Welcoming Trans Students

Resource Packet
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sexual orientation
- sexual attraction
- emotional attraction
- sexual behaviors
- partnership decisions
- identity
- community

gender expression
behaviors that express, or can be interpreted as expressing, something about gender.

gender identity
one’s understanding of oneself in relation to concepts like man, woman, trans, genderqueer, and many others.

biological sex
includes genotype, internal and external sex organs, hormone levels, secondary sex characteristics, etc.

assigned sex
category assigned on id documents

Anyone is free to copy, distribute and adapt this one-page handout, for non-commercial purposes. This version was created by Davey Shlasko and Think Again Training, 2017. The first genderbread cookie was developed by youth activists with Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC) in Portland, OR around 1997, drawing on ideas developed by many scholars and activists. The first published version was in Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, 2nd edition in 2007. www.thinkagaintraining.com
Gender and Sexual Orientation Terminology

The terms below are defined as they are usually used in U.S. English. The definitions are guidelines, not meant to be authoritative or immutable. People use them in different ways. Use them thoughtfully.

Gender and Sexual Orientation Concepts

**Binary gender system** refers to the system of beliefs, structures, policies and practices based on the idea that there are exactly two genders (where gender and sex are assumed to be interchangeable).

**Biological sex** refers to one’s body - the physiological and anatomical characteristics of maleness and femaleness with which a person is born or that develop with physical maturity. **Biological sex markers** include internal and external reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as facial hair and breasts.

**Sex assigned at birth** (or “assigned sex”) is the sex category assigned to each of us on ID documents, beginning with the birth certificate.

**Gender expression** refers to appearance and behaviors that convey something about one’s gender identity, or that others interpret as conveying something about one’s gender identity, including clothing, mannerisms, communication patterns, and so on.

**Gender identity** refers to one’s own understandings of oneself in terms of gender categories like man, woman, boy, girl, transgender, genderqueer, and many others. Gender identity cannot be observed; the only way you can know someone’s gender identity is if they tell you. Some people’s gender identity is consistent for their whole lives; other people experiences shifts in their gender identity over time.

**Gender-neutral** usually means inclusive of all genders, as opposed to gender-specific. A “gender neutral” restroom is one that everybody can use.

**Passing** means being seen as belonging unquestionably to a particular group, e.g. being seen as a woman or as a man. Often, it refers to a trans person being seen as the gender they are; sometimes it refers to being seen as the gender as which one wants to be seen at the moment, for safety or other reasons. Some people use “passing” to mean being seen as cisgender (e.g. when a trans woman is assumed by others to be a cisgender woman, she is “passing”), while for others it is not that specific. Passing is a complex and problematic concept, with regard to not only trans issues but also race, class, and other systems of categorization and power. Useful thoughts on some of the problems with “passing” can be found in Julia Serano’s *Whipping Girl* (Chapter 8).

**Pronouns** are words used in place of nouns, such as he, she, I, we, you, and they. Calling trans people the pronouns they want to be called (usually those that most closely match their gender identity) is a crucial sign of respect.

**Sexual orientation** describes an individual’s patterns of romantic and/or sexual attraction, in terms of gender. For example, someone may be attracted to people of the same gender as themself, to people of a particular other gender, or to people of all genders. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity. People of any gender may have any sexual orientation.

**Transition** can refer to any of the medical, social, legal, spiritual and personal processes that a trans person may go through in order to live their life in a way that works for their gender.
Identity Categories

Terms of self-identity are complicated. When talking about a particular person, use whichever terms that person uses for themself, bearing in mind they may not use terms exactly as they’re defined here. This list covers many of the most commonly used terms, but it is far from exhaustive (especially internationally).

Many of these terms are sometimes used as nouns rather than adjectives, e.g. “transsexual” rather than “transsexual people.” Unless you are talking about a group you are part of, it’s most respectful to stick with adjectives, and talk about “transsexual people,” “gay people,” etc., not “transsexuals” and “gays.”

**Agender (adj.):** Someone who does not experience themself as having a gender identity; someone who does not identify as a man, woman, or any other gender category.

**Asexual (adj.):** Someone who experiences little or no sexual desire (but may desire nonsexual romantic connection).

**Assigned male at birth (AMAB); Assigned female at birth (AFAB):** Identifies how an individual’s sex was categorized at birth. Used to avoid assumptions and overgeneralizations about identity and biology. For example, AFAB might be used in place of “girls” or “biological females” if you intend to include everyone raised as a girl, across variations in anatomy as well as current identity.

