

LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Health Care Teams

Major revision February 2024



NATIONAL LGBTQIA+ HEALTH
EDUCATION CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE FENWAY INSTITUTE

2S

See [Two-Spirit](#)

Ace

See [Asexual](#)

AFAB

See [Assigned female at birth](#)

Affirmed name

See [Name used](#)

Agender

adjective

Describes a person who identifies as having no gender, or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component.

Ally

verb/noun

To advocate for and support a marginalized community, or to be a person who advocates for and supports a marginalized community.

AMAB

See [Assigned male at birth](#)

Anatomical inventory

noun

A structured form that tracks the presence or absence of a patient's reproductive organs, as well as any surgical history relevant to those organs. The inventory can be integrated into the electronic health record, and can help guide preventive health screenings and post-surgical care plans.

Aromantic

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others, and/or little or no interest in forming romantic relationships.

Aromantic people may still have intimate relationships.

Asexual

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others, and/or little or no interest in having sexual relationships. Asexual people may still engage in sexual activity.

Assigned female at birth

adjective

Female sex assigned to an infant based on physical sex characteristics, such as the appearance of the infant's genitalia and/or sex chromosomes. Abbreviated as AFAB.

See also: [Assigned male at birth](#)

Assigned male at birth

adjective

Male sex assigned to an infant based on physical sex characteristics, such as the appearance of the infant's genitalia and/or sex chromosomes. Abbreviated as AMAB.

See also: [Assigned female at birth](#)

Assigned sex at birth

See [Sex assigned at birth](#)

Bi

See [Bisexual](#)

Bigender

adjective

Describes a person who has two [gender identities](#).

Binary

noun

Any system that classifies something into two distinct states.

See also: [Gender binary](#)

Binding

verb

Wrapping the chest tightly to create the appearance of a flatter chest. The most common way for people to bind is by wearing an undergarment called a binder. People may use other materials to bind such as cloth strips or bandages.

Biphobia

noun

Discrimination towards, fear, marginalization, and hatred of [bisexual](#) people, or those who are perceived as bisexual. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be biphobic.

BIPOC

adjective

An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Bisexual

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a person who is emotionally and physically attracted to more than one gender.

See also: [Pansexual](#)

Bottom

noun

A slang term for genitals and buttocks. Bottom also refers to the receptive partner in anal sex.

See also: [Top](#)

Bottom surgery

noun

A slang term for [gender-affirming genital surgery](#).

See also: [Top surgery](#)

Chosen name

See [Name used](#)

Cis

See [Cisgender](#)

Cisgender

adjective

Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) aligns with the [sex they were assigned at birth](#), based on [societal expectations](#). The term cisgender is derived from the Latin preposition *cis*, which means "on this side of," and is the antonym of *trans*, which means "across" or "beyond."

Cisnormativity

noun

Cisnormativity is the assumption that everyone is [cisgender](#), or that being cisgender is the only "normal" [gender identity](#). Cisnormativity puts pressure on people to conform to [binary](#) notions of [gender expression](#) and [gender identity](#). Cisnormativity can manifest as cissexism, the biased belief that cisgender identity is the superior gender identity. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can perpetuate cisnormativity and cissexism, and thus marginalize [transgender](#) and [gender diverse](#) people and communities.

Cissexism

See [Cisnormativity](#)

Coming out

verb

The process of discovering and accepting one's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#) (coming out to oneself), and the process of sharing one's sexual orientation or gender identity with others (coming out to friends, family, etc.). Coming out occurs at various points throughout one's life.

Conversion therapy

noun

The discredited and harmful practice of trying to forcibly change a person's [sexual orientation](#), [gender identity](#), or [gender expression](#).

Deadname

verb, noun

The harmful practice of calling a [transgender](#) or [gender diverse](#) person by their name assigned at birth, instead of the [name they use](#) and want to be called (also known as their chosen or affirmed name). Deadnaming is a form of [misgendering](#).

Differences of sex development

noun

A range of variations in primary and secondary sex characteristics that do not fit into [binary](#) notions of female or male bodies. Variations may involve sex chromosomes, external genitalia, gonads, hormone production, hormone responsiveness, and/or internal reproductive organs, and may be identified prenatally, at birth, during puberty, or later in life. Some people with these variations consider the term [intersex](#) more acceptable than differences of sex development.

