

# TRANSGENDER 101

This packet is not a complete resource on transgender issues, but it will allow us all to have a similar working knowledge of terminology, frequently asked questions, and ways to engage and be an ally to transgender people as we work toward eliminating not only homophobia but also transphobia from athletics. We encourage you to take personal responsibility for being an ally to the transgender community by educating yourself about some basic information about being transgender and understand how to effectively work with transgender people to make sports (and everywhere else) inclusive, respectful and safe for people of all gender identities and gender expressions.

Thanks,

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## TRANSGENDER GENERAL TERMINOLOGY\*

**Sex:** The classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals.

**Gender Identity:** How each of us self-identify. One can self-identify in whatever way feels most comfortable to them (boy, girl, gender non-conforming, gender queer). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match.

**Gender Expression:** External manifestation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through "masculine," "feminine" or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. We all have both a gender identity and a sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or none of these. For example, a man who transitions from male to female and is attracted to other women might identify as a lesbian or a gay woman.

## TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

**Transgender:** An umbrella term (adj.) 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 and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). Use the descriptive term (transgender, transsexual, cross-dresser, FTM or MTF) preferred by the individual. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the label to fit.

**Trans:** An inclusive abbreviation encompassing transgender, transsexual, gender non-conforming, gender queer, and other identities not specifically male or female.

**Transsexual:** An older term which originated in the medical and psychological communities. While some transsexual people still prefer to use the term to describe themselves, many transgender people prefer the term transgender to transsexual. Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, as many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

**Transvestite:** Derogatory term to avoid. (See Cross-Dressing)

**Transphobia:** Describes a range of negative attitudes and behaviors toward transgender people or gender non-conforming people as individuals or as a group. Transphobia is manifested by hostile or derisive language and actions toward transgender people or gender non-conforming people.

**Transition:** Coming to know one's gender identity is not a one-step process; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Sometimes simply figuring out who we are is all the transitioning that one will need/want to do. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, legal and medical adjustments: telling one's family; friends and/or co-workers; changing one's name and preferred pronouns; changing one's name/or sex on legal

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documents; beginning hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more forms of surgery. Transition is not always done medically and is different for each person.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS):** Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one small part of transition (see Transition above). Preferred term to "sex change operation." SRS can include "top surgery" (breast augmentation, double mastectomy) and "bottom surgery" (vaginoplasty, metiodioplasty, phalloplasty). Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have SRS. People should avoid overemphasizing the role of SRS in the transition process.

**FTM:** Acronym for "female to male" and refers to a transgender man.

**MTF:** Acronym for "male to female" and refers to a transgender woman.

**Cross-Dressing:** To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it. "Cross-dresser" should NOT be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex or who intends to do so in the future. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression. Cross-dressing is not necessarily associated with erotic activity. Cross-dressing is not indicative of sexual orientation. Cross dresser is the preferred term instead of "transvestite."

**Intersex:** People with intersex conditions (Differences of Sexual Development) are born with physically mixed or atypical bodies with respect to biological sex characteristics, i.e. chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations that make a person's sex ambiguous (e.g., Klinefelter Syndrome). Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform surgical operations to conform the infant's body to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults speak out against the practice. The term intersex is not interchangeable with or a synonym for transgender.

**Gender Queer:** Term to describe a person who doesn't identify as either male or female and doesn't want to be classified as either. This is a personal term and needs to be determined by the individual in order for the label to apply. Sometimes people will use non-gendered pronouns; since there are several variations of such it is best to ask the person what pronouns they use to identify themselves.

**Gender Fluid:** Conveys a wide, flexible range of gender expression of interests and behaviors that may change from day to day. Gender fluid people do not feel confined by typical gender identity boundaries or stereotypes of gender. They may identify as a girl/woman one day and as a boy/man another day or they may feel that neither term accurately describes their sense of who they are.

**Cisgender** (adj.): Refers to someone whose gender identity is consistent with the gender they were assigned at birth.

## TRANSGENDER TERMS TO AVOID

Problematic: "transgenders," "a transgender"

Preferred: "transgender people," "a transgender person"

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders." Instead say, "Tony is a transgender man," or "The parade included many transgender people."

Problematic: "transgendered"

Preferred: "transgender"

The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous "-ed" tacked onto the end. An "-ed" suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. For example, it is grammatically incorrect to turn transgender into a participle, as it is an adjective, not a verb, and only verbs can be used as participles by adding an "-ed" suffix.

