (Take, for example, someone who identifies as female but who looks male and who is dating an anatomical man. She will see this as a heterosexual relationship or maybe a transsexual relationship, but most people will see two men together and perceive it as a gay relationship).
- They may experience more verbal and physical attacks than most LGB people if they are crossdressed or otherwise visibly gender diverse. After all, most LGB harassment stems from the perceived violation of gender norms.
- They are generally less accepted in society than LGB people, in large part because of ignorance. There is little understanding of transgender lives; they are rarely visible in popular culture (beyond the stereotypical images of drag queens) and limited non-pathological research has been conducted on their experiences.
- They also often experience a lack of acceptance from the LGB community, which uses transgender people as entertainers, but frequently does not include them otherwise.
- As a result of the lack of acceptance in the dominant culture and LGB society, they often lack a community and do not have role models or many positive images. Consequently, transgender people, especially trans youth, may feel more isolated and more marginalized than non-trans LGB people.
- Transgender students may want to remain closeted because of the legitimate fear of how they will be treated by their professors, employers, and in their field.
- If transitioning, they will need access to medical care and mental health care. But the medical profession often fails to support them because of ignorance and a traditional, pathological understanding of transsexuality.
- If transitioning, they will need to change all of their records and documents.
- While butch lesbians and other masculine-appearing women are harassed in women's restrooms, transsexual women are especially vulnerable to attack and embarrassment when they try to use the public bathroom appropriate for their gender.

How to Be an Ally to Transgender People

- ∇ Validate people's gender expression. It is important to refer to a transgender person by the pronoun appropriate to their gender identity. In other words, if someone identifies as female, then refer to the person as "she"; if someone identifies as male, refer to the person as "he." If you are not sure, ask them. Never use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgender. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful. Some transgender people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns: "hir" instead of "her" and "his," and "sie" or "ze" instead of "she" and "he."
- ∇ Use non-gender specific language. Ask "Are you seeing someone?" or "Are you in a committed relationship?," instead of "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" or "Are you married?" Use the word "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife."
- ∇ Speak out against statements and jokes that attack transgender people. Letting others know that you find anti-transgender statements and jokes offensive and unacceptable can go a long way toward reducing gender prejudice.
- ∇ Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society's beliefs about "women" and "men."
- ∇ Do not assume that a transgender person is of any particular sexual orientation; gender identity is separate from sexual orientation.
- ∇ Use the word "crossdresser" instead of "transvestite," which is often considered pejorative.
- ∇ Never ask transgender people about how they have sex or what their genitals look like. This is inappropriate in every situation.
- ∇ Do not share the gender identity of individuals without their permission. Do not assume that everyone knows. The decision to tell someone about their gender should be left to the person.
- ∇ When you learn about someone's transgender identity, do not assume that it is a fad or trend. While public discussions about transgenderism and transsexuality are a relatively recent phenomenon, most transgender people have dealt with their gender identity for many years, often at great personal and professional costs. It is important to trust that someone's decision to identify as transgender is not made lightly or without due consideration.
- ∇ Educate yourself and others about transgender experiences and concerns. Introduce trainings, readings, and other resources to your peers and colleagues to continue educational efforts to deconstruct social norms around gender, sex, and sexual orientation.
- ∇ Work to change campus policies in areas such as housing, bathroom access, student records and forms, and health care that discriminate against transgender people and seek to include gender identity/expression in your school's non-discrimination policy.
- ∇ Support transgender organizations and issues. Write letters to your political representatives asking them to support legislation that positively affects transgender people. Support transgender-friendly businesses (see the Human Rights Campaign's website for information on LGBT-supportive corporations: www.hrc.org).