See also: [Intersex](#)

Drag

noun

The theatrical performance of gender in creative ways.

DSD

See [Differences of sex development](#)

Enby

See [Non-binary](#)

GAS

See [Gender-affirming surgery](#)

Gay

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) describing people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to people of the same [gender identity](#) as themselves. Commonly used as an umbrella term for "not straight."

Gender affirmation

noun

An umbrella term for the range of actions that [transgender](#) and [gender diverse](#) people may undertake to live in greater alignment with their [gender identity](#) and/or [gender expression](#), and thus thrive as their authentic selves. A person may affirm their gender identity or expression through social, legal, medical, or surgical means. What gender affirmation looks like for every individual is unique and based on what is personally affirming, what feels safe to do, and what is accessible and available.

Gender binary

noun

The belief that there are only two genders (female/girl/woman and male/boy/man).

Gender diverse

adjective

An umbrella term describing people who have [gender identities](#) and/or [gender expressions](#) that go beyond the [gender binary](#) of female/girl/woman or male/boy/man.

Gender dysphoria

noun

Distress experienced by some people whose [gender identity](#) does not align with their [sex assigned at birth](#) based on societal expectations; or distress experienced when a person's gender identity and/or [gender expression](#) is not affirmed. The degree and severity of gender dysphoria is highly variable among [transgender](#) and [gender diverse](#) people.

Gender expansive

adjective

An umbrella term describing people whose [gender identity](#) or [gender expression](#) goes beyond the [gender binary](#).

Gender expression

noun

The ways in which people present their [gender identity](#) to others, such as through gait, mannerisms, voice, dress, and hairstyle. Cultural and historical contexts influence how people interpret and express gender identity.

Gender fluid

adjective

Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of more than one gender, but may feel more aligned with a certain gender some of the time, another gender at other times, both genders sometimes, and sometimes no gender at all.

Gender identity

noun

A person's inner sense of being a girl/woman/female, boy/man/male, both, neither, or beyond the [gender binary](#).

Gender role

noun

A set of societal norms dictating what types of behaviors are considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on their actual or perceived gender. These roles change with time, culture, context, and interpersonal relationships.

Gender-affirming care

noun

The provision of health services to support a person's process of living in alignment with their [gender identity](#). Services may include [gender-affirming hormone therapy](#) and/or gender-affirming surgeries.

Gender-affirming chest surgery

noun

Surgeries to reduce, construct, and/or reconstruct the chest to be more aligned with a person's [gender identity](#). Gender-affirming chest surgeries are often referred to as 'top surgeries.' Types of chest surgeries include:

- breast augmentation
- breast construction
- mammoplasty
- mastectomy
- chest contouring

Gender-affirming genital surgery

noun

Surgeries to remove and/or construct genitals and/or internal reproductive organs to be more aligned with a person's [gender identity](#). Gender-affirming genital surgeries are often referred to as 'bottom surgeries.' Types of genital surgeries include:

- Clitoroplasty (creation of a clitoris)
- Hysterectomy (removal of the uterus; may also include removal of the cervix, ovaries, and fallopian tubes)
- Labiaplasty (creation of inner and outer labia)
- Metoidioplasty (creation of a masculine phallus using testosterone-enlarged clitoral tissue)
- Oophorectomy (removal of ovaries)
- Orchiectomy (removal of testicles)
- Penectomy (removal of the penis)
- Phalloplasty (creation of a phallus)
- Scrotoplasty (creation of a scrotum and often paired with testicular implants)
- Urethral lengthening (to allow voiding while standing)
- Vaginectomy (removal of the vagina)
- Vaginoplasty (creation of a neo-vagina)
- Vulvoplasty (creation of a vulva)

Gender-affirming hormone therapy

noun

The clinical provision of estrogen, androgen blockers, or testosterone to promote changes in the body that align with a person's [gender identity](#).

Gender-affirming surgery

noun

Surgeries to help align the body with a person's [gender identity](#). Types of surgeries include [chest](#) and [genital surgeries](#), facial surgeries, body sculpting, and hair removal.