Problematic: "sex change," "pre-operative," "post-operative"

Preferred: "transition"

Referring to a sex change operation, or using terms such as pre- or post-operative, inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.

Problematic: Transgendering

Preferred either transitioning or transgender depending on use.

Do not say: "Jim is transgendering" or "Joan is transgendering" Instead say "Jim has started his transition" or "Joan is a transgender woman"

Problematic: Using transgender as an identifier to describe people without their permission or out of context.

Preferred: State that a person is a man or a woman. It is not appropriate or necessary to state John is a transgender man or Beth is a transgender woman. This is potentially outing people who do not want to be out and is placing emphasis on the fact that they are not biologically male or female and thus different. Instead just say John is the guy or Beth is the woman over there. If a person feels that male or female does not appropriate fit for them, refer to them as the person over there.

Avoid: "deceptive," "fooling," "pretending," "posing" or "masquerading"

Gender identity is an integral part of a person's identity. Do not characterize transgender people as "deceptive," as "fooling" other people, or as "pretending" to be, "posing" or "masquerading" as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are disrespectful and insulting.

Avoid: "she-male," "he-she," "it," "trannie," "tranny," "shim," "gender-bender"

These words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used.

Avoid: "bathroom bill"

A new term created and used by far-right extremists to oppose non-discrimination laws that protect transgender people. The term is geared to incite fear and panic at the thought of encountering transgender people in public restrooms. Use non-discrimination law/ordinance instead.

### Avoid: Cheating

People who are competing and identify as a transgender person are not cheating or seeking an advantage in sports competition. This can be a big issue for transgender people in sports where this is often one of the first things people worry about when transgender athletes compete on male or female teams. See the On The Team reference for a discussion that addresses concerns about transgender athletes having a competitive advantage over cisgender athletes.

## **NAMES, PRONOUN USAGE & DESCRIPTIONS**

Always use a transgender person's chosen name. Often transgender people cannot afford a legal name change or are not yet old enough to change their name legally. They should be afforded the same respect for their chosen name as anyone else who lives by a name other than their birth name (e.g., celebrities).

Ask transgender people which pronoun they would like you to use rather than guessing based on someone's appearance. A person, who identifies as a certain gender, whether or not that person has taken hormones or had some form of surgery, should be referred to by the pronouns appropriate for that gender. Be sensitive to how and where you ask about pronouns since not all transgender people are out.

If it is not possible to ask a transgender person which pronoun he or she prefers, use the person's preferred name until you can ask them what pronouns they use. Or if you hear them use pronouns for themselves then use that to address them.

It is never appropriate to put quotation marks around either a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person's gender identity.

When describing transgender people, use the correct term or terms to describe their gender identity. For example, a person who is born male and transitions to become female is a transgender woman, whereas a person who is born female and transitions to become male is a transgender man.

Avoid pronoun confusion when examining the stories and backgrounds of transgender people prior to their transition. It is usually best to report on transgender people's stories from the present day instead of narrating them from some point or multiple points in the past, thus avoiding confusion and potentially disrespectful use of incorrect pronouns.

\*Resource from <http://www.glaad.org/transgender>

### **How to Be an Ally to Transgender People\*\***

- Understand that every transgender person's journey is different. Do not assume that all transgender people transition in the same ways or share the same perspectives on transgender identity.
- Understand that transitioning genders is a complex and lengthy process and differs for each person.