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Some material adapted from the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance: <http://www.tgnetarizona.org>

Gender-Normative Privilege

If I am gender normative (or, in some cases, simply perceived as gender normative):

- ∇ My validity as a man/woman/human is not based on how much surgery I have had or how well I “pass” as a non-transgender person.
- ∇ When initiating sex with someone, I do not have to worry that they will not be able to deal with my parts, or that having sex with me will cause my partner to question his or her own sexual orientation.
- ∇ I am not excluded from events which are either explicitly or de facto (because of nudity) for men-born-men or women-born-women only.
- ∇ My politics are not questioned based on the choices I make with regard to my body.
- ∇ I do not have to hear “so have you had *the* surgery?” or “oh, so you’re *really* a [incorrect gender]?” each time I come out to someone.
- ∇ Strangers do not ask me what my “real name” [birth name] is and then assume that they have a right to call me by that name.
- ∇ People do not disrespect me by using incorrect pronouns even after they have been corrected.
- ∇ I do not have to worry about whether I will experience harassment or violence for using a bathroom or whether I will be safe changing in a locker room.
- ∇ I do not have to defend my right to be a part of “queer,” and gay men and lesbians will not try to exclude me from *our* movement in order to gain political legitimacy for themselves.
- ∇ I do not have to choose between being invisible (“passing”) or being “othered” and/or tokenized based on my gender.
- ∇ When I go to the gym or a public pool, I can use the showers.
- ∇ If I go to the emergency room, I do not have to worry that my gender will keep me from receiving appropriate treatment, or that all of my medical issues will be seen as a result of my gender.
- ∇ My health insurance provider (or public health system) does not specifically exclude me from receiving benefits or treatments available to others because of my gender.
- ∇ My identity is not considered “mentally ill” by the medical establishment.
- ∇ I am not required to undergo an extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.
- ∇ The medical establishment does not serve as a “gatekeeper,” determining what happens to my body.

The Legal and Political Rights of Transgender People

Hate Crimes and Hate Crime Laws

- Over the last decade and a half, 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 Minnesota, California, Iowa, New Jersey, and Washington currently have laws that ban harassment against students in public schools based on their gender identity or expression.

Anti-Discrimination Laws

- Twelve states—California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington—and the District of Columbia ban discrimination based on gender identity and expression in housing, public accommodation, and employment (a 13th state, Hawai'i, covers housing discrimination and public accommodations only).
- More than 95 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]).
- Ohio, Idaho, and Tennessee deny transsexuals 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 transsexual people.

Anti-Discrimination Policies

- Since 1996, more than 115 colleges and college systems have added “gender identity/ expression” to their nondiscrimination policies, including the Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, the University of California, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Washington, the University of New Hampshire, Knox College, Kalamazoo College, and DePauw College.
- More than 150 Fortune 500 corporations have added “gender identity/expression” to their nondiscrimination policies, including Aetna, American Airlines, Apple Computers, AT&T, Citigroup, Ford, General Motors, Google, IBM, Eastman Kodak, Lucent Technologies, JP Morgan Chase, NCR, Nationwide, Nike, PepsiCo, S.C. Johnson and Sons, and Xerox.

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. Increasingly, though, transgender advocates are successfully challenging the denial of basic health care services to transsexual people by using claim appeal processes and by filing suits against insurers and state Medicaid agencies.

