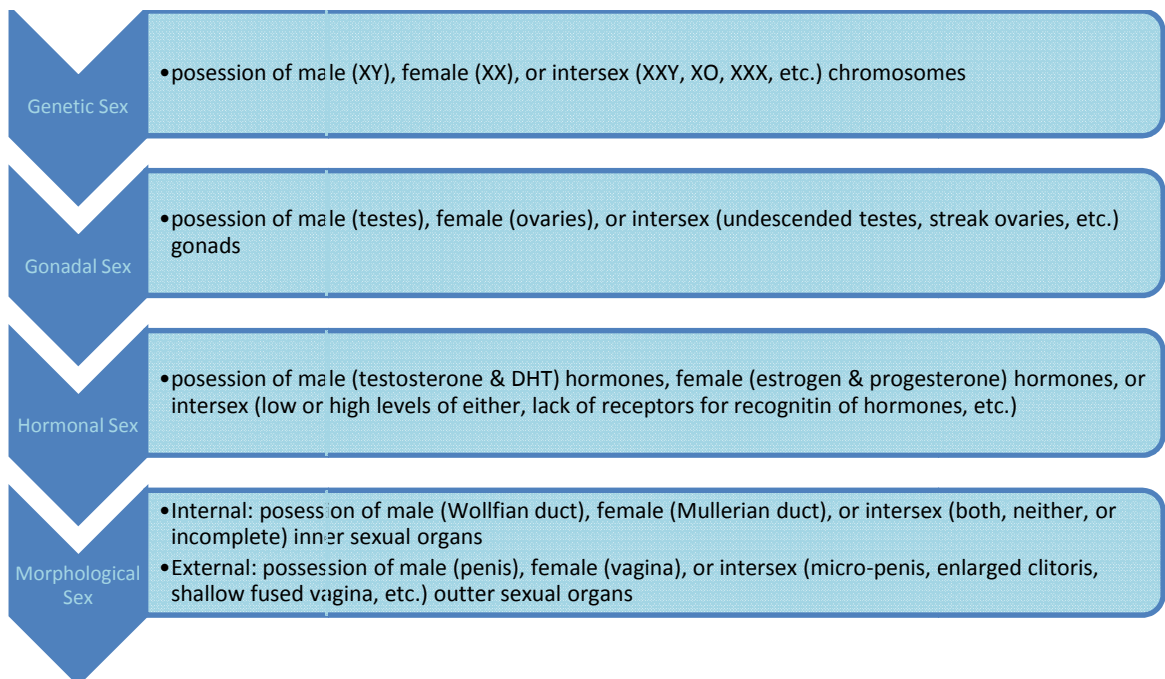


Lifelines Rhode Island's TGI/Gender-Spectrum Terminology Guide - September, 2008

Disclaimer: Terms and usage change rapidly in this field and there are diverse ways to define these terms. Please contact us for an updated version and credit us to distribute.

Basic Understanding

- **Sex**—the biology of being male, female, or intersex (see term below), which are multi-layered processes that occur during fetal development (each step affects the following step) ***If an individual is intersex on one level does NOT mean they are intersex on all other levels of sex.***



- **Gender**—the perception based on the external characteristics and behaviors of an individual that are socially defined as masculine or feminine
- **Gender Identity**—an individual's inner sense of being a man, woman, androgyne, gender-queer, bi-gender, multi-gender, two-spirit, independently gendered, or any other gender self-label
- **Sexual Orientation**—describes the gender or genders in which one is sexually and/or romantically attracted to, in relation to their own gender identity. These orientations may include but are not limited to straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, and asexual.
 - **Pansexual**—an alternative to the term "bi"sexual that acknowledges the reality that there are more than two genders and more than two biological sexes.

Some Common Identity, Expression, and Experience Terms

- **TGI**—an acronym used by Lifelines Rhode Island as an adjective to describe people who are transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit, genderqueer, and/or intersex.
- **Gender-spectrum**—the acknowledgement that sex, gender, and gender identity are not dichotomous (male vs. female, masculine vs. feminine, man vs. woman), but instead naturally occur with greater variety and overlap. The phrase *gender-spectrum individual* refers to someone that does not fall within this dichotomy, but does not specify how. This can allow for an all-inclusive way to describe a group of individuals with varying experience with their sex, gender, and gender identity.
- **Gender-variant**—a description for individuals that transgress gender social/cultural norms. This term may be seen as deviant to some and is therefore not as welcoming of a phrase, which is why Lifelines chooses to use *TGI* or *gender-spectrum*.
- **Intersex (I)**—an individual who is born with a variation or ambiguity of sex chromosomes, sex hormones, gonads, internal genitalia or external genitalia, in relation to male and female biology.
- **Trans (T)**—an umbrella term to describe people who are transgender and/or transsexual. Trans is a Latin noun or prefix that means “across” or “over.” This term is considered more inclusive than transgender. The term *Tranny* can be offensive when used by non-trans people.
- **Transgender (TG)**—this word has been used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who transgress sex and gender cultural norms. *Transgender* is more commonly used to describe individuals whose gender identity does not socially/culturally match their sex designation at birth, and tend to be socially/culturally congruent with the opposite sex. *Transgender* man or woman is a self-identified term and is often used by people seeking social gender transition, binary or non-binary, with or without medical intervention. Using the term *transgendered* can be considered offensive to *trans* individuals because it encourages the term *transgender* as a noun. This can be seen as dehumanizing because it ignores that these individuals want to be seen and treated as either the men, women or other self-identified gender that they are.
 - **Transgender man/Trans man**—an individual who was designated female at birth, but identifies as a man. He may or may not take male hormones and have sex reassignment surgery. It is important to understand that trans men are MEN and should be treated accordingly, whether or not they pass or have had any medical intervention.
 - **Transgender woman/Trans woman**—an individual who was designated male at birth, but identifies as a woman. She may or may not take female hormones and have sex reassignment surgery. It is important to understand that trans women are

WOMEN and should be treated accordingly, whether or not they pass or have had any medical intervention.