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- Respect the privacy of transgender people. For example, do not ask invasive questions about medical procedures or hormone treatments. Do not ask how a person has sex or what their genitals look like.
- Validate people's gender expression. It is important to refer to a transgender person by the pronoun appropriate to their gender identity. In other words, if someone identifies as female, then refer to the person as she; if they identify as male, refer to the person as he. If you are not sure, ask them. Never use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgender. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful. Some transgender people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns: "hir" instead of "her" and "his," and "sie" or "ze" instead of "she" and "he."
- Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society's expectations about "women's" and "men's behavior."
- Do not share the gender identity of individuals without their permission. Do not assume that everyone knows. The decision to tell someone about their gender should be left to the person.
- Do not assume that a transgender person is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or that the person will seek to transition to become heterosexual. Remember that sexual orientation and gender identity are two different parts of ourselves.
- Do not expect transgender people to be responsible for educating you. Educate yourself and others about transgender histories and concerns. Introduce trainings, readings, and other resources to your colleagues to continue educational efforts to deconstruct social norms around gender, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Use non-gender-specific inclusive language. Ask "Are you seeing someone?" or "Are you in a committed relationship?," instead of "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" or "Are you married?" Use the word "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife."
- When you learn about someone's transgender identity, do not assume that it is a fad or trend. While public discussions about transgender topics are a relatively recent phenomenon, most transgender people have dealt with their gender identity for many years, often at great personal and professional costs. It is important to trust that someone's decision to present themselves as gender variant is not made lightly or without due consideration.
- Work to change policies in areas such as housing, employment, student records and forms, and health care that discriminate against transgender people and seek to include gender identity/expression in your team/league's non-discrimination policy.
- When asking for sex or gender on surveys or demographic information forms, add transgender as an option or include a blank line allowing for the person to identify their own sex/gender. Foster a conversation as to why this information is relevant and how it can be confirmed. Often, like in cases of federal funding, a gender binary breakdown is necessary. Discuss within your department or with colleagues how broadly sex or gender can be depicted to be inclusive of your full community.
- If a student-athlete comes out as transgender, allow them to dictate how and if they come out to their teammates, classmates and/or teachers. Provide the person with support without pushing them to disclose all this information. They might be coming out to you because they trust you but they are not ready to be out in other areas of their life. When coming out as a transgender student-athlete or athlete it really becomes a matter of public interest and if this is not handled with respect for privacy it won't take much for the entire campus to know or more people to know. This can place a person physically and emotionally at risk.

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**How Might the Needs of Transgender People Differ from the Needs of *Non-Transgender LGB People*?\*\*\***

- They may identify as heterosexual, so may not be dealing with sexual identity issues (they will likely be seen by society as lesbian or gay, though, because of the common stereotype or because of appearances. Take, for example, someone who identifies as female but who looks male and who is dating a biological man. She will see this as a heterosexual relationship, but most people will see two men together and perceive it as a gay relationship). It is important to note that a person may have identified as heterosexual prior to transition as well, and may need to explore their sexuality to embrace an LGB identity while transitioning.
- They may experience more verbal and physical attacks than most LGB people if they are visibly gender variant. After all, most LGB harassment stems from the perceived violation of gender norms.
- They are generally less accepted in society than LGB people, in large part because of ignorance. There is little understanding of transgender lives; they are not visible in much of popular culture (beyond the stereotypical images of drag queens) and almost no research has been conducted on their experiences.
- They also often experience a lack of acceptance from the LGB community, which uses transgender people as entertainers, but frequently does not want to see them otherwise.
- As a result of the lack of acceptance in the dominant culture and LGB society, they often lack a community and do not have role models or many positive images. Consequently, transgender people, especially Trans\* youth, may feel more isolated and more marginalized than non-trans\* LGB people.
- Transgender people may want to remain closeted because of the legitimate fear of how they will be treated by their peers, employers, and in their field.
- If transitioning, they will need access to medical care and mental health care. But the medical profession often fails to support them because of ignorance and a traditional, psychoanalytical understanding of transsexuality.
- If transitioning, they will need to change their identification and all records and documents which vary widely by institution, county, and state. These documents may provide access to marriage, international travel, etc., that otherwise may be denied.
- While butch lesbians and other masculine-appearing women are harassed in women's restrooms, transsexual women are especially vulnerable to attack and embarrassment when they try to use the public bathroom appropriate for their gender.

\*\*\*Developed by Genny Beemyn; Edited by Jessica Pettitt



## **Transgender Inclusion in Athletic Programs\*\*\*\***

All sport governing organizations and individual leagues and schools should adopt a policy enabling transgender athletes to participate according to their gender identity.

For sample policies for high school and college athletics, see *On The Team: Equal Opportunities for Transgender Athletes* ([www.ncirights.org/site/DocServer/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf?docID=7901](http://www.ncirights.org/site/DocServer/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf?docID=7901))

For NCAA recommended policies, see *NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes* ([www.ncaapublications.com](http://www.ncaapublications.com))

### **Guidelines for Transgender Student-Athlete Inclusion**

In addition to overall eligibility policy, we recommend that the following additional guidelines be adopted by individual schools at both the high school and college level. These guidelines will assist schools, athletic departments, coaches, teams, and student-athletes in creating an environment in which all student-athletes are safe and fairly treated.

