

Gender-Affirming Language

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Overview: Glossary of terms

The following terms are not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list and are based on currently accepted definitions. In addition, please note that the following terms are Western and U.S.-centric. The terms may not be applicable to other cultures, who may use different labels and/or have other conceptions of gender. Within the LGBTQIA+ population there are various terms that may be considered outdated or slang. These terms are not listed in the glossary below. It is important to note that the language is always evolving so the terms may become outdated. Aside from where directly cited, these definitions are based on definitions found in the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's (WPATH's) Standards of Care, *Sexuality and intimacy: An occupational therapy approach* (Ellis & Ungco, 2022), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's *Understanding the Well-Being of LGBTQIA+ Populations*, *Transgender and Gender Diverse Health Care: The Fenway Guide* (Keuroghlian et al., 2022), Human Rights Campaign (n.d.): *Glossary of Terms*, and the *Trans Care BC: Provincial Health Services Authority(n.d.) Glossary*.

Common Gender-Identity Terminology

Term	Definition
Agender	"Describes a person who identifies as having no gender or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Androgynous	A term used to refer to a gender identity that is neither feminine nor masculine in presentation.
AFAB	An acronym for "Assigned Female at Birth" that denotes what gender an individual was given at birth.
Allyship	Describes when individuals (straight, cisgender, and individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community) actively support and celebrate LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals. In addition to challenging transphobic and homophobic remarks and actions, they also reflect on their own biases.
AMAB	An acronym for "Assigned Male at Birth" that denotes what gender an individual was given at birth.
Assumption Culture	The assumptive, implicit, and false messaging that one knows things (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, etc.) about other people just from appearance.
Binary	In contrast to "nonbinary," this describes a personal characteristic (or social structure or system) with only two possible options. It could describe designations for sex (e.g., male or female), binary gender (e.g., girl/woman/feminine or boy/man/masculine), or sexual orientation (e.g., gay or straight)

Cis Privilege	Advantages that cisgender people experience due to their gender identity as cisgender (majority)
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth (SAAB).
Cisgender Man	“A person assigned male sex at birth who identifies as a man” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Cisgender Woman	“A person assigned female sex at birth who identifies as a woman” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Cisnormative	The belief or assumption that cisgender people are the norm and that anyone outside of being cisgender is abnormal. Can also refer to the belief that all people are cisgender.
Cissexism	Another term for <i>transphobia</i> that refers to prejudice and discrimination against those with a differing gender presentation
Detransition	A term used to describe the discontinuation, or reversal of transgender treatment, such as the cessation of hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
Drag King	A term to describe a performance artist who dresses and acts in a masculine manner and uses male gender stereotypes in their routine. The artist may identify as trans, questioning, or cisgender.
Drag Queen	A term to describe a performance artist who dresses and acts in a feminine manner and uses female gender stereotypes in their routine. The artist may identify as trans, questioning, or cisgender.
Gender	“A term that encompasses the multidimensional characteristics and roles of individuals, inclusive of but not limited to women and men, according to social and cultural norms in social, psychological, and behavioral domains” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Gender-Affirmation	Making social, legal, or medical changes to recognize, accept, and express one’s gender identity (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).
Gender-Affirmation Surgery (GAS)	Surgery that occurs to affirm an individual’s gender identity. This can include a wide range of surgical procedures.
Gender Affirming Care	A spectrum of social, psychological, behavioral, or medical (including hormonal or surgical) services and resources designed to support and affirm someone’s gender identity. (Ellis & Ungco, 2023).
Gender and Sexual Minority (GSM)	A term used to describe individuals whose gender identity and sexual orientation are different from what is considered social and cultural norms (i.e., transgender and gay).
Gender Binary	The idea that gender can only exist in two, separate categories of “male” and “female.”
Gender Creative	A term to describe youth who express and identify their gender outside of societal and cultural norms.