**Bisexual (adj.):** Describes people who are attracted to both men and women; or, people who are attracted to those of the same gender as their own and those of a different gender.

**Cisgender (adj.):** Not trans. From Latin cis- meaning “on the same side,” as opposed to trans- meaning “across.” Describes people whose gender identity matches what is expected of them based on their sex assigned at birth – people assigned male at birth who identify as men and people assigned female at birth who identify as women.

**Cross Dresser (n.):** Someone who enjoys dressing in clothes typically associated with the other of the two binary gender categories. Most cross dressers are heterosexual men who enjoy wearing women’s clothes occasionally.

**Drag Kings and Drag Queens (n.):** Drag is the practice of dressing and acting in an exaggerated masculine or feminine way, usually playfully for theatrical performance. Drag Queens are usually men whose performances highlight femininity; Drag Kings are usually women whose performances highlight masculinity. People with nonbinary gender identities can also do drag.

**Gay (adj.):** Describes men and women whose primary romantic/erotic attraction is to people of their same gender, i.e. men who are attracted to men and women who are attracted to women.

**Gender creative (adj.):** Used to describe children whose gender expression and/or identity stands out, and who may or may not turn out to be transgender in the sense of needing to transition.

**Genderqueer (adj.):** One of many identity labels used by trans people whose gender identity is outside the binary. Genderqueer means different things to different people, and genderqueer people look, act and describe themselves in a wide variety of ways.

**Gender fluid (adj.):** Someone whose gender identity (not only expression) varies from day to day.

**Hijra (adj., n.):** A traditional gender category in South Asia (including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). Hijras are neither men nor women. They are usually AMAB (although many are intersex), and transition
as adults (sometimes but not always including surgery). Hijras occupy a unique role in the social, economic and family life of the community, different from the roles expected of men or women.

**Intersex (adj.):** Describes someone whose anatomy or physiology is not easily categorized as simply male or female. This may be apparent at birth, or may become apparent at puberty. Some intersex people are also trans, and many are not.

**Lesbian (adj.) (n.):** Describes women whose primary romantic and erotic attraction is to women.

**LGBT/GLBT:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans. Also sometimes includes Q (queer, questioning), I (intersex), S (same-gender-loving), A (ally, especially in youth spaces), A (asexual) and others.

**Nonbinary (adj.):** Broad term for any gender identity other than man and woman, such as genderqueer, two-spirit, hijra, gender-fluid, and so on.

**Queer (adj.):** An umbrella term describing a wide range of people who do not conform to heterosexual and/or gender norms; a reclaimed derogatory slur taken as a political term to unite people who are marginalized because of their nonconformance to dominant gender identities and/or heterosexuality. Sometimes used as a shortcut for LGBT. Other times used to distinguish politically queer people from more mainstream LGBT people. Because of its history as a slur, this term should be used thoughtfully. If you’re not queer, or for public communications, LGBTQ is often more appropriate.

**Trans* (adj.):** Anyone whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs significantly from what is expected of them in their culture based on their sex assigned at birth. This broad category includes transgender, transsexual and nonbinary people, cross dressers, drag queens and kings, masculine women and feminine men, and more. The asterisk is a reminder that trans* includes everyone who could be described this way, not only a particular subset. We use the term so broadly because it enables us to talk about issues facing the whole range of trans* people; at the same time, it’s important to remember that not everyone who could be described as trans* self-identifies as a trans* person.

**Trans (adj.):** Can be used as broadly as trans*, or can be short for transgender as defined below.

**Transgender (adj.):** Can be used as broadly as trans*, but more often refers specifically to people who have an experience of transitioning (socially, legally and/or medically) from living as one gender to living as another gender. **Tip:** Transgender should almost always be used as an adjective. As a noun (e.g. “she’s transgender”) it sounds disrespectful to many people, and as a past-tense verb (“transgendered”) it does not make any sense.

**Transsexual (adj.):** Usually, a person who experiences an intense, persistent, and long-term feeling that their body and assigned sex are at odds with their gender identity. Such individuals often (but not always) desire to change their bodies to bring them into alignment with their gender identities. This term originated as a medical diagnosis, and many people do not identify with it for that reason.