#### Facilities Access:

1. **Changing Areas, Toilets, Showers:** Transgender student-athletes should be able to use the locker room, shower, and toilet facilities in accordance with the student's gender identity. Every locker room should have some private, enclosed changing areas, showers, and toilets for use by any athlete who desires them. When requested by a transgender student-athlete, schools should provide private, separate changing, showering, and toilet facilities for the student's use, but transgender students should not be required to use separate facilities.
2. **Competition at Another School:** If a transgender student-athlete requires a particular accommodation to ensure access to appropriate changing, showering, or bathroom facilities, school leaders, athletic directors, and coaches, in consultation with the transgender student-athlete, should notify their counterparts at other schools prior to competitions to ensure that the student has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe. This notification should maintain the student's confidentiality. Under no circumstances should a student-athlete's identity as a transgender person be disclosed without the student's express permission.
3. **Hotel Rooms:** Transgender student-athletes generally should be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible.

#### Language

1. **Preferred Names:** In all cases, teammates, coaches and all others in the school should refer to transgender student-athletes by a student's preferred name.
2. **Pronouns:** Similarly, in all cases, pronoun references to transgender student-athletes should reflect the student's gender and pronoun preferences.

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### Dress Codes and Team Uniforms

1. Dress Codes: Transgender athletes should be permitted to dress consistently with their gender identities. That is, a female-to-male transgender athlete should be permitted to dress as a male. A male-to-female should be permitted to dress as a female.

For reasons unrelated to trans-inclusion, schools should evaluate the necessity of gendered dress codes and recognize that they tend to marginalize a range of students who may not feel comfortable with them. Dress codes for athletic teams when traveling or during a game day at school should be gender-neutral. Instead of requiring a girls' or women's team to wear dresses or skirts, for example, ask that team members wear dresses or slacks that are clean, neat, well cared for and appropriately "dressy" for representing their school and team.

2. Uniforms: All team members should have access to uniforms that are appropriate for their sport and that they feel comfortable wearing. No student should be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the student's gender identity.

### Education

1. In School: All members of the school community should receive information and education about transgender identities, school or district non-discrimination policies, the use of preferred names and pronouns, and expectations for creating a respectful team and school climate for all students, including transgender and gender-variant students.
2. Athletic Conference Personnel: Athletic conference leaders should be educated about the need for policies governing the participation of transgender student-athletes, develop such policies, and ensure that all schools in the conference understand and adopt the policies.
3. Opposing Teams/Schools: Without violating a transgender student's confidentiality or privacy, school leaders, athletic directors, and coaches should communicate with their counterparts at other schools prior to competitions in which a transgender athlete is participating about expectations for treatment of transgender student-athletes on and off the field. This does not require "outing" or otherwise identifying a particular student-athlete as transgender, but rather establishing general expectations for the treatment of all student-athletes, including those who may be transgender.

### Media

1. Training: All school or athletic representatives (conference and/or state leaders, sports information departments and personnel, school leaders, athletic administrators, team members, and coaches) who are authorized to speak with the media should receive information about appropriate terminology, use of preferred names and pronouns, and school and athletic conference policies regarding the participation of transgender student-athletes on school sports teams.
2. Confidentiality: Protecting the privacy of transgender student-athletes must be a top priority for all athletic department and affiliated school personnel, particularly when in the presence of the media. All medical information shall be kept confidential in accordance with applicable state, local and federal privacy laws.

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### Enforcement and Non-Retaliation

1. **Enforcement:** Any member of an athletics department who has been found to have violated this policy by threatening to withhold athletic opportunity or harassing any student on the basis of their gender identity or expression, or by breaching medical confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge or expulsion from the school. The athletic department will also take appropriate remedial action to correct the situation. Any member of the athletic department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should report the conduct to the appropriate official such as the athletic director.
2. **Retaliation:** Retaliation is specifically forbidden against anyone who complains about discrimination based on gender identity or expression, even if the person was in error. This athletic department will take steps to prevent any retaliation against any person who makes such a complaint.

\*\*\*\* On The Team: Equal Opportunities for Transgender Athletes ([www.ncirights.org/site/DocServer/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf?docID=7901](http://www.ncirights.org/site/DocServer/TransgenderStudentAthleteReport.pdf?docID=7901))