Gender Diverse	People with gender identities that may be a combination of or beyond identities in the traditional girl/woman/feminine and boy/man/masculine binary gender paradigm; for example, people who are genderfluid or nonbinary.
Gender Dysphoria	“The emotional distress experienced when there is a misalignment of one’s physical body and perceived gender with the inner sense of self” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.9).
Gender Emergence	“The process of identifying and accepting one’s own gender identity, and the process of sharing one’s gender identity with others (e.g., disclosing one’s gender identity to friends, family, etc.); may also be called “coming out” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.310).
Gender Euphoria	The joy a person experiences when their gender identity is affirmed between their internal sense of gender and the way their gender is expressed and/or perceived.
Gender Expression	“The outward manifestation of how a person expresses their gender through behaviors, mannerisms, voice, gait, and clothing, which may be interpreted differently depending on culture, context, and historical period” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Genderfluid	“Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is genderfluid may always feel like a mix of more than one gender or may feel more aligned with a certain gender some of the time, another gender at other times, multiple genders sometimes, and sometimes no gender at all” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Gender Identity	“A person’s inner sense of themselves as a girl/woman/feminine, boy/man/masculine, beyond girl/woman/feminine or boy/man/masculine (such as having a nonbinary gender identity), or having no gender” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Gender Identity Change Effort	A series of psychological approaches used to change a person’s gender identity to align with societal expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Also, referred to as “conversion therapy,” which falsely implies that the approaches are legitimate clinical practices instead of harmful discrimination that is rooted in transphobia and societal stigma (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).
Gender Inclusive Language	Language that avoids using gendered words, terms, or phrases and is inclusive to people of all genders.
Gender Marker	The gender designated on a person’s official government-issued documents, such as a passport, driver’s license, or birth certificate.
Gender Minority Stress	“Chronic stress unique to the experience of transgender and gender diverse individuals caused by lifetime experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence that has a social basis in structural, institutional, and policy-level conditions” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.311)
Gender Non-conforming (GNC)	A term that describes a person whose gender identity is outside the traditional gender binary. While similar to terms such as <i>Nonbinary</i> , <i>Gender Diverse</i> , <i>Genderfluid</i> , and <i>Genderqueer</i> it is still considered its own term and identity. *Please note this term may be offensive to some, as it can infer that someone is

	not conforming to what is socially accepted. *
Gender Normative	A term to describe when social and cultural norms align with gender roles and/or gender expression.
Gender Roles	Social and cultural norms that one is expected to behave according to the gender one was assigned at birth.
Genderqueer	“An umbrella term that describes a person whose gender identity is beyond the traditional gender binary of girl/woman/feminine or boy/man/masculine” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Hormone Blockers (Puberty Blockers)	Medication that is used to postpone puberty for adolescents with the goal of temporarily suppressing the unwanted development of secondary sex-characteristics. WPATH (2022) maintains that hormone blockers are fully reversible.
Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)	The administration of hormones (testosterone or estrogen) or other hormone-modulating medications to produce physical changes in secondary sex characteristics in line with gender identity. HRT is not considered a reversible process. (WPATH, 2022).
Intersectionality	How the interconnection of social categorizations (i.e., race, class, gender, etc.) creates privileges or disadvantages for individuals or groups of people.
Intersex	A term used to describe individuals born with primary and/or secondary sex characteristics who do not fit the traditional binary medical definitions of male or female sexual or reproductive anatomy.
LGBTQIA+	An initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, asexual, and all gender and sexual minority people.
LGBTQIA2S+	“Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Two-Spirit. The terms used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations are constantly changing and being updated to better represent people” (Medicine Hat Public Library, n.d.a.).
Lifestyle Choice	“A disrespectful and delegitimizing term used to imply that trans people make the 'optional' choice to be trans. The term is commonly used to imply that any negative ramifications that trans people experience from discrimination is partly their own fault, as the negativity could have been avoided if the individual just chose not to be trans. Although the term 'lifestyle choice' is sometimes used without malice, its basic premise of 'choice' discredits the trans individual's innate sense of gender identity and belittles the dysphoria trans individuals may struggle with, due to living in societies that pathologize, stigmatize, and discriminate against trans individuals” (Trans Care BC: Provincial Health Services Authority, n.d.).
Medical Transition	A term to describe the medical steps needed to align one’s physical body with their gender identity.
Misgender	To refer to a person by a pronoun or other gendered term (e.g., Ms./Mr.) that incorrectly indicates that person’s gender identity or is otherwise inappropriate for or offensive to them (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.311).