**Trans man (or transgender man, or transsexual man) (n.):** Someone assigned female at birth who now identifies and lives as a man. Also FTM/ F2M/ FtM (adj.)

**Trans woman (or transgender woman, or transsexual woman) (n.):** Someone assigned male at birth who now identifies and lives as a woman. Also MTF/ M2F/ MtF (adj.).

**Two-Spirit (adj., n.):** A contemporary Native American term describing a range of gender and sexual orientation categories from cultural traditions, both historical and current, across North America (and sometimes the rest of the hemisphere) that are outside the Euro-American binary system.
Highlights from the US Trans Survey

Access further survey results, including state-specific statistics, at http://www.ustranssurvey.org/

Identification Documents

Overall, nearly one-third (32%) of individuals who have shown IDs with a name or gender that did not match their presentation reported negative experiences, such as being denied services or harassed.

Health & Healthcare

One in four (25%) experienced a problem with their insurance in the past year related to being trans. One-third (33%) reported having at least one negative experience with a health care provider in the past year related to being trans, such as verbal harassment, refusal of treatment, or having to teach the health care provider about transgender people to receive appropriate care.

Trans people in this survey were 8x as likely as the general population to have experienced “severe psychological distress,” and about 10x as likely to have been suicidal.

- Psychological distress was highly correlated with having unsupportive families, having lost a job, and having been physically or sexually assaulted.
- In other words, being trans itself does not lead to psychological distress; being targeted for violence and exclusion does.

Trans people are more likely than the general public to have been tested for HIV. 1.4% of respondents report being HIV+ (compared to 0.3% for the US overall), but the rates are much higher for trans women of color, particularly Black trans women, at 19%.
Education

Of those who had been out as trans in K-12:
- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents had one or more negative experiences, such as being verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, or physically or sexually assaulted.
- Seventeen percent (17%) left a K–12 school because the mistreatment was so bad

Of those who were out in college:
- Twenty-four percent (24%) of people were verbally, physically, or sexually harassed
- About ½ who are out to some classmates said they were supportive

Income & Employment

Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents who have ever been employed reported losing at least one job because of their gender identity or expression.

Thirty percent (30%) of respondents who had a job in the past year reported being fired, denied a promotion, or experiencing some other form of mistreatment in the workplace related to their gender identity or expression, such as being harassed or attacked.

Nearly 1/5 have been in the military

Respondent have more than 3x the unemployment rate and 3x the poverty rate of the US overall

Nearly 1/3 have experienced homelessness

Police & Bathrooms

Most (60%) are uncomfortable asking police for help, and most who have interacted with police report being mistreated

Nearly ¼ had someone question their presence in a restroom, more than half avoided using a restroom for fear of harassment or police involvement
Best Practices for Trans Inclusion in Education

It’s important to consider trans inclusion on at least 3 different levels in education: interpersonal behaviors, curriculum and program content, and institutional structure and policy.

At each of these levels, we can identify practices that are beginning to work toward trans inclusion, better practices or trans inclusion, and finally “best practices.”

The “beginning practices” and some of the “better practices” are concrete, tangible steps you can implement in the short to medium term to make your organization somewhat more inclusive for trans students, staff and faculty. It will still be an essentially cis-centric and cisnormative institution, but trans folks will have a chance at succeeding there.

The “best practices” go much further, but are less concrete. They require some imagination and a great deal of commitment. The reality is that there is no simple check list of steps that, if you do them all, will make your educational institution perfectly trans-inclusive. That’s because society and culture are ever-changing, so inclusion, equity and justice likewise are moving targets. The “best practices” we recommend as truly transformative action for trans inclusion and justice are not specific fixes that can put into place and then forgotten. Rather they are processes that organizations should practice in an ongoing way to continually work toward intersectional trans inclusion and justice.
**Beginning Practices** acknowledge and begin to address barriers faced by trans folks

For example...

**In interpersonal behaviors**
- Call people by requested names/pronouns
- Avoid intrusive questions

**In curriculum and program content**
- Acknowledge the limits of your expertise on trans issues relevant to your field
- Begin to find and add info and resources

**In institutional structure and policy**
- Acknowledge gender-related bullying and formulate a rule against it (or formalize an understanding that existing rules about bullying and harassment include behaviors based on transphobia)
- Establish mechanisms for trans students to request individual accommodations related to housing, name changes, etc.