See also: [Gender-affirming chest surgery](#), [Gender-affirming genital surgery](#)

Genderfluid

See [Gender fluid](#)

Genderqueer

adjective

Describes people whose [gender identity](#) goes beyond the [gender binary](#).

Heteronormativity

noun

Heteronormativity is the assumption that everyone is [heterosexual](#), or that being heterosexual is the only "normal" [sexual orientation](#). Heteronormative social systems incentivize conforming to the behavior and appearance of heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity can manifest as heterosexism, the biased belief that heterosexual identity is the only valid sexual orientation. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can perpetuate heteronormativity and heterosexism, and thus marginalize [queer](#) people and communities.

Heterosexual

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) that describes women who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to men, and men who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women.

Homophobia

noun

Discrimination towards, and fear, marginalization, and hatred of people who are or perceived to be of diverse sexual orientation, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or pansexual people. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be homophobic.

Hormone replacement therapy

See [Gender-affirming hormone therapy](#)

HRT

See [Gender-affirming hormone therapy](#)

Intersectionality

noun

This concept was developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the unique experiences of Black women who face the compounding factors of both racial and gender discrimination. Intersectionality is the idea that a person's various identities, particularly marginalized identities, interconnect and cannot be understood in isolation. It is important for health care providers to understand the whole person, including all of their privileged and marginalized identities.

Intersex

adjective

Describes a range of variations in primary and secondary sex characteristics that do not fit into binary notions of female or male bodies. Variations may involve sex chromosomes, external genitalia, gonads, hormone production, hormone responsiveness, and/or internal reproductive organs, and may be identified prenatally, at birth, during puberty, or later in life. Some people with an intersex variation choose to label their [gender identity](#) as intersex. People with intersex variations are typically assigned a female or male sex at birth; in a few jurisdictions, an infant may be assigned intersex at birth. Another medical term for intersex is [differences of sex development](#).

Lesbian

adjective, noun

A [sexual orientation](#) describing a woman or [non-binary](#) person who is primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women.

LGBTQIA+

adjective

An acronym for [lesbian](#), [gay](#), [bisexual](#), [transgender](#), [queer](#), [intersex](#), [asexual](#), and all sexually and [gender diverse](#) people. Examples of terms represented by the "+" include: [pansexual](#), [omnisexual](#), [gender fluid](#), [non-binary](#), [Two-Spirit](#), and many more terms.

Men who have sex with men

noun

A category used in public health research to describe [cisgender](#) men who engage in sexual behavior with other cisgender men, regardless of how they identify their [sexual orientation](#). Abbreviated as MSM.

See also: [Women who have sex with women](#)

Minority stress

noun

Chronic stress faced by members of stigmatized minority groups, such as sexual and gender minority people. Minority stress is caused by external, objective events and conditions, expectations of such events, the internalization of societal attitudes, and/or concealment of one's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#). Minority stress is compounded when a person holds multiple marginalized identities.

Misgender

verb

To refer to someone in a way that does not affirm that person's [gender identity](#); for example, by using incorrect [pronouns](#) or by deadnaming.

MSM

See [Men who have sex with men](#)

Name used

noun

The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, including when that person's insurance or identification documents lists a different name. The terms "name used," "affirmed name," or "chosen name" are recommended over "preferred name."

NB

See [Non-binary](#)

Neopronouns

See [Pronouns](#)

Non-binary

adjective

An umbrella term for [gender identities](#) that go beyond the [gender binary](#) of female and male. Non-binary people may refer to themselves as non-binary, and/or may use a range of identity terms, such as: [agender](#), [bigender](#), [genderqueer](#), and [gender fluid](#). Often abbreviated as NB or enby.

Open relationship

noun

Describes a relationship between intimate partners who consensually agree to non-monogamy.

Organ inventory

See [Anatomical inventory](#)

Outing

verb

Involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#).

Pangender

adjective

Describes a person who has multiple [gender identities](#).

Pansexual

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) describing a person who can be emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of any [gender identity](#) or [gender expression](#).