Name Used	“The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, even if it is different from the name on that person’s insurance or identification documents (i.e., birth certificate, driver’s license, and passport)” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.311). Also referred to as “chosen name.”
Neopronouns	Set of pronouns created outside the official recognized language that are intended to be gender inclusive.
Neutrois	An individual who may feel neutral or indifferent towards having an identified gender. Also known as genderless and/or agender.
Nonbinary (Enby)	“Describes a person whose gender identity is a combination of or beyond the traditional girl/woman/feminine and boy/man/masculine binary identities. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or enby” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Outing	The act of exposing an individual’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity without their consent, which can negatively impact that person’s wellbeing and safety (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).
Pangender	A term to describe a gender identity that includes all genders.
Passing	A term that refers to an individual’s ability to be perceived as the gender they identify with. (e.g., identifies as a woman and is seen as a woman). Occasionally this term refers to a transgender individual being seen as a cisgender individual. Some individuals view passing as important and receive gender euphoria from being able to pass while others do not consider it important.
Passing Privilege	The privilege an individual receives when they can pass as their desired gender (e.g., a trans woman being able to use the women’s restroom because she’s assumed to be a cisgender female).
Pronouns	“Words used when referring to an individual but not using the individual’s name. Examples of pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs, the appropriate phrasing is “What are your pronouns?” when seeking this information” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.312).
Questioning	When an individual is exploring their gender identity and/or their sexual orientation.
Sex	Assigned at birth based on biological characteristics such as external genitalia, internal genitalia, and hormones.
Sex Assigned at Birth (SAAB)	Specifies sex as defined by anatomical and other biological sex characteristics and designated at birth.
Sexual and Gender Minorities	“A term that describes a broad group of people with sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex development that do not align with societal expectations or norms, including but not limited to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, intersex, asexual, and Two spirit” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.313).

Social Transition	A term used to describe when an individual changes their gender expression to align more with their gender identity through methods of changing their name, pronoun, clothing, hair styles, and/or the ways that they move and speak.
Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD)	Describes individuals whose gender identity does not align with the one they were assigned at birth.
Trans Feminine	“Describes a person who was assigned male sex at birth and identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Transgender	<p>“Describes people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not align based on traditional expectations; for example, a person assigned a female sex at birth who identifies as a man; or vice versa. Sometimes is abbreviated to “trans” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.313).</p> <p>Transgender can also refer to those who use terms such as nonbinary, genderfluid, genderqueer, etc.; however, not all individuals with these identities may identify as transgender.</p>
Trans Man	“A person assigned a female sex at birth who identifies as man” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Trans Masculine	“Describes a person who was assigned a female sex at birth and identifies with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Transphobia	“Discrimination toward, or fear, marginalization, and hatred of, transgender people or those perceived as transgender. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be transphobic” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).
Trans Woman	“A person assigned male sex at birth who identifies as a woman” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8)
Two Spirit	“Two-Spirit, a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term niizh manidoowag, refers to a person who embodies both a masculine and feminine spirit. Activist Albert McLeod developed the term in 1990 to broadly reference Indigenous peoples in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. Two-spirit is used by some Indigenous peoples to describe their gender, sexual and spiritual identity” (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2023).
World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH)	“Professional organization devoted to transgender health, whose mission as an international multidisciplinary professional association is to promote evidence-based care, education, research, advocacy, public policy and respect in transgender health” (Trans Care BC: Provincial Health Services Authority, n.d.).

Relationship Styles

Inquiring about relationship styles can inform practitioners on the client's support system, sexual health, and caregivers. It is important to use inclusive language and not assume the client's relationship styles. Refer to the [Names and Pronouns](#) and [Inclusive Environment](#) documents for more information.

Terms	Definitions
Aromantic	A term used to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction to others.
Asexual	A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others.
Bisexual	A term used to describe a person who is attracted to two or more genders.
Demisexual	A term used to describe a person who only experiences sexual attraction after they form a strong emotional connection with someone.
Gay	A term used to describe same-gender attraction, typically between men although may also be used for women who experience same-gender attraction.
Heteronormative	The idea that being straight (heterosexual) is the norm while any other sexuality is abnormal. Can also refer to the idea that all relationships are heterosexual.
Lesbian	A term used to describe same gender attraction between women.
Marriage	A term used to describe a legal and social union of individual people, also known as matrimony.
Monogamish	A term used to describe when a couple agrees to step outside the bounds of monogamy. It is not fully considered an open relationship, as portions of the relationship are closed. The couple agrees to set boundaries when engaging with an additional party.
Monogamous	A term used to describe a form of exclusively partnering with one person at a time, which can be sexual and/or emotional
Open Relationship	A term used to describe a form of consensual non-monogamy in which typically there is an exclusive emotional commitment to the primary partner while being non-exclusive sexually (Hammack et al., 2018).
Pansexual	A term used to describe a person who is attracted to all genders.
Polyamorous	A term used to describe a form of consensual non-monogamy where multiple emotional and sexual attachments are supported (Hammack et al., 2018).
Polygamy	A term used to describe the practice of having more than one spouse at the same time (Merriam-Webster, n.d.c).
Queer	An umbrella term used to describe people who identify as sexual and/or gender minorities.
Romantic Orientation	How a person characterizes their romantic attraction towards other people.

