

LGBTQ+ GLOSSARY OF TERMS: A QUICK GUIDE TO PROPER TERMINOLOGY

A proper understanding of the varying identities under the LGBTQ+ umbrella and associated terminology is a crucial first step in creating a respectful work environment for LGBTQ+ employees. The list below, while not all-inclusive, is a good starting point for educating your employees and creating a common understanding.

- **Sexual orientation:** A person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. (e.g. heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual). Some may describe their romantic orientation discretely from their sexual orientation (e.g. heteroromantic, homoromantic, biromantic, panromantic, and aromantic).
- **Sex assigned at birth:** The sex assigned to a child at birth based on their external anatomy.
- **Gender identity:** A person's internal understanding of their gender. While sexual orientation and gender identity are both intrinsic, one does not imply the other.
 - **Cisgender:** Describes people whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.
 - **Transgender/trans:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.
 - **Non-binary:** Describes people whose gender identity does not align with being a man or a woman. They may identify as both, somewhere in between, or with a gender that falls entirely outside of these categories. Examples include **agender** and **genderfluid**.

Some people who identify as transgender may also identify as nonbinary and vice versa. However, these terms are not interchangeable.

Certain racial and ethnic groups might have other, more culturally-specific terms that they prefer to describe their LGBTQ+ identity.
- **Gender expression:** A person's external expression of their gender (e.g. names, pronouns, clothing, hairstyles, voice, etc).
- **Questioning:** Describes people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Outing:** Exposing another person's LGBTQ+ identity to others without their permission.
- **Coming out:** Process in which an individual acknowledges and accepts their LGBTQ+ identity and shares that with others. The opposite of this is referred to as **covering**, when an individual actively conceals their their LGBTQ+ identity.
- **Queer:** An umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. While historically used as a slur, this word has been reclaimed by many LGBTQ+ people.
- **Gender dysphoria:** Distress stemming from the disconnect between an individual's gender identity and their sex assigned at birth. Experiences of discrimination (e.g. being forced to use facilities that do not correspond with one's gender identity) can further compound distress.
- **Transitioning:** A series of processes that some people may undergo in order to live in alignment with their gender identity. These may differ person to person, but can include **social transition** (e.g. changing pronouns), **medical transition** (e.g. reconstructive surgery), and **legal transition** (e.g. changing legal name). Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.
- **Gender-affirming care:** Refers to any services or procedures that empower an individual to better align themselves with their gender identity and relieve gender dysphoria. It can be **medical** (e.g. hormone replacement therapy), **surgical** (e.g. plastic surgery), **behavioral** (e.g. speech therapy), or **psychosocial** (e.g. mental health counseling).
- **Misgendering:** Occurs when someone deliberately or accidentally refers to a transgender or non-binary person with language that does not align with their affirmed gender. Neglecting to use someone's preferred pronouns, referring to them by the wrong title, or **deadnaming** (calling them by a name they no longer use, like their birth name) are all common examples of misgendering. Regardless of intent, the act of the act of invalidating another person's gender identity with inaccurate or outdated language is harmful.