

# Glossary

Here's a quick reference for some of the most commonly used terms in the LGBTQ community, as well as terms that might be useful as you advocate for and support students.

**Remember that people defy labels and not everyone will fit into a definition, label or box, no matter how large we make it.**

**ALLY:** A person who may not share the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBTQ students, but who supports and honors sexual and gender diversity and challenges homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist remarks and behaviors.

**ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS:** Federal, state, and local laws that prohibit the government and/or private organizations from discriminating against someone based on certain personal characteristics, such as race, religion, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

**BIOLOGICAL SEX, SEX:** A term used historically and within the medical field to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male.

**BISEXUAL:** A person who has significant sexual, romantic and/or spiritual attractions to both men and women or someone who identifies as a member of this community.

**COMING OUT:** The process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to other people.

**CYBERBULLYING:** Harassment or intimidation conducted through digital communications methods such as the internet and text messages.

**DAY OF SILENCE:** A national observance, usually occurring in April and organized by student groups, during which students take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest discrimination against LGBTQ students.

**DISCRIMINATION:** The different and unfair treatment of certain groups of people based on specific characteristics, such as race, religion, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

**DIVERSITY DAY:** A day devoted to educational activities about characteristics such as race, class, sex, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

**EQUAL PROTECTION:** A constitutional guarantee that the government will treat one person or group of people the same way that it would treat any other person or group of people under the same circumstances.

**FIRST AMENDMENT:** A provision of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees freedoms of association and expression, including freedom of speech.

**FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION:** The constitutional right to associate with individuals of your choice, including for the purpose of discussing or pursuing a common interest.

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH:** The constitutional right to express your thoughts, ideas, and opinions without interference from the government.

**FTM (FEMALE TO MALE), TRANSGENDER MAN:** A term used to identify a person who was assigned a sex of female at birth but who has a male gender identity.

**GAY:** A term that can be used to describe either a man whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to other men or to reference anyone whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to a person who is the same sex as themselves.

**GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:** A student club for LGBTQ students and their straight allies, designed to provide a safe and supportive

environment for social interaction, education, and advocacy.

**GENDER:** A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other.

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** The outward manifestation of internal gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and other characteristics.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** An individual's self-concept of whether he or she is male or female, regardless of sex or sexual orientation; the inner sense of being a man, a woman, both or neither. Gender identity may or may not align with a person's birth-assigned sex.

**GENDER-NONCONFORMING:** Behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance.

**GENDER ROLE:** The social expectation of how an individual should look or behave, often based upon the sex assigned at birth.

**GENDER TRANSITION:** The social, psychological or medical process of transitioning from one gender to another. Gender transition is an individualized process and does not involve the same steps for everyone. Transition may include telling one's social support network; legally changing one's name or sex; therapeutic treatment with hormones; and possibly, though in not all instances, surgery.

**HARASSMENT:** Actions or words that harm or distress a person, and do not otherwise serve a legitimate purpose. Harassment often interferes with the ability to take full advantage of educational opportunities.

**HATE CRIME:** A crime that is motivated by race, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Under federal law and some state and local laws, hate crimes may be investigated by additional law enforcement personnel and can carry additional penalties.

## GLOSSARY

**HETEROSEXISM:** The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal and other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** A fear of or hostility toward lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

**INTERSEX:** A health condition, often present at birth, involving anatomy or physiology that differs from societal expectations of male and female. Intersex conditions can affect the genitals, the chromosomes and/or other body structures. Intersex conditions are sometimes referred to as “disorders of sexual development.” People with intersex conditions should not be assumed to be transgender.

**LESBIAN:** A woman whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to other women.

**LGBT HISTORY MONTH:** A month-long celebration of the LGBT rights movement and of historical LGBT figures, celebrated in October in the United States.

**MTF (MALE TO FEMALE), TRANSGENDER WOMAN:** A term used to identify a person who was assigned the sex of male at birth but who has a female gender identity.

**OUT:** A description for someone who expresses, or does not hide, his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

**PRIDE:** The idea, and events celebrating the idea, that people should be proud of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**QUEER:** A traditionally pejorative term for LGBTQ people that has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ activists, who use it self-descriptively as a means to empower the LGBTQ community.

**QUESTIONING:** A term that describes someone

who is unsure of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

**SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY (SRS):** Any one of a variety of surgeries they may be involved in the process of transition from one gender to another. Many transgender people will not undergo SRS for health or financial reasons, or because they choose not to.

**TITLE IX:** A federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in any educational program or activity that receives assistance from the federal government.

**TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, cross-dressers, gender-nonconforming people and so on. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

**TRANSPHOBIA:** The fear or hatred of those who challenge gender stereotypes, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

**TRANSSEXUAL:** A person who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the awareness that their birth-assigned sex is inappropriate. Transsexuals may take steps to change their body, gender role and gender expression to align them with their gender identity.