Sexual Orientation	How a person characterizes their sexual attraction towards other people.
Straight	A term used to describe a person who is only attracted to those of the opposite gender.
Swinging	A term used to describe a form of consensual non-monogamy while married in which the couples agree to swap partners; also known as “co-marital sex” (Hammack et al., 2018).

Sexual and Romantic Orientation

Aromantic	A term used to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction to others.
Asexual	A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others.
Bisexual	A term used to describe a person who is attracted to two or more genders.
Bioromantic	A term used to describe a person who is romantically attracted to two or more genders.
Demisexual	A term used to describe a person who only experiences sexual attraction after they form a strong emotional connection with someone.
Demiromantic	A term used to describe a person who only experiences romantic attraction after they form a strong emotional connection with someone.
Gay	A term used to describe same-gender attraction, typically between men although may also be used for women who experience same-gender attraction.
Heteronormative	The idea that being straight (heterosexual) is the norm while any other sexuality is abnormal. Can also refer to the idea that all relationships are heterosexual.
Lesbian	A term used to describe same gender attraction between women.
Panromantic	A term used to describe a person who is romantically attracted to all genders.
Queer	An umbrella term used to describe people who identify as sexual and/or gender minorities.
Romantic orientation	How a person characterizes their romantic attraction towards other people.
Sexual orientation	How a person characterizes their sexual attraction towards other people.
Straight	A term used to describe a person who is only attracted to those of the opposite gender.

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

It is important for practitioners the needs of their transgender and gender diverse clients to provide gender affirming care.

Terms	Definitions
Binding	A term that refers to the practice of using a commercial binder, tight sports bras, undershirts, or other materials to provide a flat, more masculinized chest contour.
Gaff	An undergarment designed to flatten the external genital bulge.
Packer	“A prosthetic device that creates the appearance of a penis and testicles or the shape of external genitalia” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.312).
Padding	The practice of using silicone inserts, fabric or foam pads, or breast forms to produce the external appearance of a more feminized chest contour (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).
Penile prosthesis	“A device surgically implanted within the new penis following phalloplasty to allow for erections” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.312).
Stand-To-Pee Device	“A device used to facilitate standing urination” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.313).
Tucking	“The practice of tucking the testicles into the inguinal canals and securing the phallus backward between the legs to create a flatter genital region” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.313).

Gender-Affirming Surgeries

It is important for practitioners to understand care pre- & post-gender affirming surgery, outlined in detail in the [Surgical Considerations](#) document.

Terms	Definitions
Facial Gender-Affirming Surgery	“A group of surgical procedures that can be utilized to alter gendered dimensions of the face often called “facial feminization surgery” can also be used to “masculinize” facial features for people of all genders. Procedures include craniofacial reconstruction of the bones (forehead, jaw, chin) and changing soft tissue” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.310).
Hair Restoration Surgery	A term to describe a surgery that moves hair follicles from the donor site to the recipient site of the body
Revision surgery	Surgery performed to correct functional or visual sequelae from a previous surgery, ranging from a minor office procedure to improve soft tissue contour or remove scarring to operations that are more intensive than the initial procedure
Feminizing Surgeries	
Describes gender-affirming surgical procedures that change the physical characteristics of one’s gender which can include	
Chest augmentation	Surgical procedure that increases breast size with the use of silicone or saline inserts may also be referred to as breast construction surgery.