Transgender Campus Resources

Books and Articles

- Allen, Mariette P. *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them*. E.P. Dutton, 1998.
- Beemyn, Brett. "Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students." In *Gay, Lesbian, Transgender Issues in Education: Programs, Policies, and Practices*. Edited by James Sears. Haworth Press, 2005.
- Beemyn, Brett Genny. "Trans on Campus: Measuring and Improving the Climate for Transgender Students." *On Campus with Women* 34 (Spring 2005). Available at www.aacu.org/ocww.
- Beemyn, Brett Genny. "Trans Youth," a special issue of the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* 3 (Fall 2005).
- Beemyn, Brett, Billy Curtis, Masen Davis, and Nancy Jean Tubbs. "Transgender Issues on College Campuses." In *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Research, Policy, and Personal Perspectives*. Edited by Ronni L. Sanlo. Jossey-Bass, 2005. 49-60. Available at www.umass.edu/stonewall/transhand.
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- Califia, Pat. *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*. Cleis Press, 1997.
- Cameron, Loren. *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits*. Cleis Press, 1996.
- Carter, Kelly A. "Transgenderism and College Students: Issues of Gender Identity and Its Role on Our Campuses." In *Toward Acceptance: Sexual Orientation Issues on Campus*. Edited by Vernon A. Wall and Nancy J. Evans. University Press of America, 1999. 261-82.
- Cromwell, Jason. *Transmen and FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities*. University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Diamond, Morty, ed. *From the Inside Out: Radical Gender Transformation, FTM and Beyond*. Manic D Press, 2004.
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- Howard, Kim, and Annie Stevens, eds. *Out and About Campus: Personal Accounts by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender College Students*. Alyson, 2000.
- Israel, Gianna E., and Donald E. Tarver II. *Transgender Care: Recommended Guidelines, Practical Information, and Personal Accounts*. Temple University Press, 1997.
- Mallon, Gerald P., ed. *Social Services with Transgendered Youth*. Harrington Park Press, 1999.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne. *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Namaste, Viviane K. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Nestle, Joan, Riki Wilchins, and Clare Howell, eds. *Genderqueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. Alyson, 2002.
- Rankin, Susan R. *Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective*. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, 2003.
- Rudd, Peggy J. *Crossdressing with Dignity: The Case for Transcending Gender Lines*. PM Publishers, 1999.
- Sanlo, Ronni, L., ed. *Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender College Students: A Handbook for Faculty and Administrators*. Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Sausa, Lydia A. "Updating College and University Campus Policies: Meeting the Needs of Trans Students, Staff, and Faculty." In *Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses*. Edited by Elizabeth P. Cramer. Harrington Park Press, 2002. 43-55.
- Transgender Law Center. *Peeing in Peace: A Resource Guide for Transgender Activists and Allies*. Available at <http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org>.

On the Web

FTM International: www.ftmi.org
International Foundation for Gender Education: www.ifge.org
National Center for Transgender Equality: www.nctequality.org
National Student Genderblind Campaign: www.genderblind.org
PFLAG's TNET (Transgender Network): <http://pflag.org/TNET.tnet.0.html>
People in Search of Safe Restrooms (PSSR): www.pissr.org
Sylvia Rivera Law Project: www.srlp.org
Trans-Academics.org: www.trans-academics.org
Trans Family: www.transfamily.org
Trans Health: www.trans-health.com
Trans Proud: www.transproud.com
Transgender Care: www.transgendercare.com
Transgender Day of Remembrance: www.gender.org/remember/day
Transgender Law and Policy Institute: www.transgenderlaw.org
Transgender Law Center: www.transgenderlawcenter.org
Transgender Youth Resources: www.youthresource.com/living/trans.htm
UMass Amherst Transgender Guide: www.umass.edu/stonewall/trans
University of California info. on gender-free restrooms: www.uclgbtia.org/restrooms.html

Films

The Aggressives (documentary about women of color who assume masculine roles, behavior, and dress)
Boy I Am (documentary about FTM youth and relations between trans men and lesbians)
A Boy Named Sue (documentary about an FTM individual)
Boys Don't Cry (fictionalized story of Brandon Teena's life)
Drag Kings on Tour (documentary)
Georgie Girl (documentary about a transsexual New Zealand legislator)
Just Call Me Kade (documentary about a transsexual male teen)
Ma Vie en Rose (feature film about a trans child)
No Dumb Questions (documentary about children learning about their transsexual aunt)
Normal (feature film about a male-bodied crossdresser)
The Opposite Sex: Jamie's Story (documentary about a transitioning MTF individual)
The Opposite Sex: Rene's Story (documentary about a transitioning FTM individual)
Paris Is Burning (documentary about voguing in New York in the late 1980s)
The Rubi Girls (documentary about a Dayton drag queen troupe)
Soldier's Girl (fictionalized story of the partner of murdered soldier Barry Winchell)
Southern Comfort (documentary about a transsexual man who dies of ovarian cancer)
Toilet Training (documentary about the need for gender-neutral bathrooms)
Transamerica (feature film about a transsexual woman)
TransGeneration (documentary/television series about transitioning college students)
Venus Boyz (documentary about drag kings)