- **Transsexual (TS)**—this term can be used to describe transgender individuals who receive hormones and had sex reassignment surgery to make a distinction between those who have not. More often the term *transgender* is used to describe all of these individuals regardless of attainment of hormones or SRS. The term *transsexual* was coined by doctors and may hold a “mental illness” stigma. In addition, it may, for some, seem to hold a sexualized concept, instead of a concept strictly of gender identity. Despite this, some individuals who do and do not have medical intervention may still identify as *transsexual*.
 - **Sex reassignment surgery (SRS)**—the surgical procedure in which an individual’s sexual anatomy is altered to resemble and function as the anatomy of the opposite sex.
- **FTM/F2M**—a shortened term applied to female-to-male trans men. This term is not preferred or used by everyone and should not be used unless a person prefers it.
- **MTF/M2F**—a shortened term applied to male-to-female trans women. This term is not preferred or used by everyone and should not be used unless a person prefers it.
- **Man or Woman of Trans Experience**—term used by people who have completed social and/or medical transition to a gender or body configuration other than their birth-designated gender or sex. Generally, people identifying in this way have experienced a transition, but do not self-identify as trans.

Some Common Trans Cultural Terms

- **Transition**—this can refer to the social and/or legal process of changing from a birth-designated gender to the gender with which a person identifies and/or to the medical processes involved in changing physical appearance and anatomical characteristics. Some people seek transition to non-binary gender identities as well. Not all people seeking social and/or medical transition want standard male or female bodies. The term *transition* is also known as *gender affirmation* or affirming one’s gender.
- **Passing**—a term to describe individuals who are not publicly identifiable as transgender/transsexual or as having undergone gender affirmation. Not all trans people are able to pass. Ability to pass should not be a factor when deciding whether a person’s transition is “successful” or deserving of the pronouns and bathroom access of the gender with which a trans person identifies.

- **Stealth**—a term to describe individuals who are not open about their trans history or status in any or all aspects of life. This term is not the same thing as “being closeted.”
 - **Being Read/Being Clocked**—a situation in which a trans person is somehow identified as or “discovered” to be trans; this often leads to anti-trans verbal abuse or violence.
 - **Pronoun Cueing**—the act of cueing others by example to use the pronouns appropriate for a given person in a social situation.
 - **Mispronouncing**—incorrect pronoun usage that often causes problems for TGI people by reinforcing misinformation about their identities and providing incorrect pronoun cueing.
- **Cisgender/Cissexual**—Cis is a prefix that mean “on this side (of)” or “not across.” *Cisgender* and *Cissexual* is a description of a non-transgender or non-transsexual man or woman when discussing trans issues. *Cisgender/Cissexual* individuals therefore have a gender identity and body concept that is culturally/socially congruent with their sex and gender designation at birth. These terms are less biased than the popular terms "biomen," "bioguy," or "biowomen."
 - **Cissexism**—discrimination and invisibility experienced by TGI people who do not conform to a binary gender, body concept, or anatomy that matches their sex designation at birth.
 - **Androgyne**—an individual who consistently merges feminine and masculine characteristics in subtle or drastic ways, making their gender uneasily detectable as *man* or *woman*. They may identify as neutral-gendered, gender-fluid, bi-gendered, or they may identify as a man or woman but simply like to express themselves androgynously.
 - **Gender-queer (GQ)**—an individual that may feel the terms *man* or *woman* do not accurately describe them. Some GQ people consider themselves neither men nor women, while others may consider themselves a combination. These individuals may prefer to vary their expression on a day-to-day basis including in a feminine, masculine, and androgynous manner.
 - **Bi-gender**—an individual who identifies as both a man and a woman and may dress and/or behave androgynously, masculine, or feminine on different days or for different occasions.
 - **Multi-gender**—an individual who has more than two gender identities, or whose gender identity is multifaceted, and may dress and/or behave androgynously, masculine, or feminine on different days or for different occasions.

- **Two Spirit**—a Native American individual who has a masculine and feminine spirit living in the same body and may fulfill mixed gender roles including wearing the clothing and performing the work of men and women. This term may be contemporarily used among the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex Native American/American Indian/First Nation community. Many consider it offensive for outsiders to identify as Two Spirit.
- **Crossdresser**—a cisgender individual who privately or socially presents in clothing, (makeup), demeanor, name, and pronouns of a different gender but does not identify as that gender nor desire to change their sex. It is inappropriate and disparaging to refer to trans men and women as *crossdressers*.
- **Drag Queen/King**—individuals who publicly present in clothing, name, and/or pronouns of non-birth-assigned gender for enjoyment, entertainment, and/or self-expression. Drag shows are popular in some gay, lesbian, and bisexual environments. It is inappropriate and offensive to refer to trans men and women as drag kings/queens.

Lifelines Rhode Island is a grassroots advocacy, education, and support initiative to meet the needs of transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit, genderqueer, androgyne, bi-gender, multigender and intersex (TGI/gender-spectrum) people across the Ocean State.

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