Orchiectomy	A surgical procedure to remove one or both testicles. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b)
Tracheal Shave	A surgical procedure performed to reduce the size of thyroid cartilage for a feminine appearance. Also called Adam’s Apple reduction surgery.
Vaginoplasty	The creation of vulvar subunits and the vaginal canal through a surgical procedure.
Vocal Feminization surgery	A term used to describe a surgical procedure that elevates the pitch of the voice.
Vulvoplasty	Creation of the vulvar subunits and introitus but not the vaginal canal through surgery. Can also be called the zero- or-limited-depth vaginoplasty.
Masculinizing Surgeries Describes gender-affirming surgical procedures that change the physical characteristics of one’s gender which can include:	
Chest Recontouring	Surgical procedure that removes breast tissue and recontours the remaining tissue into a gender-affirming shape. (See also: <i>Double-Incision mastectomy, Periareolar mastectomy</i>)
Colpocleisis	A surgical procedure that closes the vaginal canal, often performed with a vaginectomy. (See also: <i>Vaginectomy</i>) (Deutsch, 2016)
Double-Incision Mastectomy	“Surgery to create a flat chest that utilizes longer incisions under the pectoral shadow” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.310).
Hysterectomy	A surgical procedure that removes part or all of the uterus. A hysterectomy can also include removal of the ovaries, cervix, fallopian tubes, and surrounding structures. (Deutsch, 2016).
Metoidioplasty	A surgical procedure that uses the clitoris to create a penis. When taking testosterone, the clitoris experiences hypertrophy which results in a 4 cm to 7 cm penis in length (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).
Oophorectomy	A surgical procedure to remove one or both ovaries. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a).
Periareolar Mastectomy	“Surgery to create a flat chest that involves incisions around the nipple-areolar complex” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.310).
Perineal Urethrostomy	“A procedure that results in a urethral meatus in the perineum. It can be performed in cisgender men or TGD people experiencing urinary complications” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.312).
Phalloplasty	“A procedure that uses tissue from another part of the body to construct a penis” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.312).
Reconstructive Urology	“Reconstructive urology (also called genitourinary reconstruction) is a subspecialty of urology that focuses on restoring normal urine flow in both the upper and the lower urinary tract to treat post-operative complications such as urethral fistulas and strictures, which are particularly common with Phalloplasty surgery” (TransHealthCare, 2022).
Salpingectomy	A surgical procedure to remove one or both fallopian tubes. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.d).

Scrotoplasty	A procedure that uses the labia majora to create a scrotum.
Urethral Lengthening	“Surgical extension of the urine channel through the new penis created during metoidioplasty or phalloplasty” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 313).
Vaginectomy	A surgical procedure that removes the vaginal mucosal tissue, often performed in combination with a colpocleisis. (<i>See also: colpocleisis.</i>) (Deutsch, 2016)

Theoretical Concepts

It is important for practitioners to understand the theoretical concepts that can assist with guiding their interventions for their transgender and gender diverse clients. Refer to the [Frame of Reference](#) document for more details.

Terms	Definitions
Cultural Humility	A learning-oriented approach for providers that emphasizes perpetual learning and self-evaluation, developing mutually beneficial relationships with communities, and acknowledging the power dynamic between provider and client. (Agner, 2020)
Distal Stressors	“Stress-inducing events that occur due to an individual’s gender minority identity (e.g., gender-related discrimination, rejection, victimization, and identity non-affirmation)” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 310).
Ecological (or Scosocial) Framework/Model	“The use of multilevel interventions that address individual, institutional, organizational, and societal/public policy issues to reduce inequities and barriers to health and well-being for TGD populations” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 310).
Intersectionality	“A theoretical framework that explores how systems of oppression and privilege, as well as the power relations associated with these systems, construct our perspectives and experiences; this framework seeks to inform the empowerment of individuals and groups of people negatively impacted by the power relations” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 311).
Gender Minority Stress Model	Expanded from the Meyer Minority Stress Model and helps practitioners understand the range of stressors experienced by transgender and gender diverse people (Testa et al, 2015).
Proximal Stressors	“Gender-minority individuals’ internal reactions to distal stressors, including expectations of violence or discrimination and nondisclosure of one’s gender identity to prevent mistreatment” (Keuroghlian et al., p. 312, 2022).
Resilience	“The use of adaptive coping strategies that enable individuals and communities to thrive despite adversity” (Keuroghlian et al., p. 312, 2022).
Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)	“An organizational structure and treatment framework that centers on understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma” (Keuroghlian et al., p. 313, 2022).

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