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**Better Practices** take meaningful steps toward finding and remedying gaps in accessibility for trans folks

For example...

**In interpersonal behaviors**
- Do your “homework” to work through internalized transphobia and transmisogyny (and its intersections with racism, classism, etc.)
- Speak out against transphobic statements, legislation, etc.

**In curriculum and program content**
- Incorporate work by trans scholars and relevant to trans lives - not only white/class-privileged scholars and lives, and not only as a separate “trans week”
- Model trans-inclusive thinking and behavior

**In institutional structure and policy**
- Amend database to include legal and preferred name (and make sure each shows up where it needs to)
- Hire diverse trans and trans-affirming staff and faculty
- Establish gender-inclusive restrooms and athletic opportunities

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**Best” Practices fully embody a nuanced understanding of the full range of human gender experiences**

For example...

**In interpersonal behaviors**
- Offer active solidarity in the context of deep, accountable relationships with diverse trans individuals and communities

**In curriculum and program content**
- Reimagine curriculum and program content, including and sometimes centering diverse trans experiences from the beginning

**In institutional structure and policy**
- Redesign policies and structures based on an understanding that all kinds of trans people will always be part of the organization at every level
Selected Resources

Working for inclusion and justice is a lifelong practice. Here are a few resources to inspire and inform you on your way. This list is not exhaustive, and the resources listed are not perfect. We encourage you to use the models and ideas discussed in our training session to think critically about these and other resources you encounter, and to share your thoughts and further resources with each other.

Start with your own local/campus resources! https://www.seattleu.edu/oma/student-success-resources/resources-for-trans-students/

General Trans Allyship Info for Anyone


Trans and Gender-nonconforming inclusion resources from Smith College School for Social Work: https://www.smith.edu/ssw/tgnc


Intersectional (not Trans-Specific) Allyship Resources

Chesca Leigh Ramsey’s video guide on how to apologize: https://tinyurl.com/jpgdcwm and “5 Tips for Being a Good Ally”: https://tinyurl.com/kcq92je

Jay Smooth on “How to Tell Somebody They Sound Racist” (also, generally how to give feedback): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Ti-gkjiXc

Jay Smooth on empathy and accountability (regarding Rachel Dolezol): https://tinyurl.com/ycm55sjs

A brief primer on intersectionality: https://tinyurl.com/ya8ltssr


Trans Medical Info


WPATCH Standards of Care: *Flexible* standards for transition-related mental and physical healthcare for trans people (not all healthcare providers follow these) [http://www.wpath.org/uploaded_files/140/files/IJT%20SOC,%20V7.pdf](http://www.wpath.org/uploaded_files/140/files/IJT%20SOC,%20V7.pdf)

Trans Legal Info


ACLU “know your rights” page for trans folks: [https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/transgender-people-and-law](https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/transgender-people-and-law)

Super Smart Trans Analysis

Enke, A. (2012). *Transfeminist perspectives in and beyond transgender and gender studies*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Especially Enke’s own chapter, “The education of little cis: Cisgender and the discipline of opposing bodies.” (Authorship note: The editor of this volume goes by Finn Enke. The publisher made Finn include their previous first name on the book cover, to capitalize on Finn’s academic reputation. I cite the book as published to make sure you can find it, but you should call the author Finn.)


Regional and National Advocacy Resources

Gender Justice League (based in Seattle): [https://www.genderjusticeleague.org/](https://www.genderjusticeleague.org/) has a resource page ([https://www.genderjusticeleague.org/resources](https://www.genderjusticeleague.org/resources)) as well as info about local and state-level advocacy efforts.

National Center for Lesbian Rights (http://www.nclrights.org) – NCLR’s work includes advocacy and services related to trans immigrants seeking legal status in the U.S.

National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) (http://www.transexuality.org) works on federal-level policy issues affecting trans people.

Transgender Law Center. (http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org) Policy advocacy at federal and state levels. Resources include research, policy briefs, action kits and video testimonials.


SONG (Southerners on New Ground) ([http://southernersonnewground.org/](http://southernersonnewground.org/))

Sylvia Rivera Law Project ([http://www.srlp.org](http://www.srlp.org)) One of the first trans poc-led trans advocacy orgs; gives great info and inspiration for what intersectional, urban trans advocacy can look like


Gender Spectrum: [https://www.genderspectrum.org/](https://www.genderspectrum.org/)

ACLU: [https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights](https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights)