

## LGBTQ ISSUES IN TEEN DATING VIOLENCE: GLOSSARY

Until very recently, gender, sex, and sexuality were viewed based on binary systems: male or female, gay or straight. Now, due to greater societal acceptance of varying sexual orientations and new insight into the differences between biological sex and gender identity, people of all ages – especially young people – are finding new ways and using new words to label their gender identity and sexual orientation. For example, Facebook offers 58 different gender options, allows for the creation of a “custom” gender, and allows users to select among three personal pronouns – “he,” “she,” and “they” – in order to express their true selves most authentically.<sup>1</sup> Due to this individualization of identity, in court, young persons may identify themselves in an unanticipated way. It is respectful for the court to honor whatever identities the young people who come before the court may have, and the court’s acceptance of the way in which they choose to speak about themselves will promote greater compliance in the courtroom and with court orders.

Because there is such variance in identity and self-expression, we have provided a limited glossary here, adapted from the University of California Riverside LGBT Resource Center<sup>2</sup> and the University of Wisconsin-Madison LGBT Campus Center.<sup>3</sup> We invite you to refer to both universities’ glossaries for a more complete set of terms that young people might use to identify themselves in your court.

It is important to note the difference between the terms “sexual orientation (sexuality),” “sex identity (sex),” and “gender identity (gender),” as these terms are used throughout the glossary. **Sexuality** is the “physical and/or emotional attraction to, and desire to sexually and/or emotionally partner with, other people of specific genders and/or sexes.”<sup>4</sup> **Sex** is the “physical, biological, chromosomal, genetic, and anatomical makeup of a body, classified as male, female, or intersex.”<sup>5</sup> This term can also describe the “categorization of a person’s physiological status based on physical characteristics.”<sup>6</sup> **Gender** is “an individual’s internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, a person’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.”<sup>7</sup> Sexual orientation is not dependent upon gender or sex identity.

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Sexual orientation and gender identity vary greatly from individual to individual. For example, a young woman who is sexually attracted to both men and women might refer to herself as “bisexual,” but she might also define herself with the words “pansexual” or “queer.” A young transgender man who is emotionally attracted to other men but is not attracted to anyone sexually might refer to himself as “a trans gay asexual man” or simply “a queer trans man.” Young persons who do not see themselves as part of the gender binary might ask the court to refer to them with “they/them/theirs” pronouns, and might identify as “agender,” “non-binary,” “gender non-conforming,” or “genderqueer.”

Finally, as the UC Riverside LGBT Resource Center notes, “Each person who uses any or all of these terms does so in a unique way (especially terms that are used in the context of an identity label). If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms, it is always appropriate to ask.”<sup>7</sup>

**Agender** – a person who does not identify with any gender, or feels that they have no gender.

**Asexual** – a person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation.

**Bigender** – a person whose gender identity is made up of both male/man and female/woman; a person with a tendency to shift between stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors depending on context.

**Bisexual** – a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to individuals of their own gender and of genders different from their own. Typically, this means a person attracted to both men and women, but some feel that the strict “both men and women” definition excludes attraction to transgender individuals. This sexual attraction does not have to be equally split between genders, and there may be a preference for one gender over the other.

**Cisgender** – a person whose gender identity is aligned with the gender they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex. The term is also used to connote individuals who are not transgender, the way “heterosexual” or “straight” are used to connote individuals who are not lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.

The prefix *cis-* attached to the word *gender* comes from the Latin word *cis*, meaning “on the side of.” *Cis* is the Latin antonym of the word *trans*, which means “on the other side of” or “across from.” Therefore, “cisgender” literally means that a person’s gender identity is “on the same side of,” or in alignment with, a person’s physical sex.

**Coming Out** – the process by which a person accepts their own sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status; the process by which a person shares their sexuality, gender

identity, or intersex status with others. Oftentimes, this is a continual, lifelong process, and stigma against LGBTQ individuals can make coming out difficult and/or dangerous.

**Designated Female at Birth (DFAB)** – a phrase used by trans, intersex, or gender-nonconforming individuals to indicate that, via the viewing and labeling of their bodily characteristics, they were deemed to be the female sex at birth.

**Designated Male at Birth (DMAB)** – a phrase used by trans, intersex, or gender-nonconforming individuals to indicate that, via the viewing and labeling of their bodily characteristics, they were deemed to be the male sex at birth.

**FTM (Female-to-Male)** – a term used by the transgender and gender-nonconforming communities to identify a person assigned the sex of “female” at birth, but who currently identifies his gender as male.

**MTF (Male-to-Female)** – a term used by the transgender and gender-nonconforming communities to identify a person assigned the sex of “male” at birth, but who currently identifies her gender as female.

**Gay** – a term used to refer to homosexual/same-gender loving communities as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who experiences same-gender attraction. Used commonly to specifically represent male-identified individuals who are emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male-identified individuals.

**Gender Dysphoria** – an emotional and/or mental dissonance between one’s desired concept of their body and what their body actually is; a term used in psychiatry to define the incongruence between an individual’s gender identity and their designated sex at birth.

**Gender Identity (Gender)** – an individual’s internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else; how a person conceptualizes their gender despite what sex they were designated at birth; e.g., cisgender man or woman, transgender man or woman, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, agender. (Defined above.)

**Gender Non-Conforming** – individuals who do not identify as transgender or cisgender, or conform to traditional gender norms.

**Genderqueer** – an umbrella term for people whose gender identity exists outside the male-female gender binary; another way to express that someone does not identify as cisgender or transgender.

**Heterosexual** – a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of a different sex or gender identity.

**Homosexual** – a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of their same sex or gender identity.

**Intersex** – a person who is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, and/or an internal reproductive system that is not considered “standard” for either the male or female sex. This word is preferred to the term to “hermaphrodite.”

Many intersex individuals are forcibly assigned a certain sex through surgical operations during childhood. There is a movement to ask intersex individuals themselves, when they are grown, whether they want such a surgery instead of allowing doctors or intersex individuals’ parents to make the decision for them when they are children.

**Lesbian** – a term used to describe female-identified individuals who are emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to female-identified individuals.

**Outing (To Be Outed)** – the process in which someone discloses another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status without the concerned person’s permission. Outing is directly associated with an LGBTQ individual’s personal safety and consent – abusers can threaten to “out” their LGBTQ victims as a manipulation tool.

**Pansexual** – a person attracted to individuals of all gender identities; a person for whom gender does not factor into their experience of sexual attraction; a person who is attracted to certain physical features or personality traits in all people regardless of gender.

**Preferred Pronouns** – denotes which pronouns someone would like others to use to refer to them. It is polite to ask every person – even if you think you already know their gender identity – what their preferred pronouns are.

**Queer** – an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual or cisgender; an umbrella term for any/all identities that fall outside the gender-normative and heterosexual majority. The term was once used pejoratively but a movement to reclaim the word began in the 1980s and it is now widely used by members of the LGBTQ community – hence, the “Q” added to the end of the LGBT acronym.

**Sex Identity (Sex)** – The categorization of a person’s physiological status based on physical characteristics; the physical, biological, chromosomal, genetic, and anatomical makeup as a body, classified as male, female, or intersex. (Defined above.)

**Sexual Orientation (Sexuality)** – an individual’s emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to and desire to sexually and/or emotionally partner with individuals of specific genders; i.e., homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual. (Defined above.)

**Trans** – an abbreviation of the word “transgender.” Can be used on its own (“I’m trans and a lesbian”) or in conjunction with certain genders (“I’m a pansexual trans man.”).

**Transgender** – a person whose gender identity differs from the gender they were designated at birth based on their physical sex. The prefix *trans-* attached to the word *gender* comes from the Latin word *trans*, meaning “on the other side of” or “across from.” *Trans* is the Latin antonym of the word *cis*, which means “on the side of.” Therefore, “transgender” literally means that a person’s gender identity is “on the other side of,” or in opposition to/not aligned with, a person’s physical sex.

## ***Endnotes***

1. Russell Goldman, ABC News, *Here’s a List of 58 Gender Options for Facebook Users* (February 13, 2014), <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2014/02/heres-a-list-of-58-gender-options-for-facebook-users/> (last visited October 22, 2015).
2. Eli R. Green & Eric N. Peterson, UC RIVERSIDE LGBT RESOURCE CENTER, *LGBTQI Terminology* (2003-2004), <http://www.lgbt.ucla.edu/documents/LGBTTerminology.pdf> (last visited September 29, 2015).
3. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON LGBT CAMPUS CENTER, *Trans, Genderqueer, and Queer Terms Glossary*, [https://lgbt.wisc.edu/documents/Trans\\_and\\_queer\\_glossary.pdf](https://lgbt.wisc.edu/documents/Trans_and_queer_glossary.pdf) (last visited September 29, 2015). This resource was adapted with permission from JAC Stringer of The Trans and Queer Wellness Initiative (2013).
4. Adapted from endnote 2, at 7 “Sexual Orientation.”
5. *Id.*, at 7 “Sex Identity (Sex).”
6. *Id.*
7. *Id.*, at 4 “Gender Identity.”