See also: [Bisexual](#)

Polyamorous

adjective

Describes a sexual and/or romantic relationship that includes three or more people.

People may consider being polyamorous part of their [sexual orientation](#), or a key part of how they approach forming romantic relationships.

Preferred Name

See [Name used](#)

Pronouns

noun

Pronouns are words used in place of a person's name. Examples of pronouns are she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, he/him/his. *Neopronouns* are new pronouns that people may use to affirm their [gender identity](#); examples include: xe/xem/xyr and ze/hir/hirs. Some people use their name instead of pronouns.

Queer

adjective

An umbrella term describing [sexual orientations](#) and [gender identities](#) that go beyond [heterosexual](#)/straight and [cisgender](#). Any [LGBTQIA+](#) person may identify as queer. Some people use the term queer to reflect the fluidity and complexity of sexual orientation and gender identity. The term "queer" was historically used to slander LGBTQIA+ people, but has been reclaimed by many as a term of pride.

Questioning

adjective

Describes uncertainty about, or the process of exploring, one's [sexual orientation](#) and/or [gender identity](#).

Same gender loving

adjective

A [sexual orientation](#) term used by some people in place of [gay](#) or [lesbian](#).

Same-sex attracted

adjective

Describes the experience of a person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of the same gender. Used most commonly by people who live in religious communities that are not accepting of [LGBTQIA+](#) identities.

Sex

See [Sex assigned at birth](#)

Sex assigned at birth

noun

The categorization of an infant as female, male, or [intersex](#), based on the appearance of the infant's genitalia and/or sex chromosomes.

Sexual orientation

noun

How a person experiences their physical, emotional, and romantic attachments to other people.

SGL

See [Same gender loving](#)

SOGI

noun

An acronym for [sexual orientation](#) and [gender identity](#). Sometimes the acronym includes an "E" for [gender expression](#).

SOGIE

See [SOGI](#)

SSA

See [Same-sex attracted](#)

Straight

See [Heterosexual](#)

Structural stigma

noun

Societal conditions, policies, and institutional practices that restrict opportunities and resources for oppressed and marginalized groups.

Top

noun

A slang term for the chest. Also refers to the insertive partner in anal sex.

See also: [Bottom](#)

Top surgery

noun

Slang term for [gender-affirming chest surgery](#).

See also: [Bottom surgery](#)

Trans

See [Transgender](#)

Trans feminine

adjective

Describes a person who was [assigned male at birth](#) and identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.

Trans man

noun

A man who was not [assigned male at birth](#) but whose [gender identity](#) is boy/man/male.

See also: [Transgender](#), [Trans masculine](#)

Trans masculine

adjective

A person whose [gender identity](#) is man/male and who was [assigned female sex at birth](#).

Trans woman

noun

A person whose [gender identity](#) is woman/female and who was [assigned male sex at birth](#).

.
See also: [Transgender](#), [Trans feminine](#)

Transfeminine

See [Trans feminine](#)

Transfemme

See [Trans feminine](#)

Transgender

adjective

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth, based on societal expectations.

Transition

See [Gender Affirmation](#)

Transmasc

See [Trans masculine](#)

Transmasculine

See [Trans masculine](#)

Transphobia

noun

Discrimination towards, fear, marginalization, and hatred of [transgender](#) and [gender diverse](#) people or those perceived as transgender or gender diverse. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be transphobic.

Transsexual

adjective

A term used in the late 20th century to describe people who have gone through the process of medical [gender affirmation](#). While the term transsexual has largely been replaced with [transgender](#), transsexual is still an important identity term for some members of the community, especially those born before 1980.

Tucking

noun

A technique to reduce the appearance of a bulge and create the appearance of a flatter crotch area by positioning genitals in a particular way and using tape, tight shorts, or specially designed undergarments.

Two-Spirit

adjective

Describes a person who embodies both a masculine and a feminine spirit. This is a culture-specific term used among some Native American, American Indian, and First Nations people. Abbreviated as 2S.

Women who have sex with women

noun

A category used in public health research to describe cisgender women who engage in sexual behavior with cisgender women, regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. Abbreviated as WSW.

See also: [Men who have sex with men](#)

WSW

See [Women who have sex with women](#)