

Involving the Transgender Community

*YMCA Members, Participants,
Staff, and Volunteers*

Recommended Readers

- CEOs
- Branch executives
- Senior staff members

Quick Summary

- Understand the transgender community.
- Find ways to address the needs and concerns of transgender constituents.
- Learn what other YMCAs have learned as they respond to and include the transgender community.



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The Transgender Community

The growing diversity of the U.S. population makes inclusion by and within YMCAs increasingly important. While diversity enriches and improves us, it sometimes includes the unfamiliar.

YMCAs are both “employers” and “places of public accommodation” in the eyes of the law, and they must comply with all laws related to this status in their area. The law is expanding to recognize transgender rights, and numerous states, counties, and municipalities have enacted laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity. As of 2009, at least 13 states and the District of Columbia had enacted nondiscrimination laws with explicit protection for the transgender community.

YMCAs interact with transgender persons who are parents of children in YMCA care, members or program participants, employees, and volunteers. This paper shares examples of the ways some YMCAs fulfill the mission’s promise of inclusivity. YMCA of the USA’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered (GLBT, sometimes referred to as LGBT) Affinity Group is creating resources to assist YMCAs in developing inclusive policies and practices in this area. To see the latest resources, go to the GLBT Affinity Group Web site at www.ymcaglb.org.

This paper is intended to help YMCAs better understand the transgender community, suggest processes for addressing the needs and concerns of transgender constituents, and share what other YMCAs have learned as they respond to and include the transgender community.

YMCA National Diversity and Inclusion imperative

When talking with and about transgender people, it is important to be aware that there are significant regional differences in the way the transgender community refers to itself. From a legal perspective, each state has its own definition. “Sexual orientation” (the nature of a person’s innate sexual attractions) is a term that may or may not include transgender status. Sexual orientation is about sexual attraction, and gender identity is about how a person defines herself or himself; the terms are distinct and should not be confused in writing or speech. As a YMCA embraces and implements its diversity and inclusion work, it is important to recognize these distinctions and to include the transgender community. For more on these and other terms that might come up in a discussion of the transgender community, see the glossary.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, a national organization supporting gender equality, transsexual people make up between 0.25 and 1.0 percent of the U.S. population. However, “there are no

“The time is now to step up our efforts to make sure our YMCAs are truly places where everyone is welcome, feels valued, and all have the opportunity to develop their unique gifts to make the world a better place.”

David Thomas
Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion
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concrete statistics on the number of transgender people . . .” (Human Rights Campaign). Although the number of persons who transition surgically is smaller, these estimates are dated and likely undercount the transsexual population. For example, they do not account for people who have not yet undergone, cannot (for medical, financial, safety, or other reasons), or choose not to undergo sex reassignment surgeries (Human Rights Campaign). Intersex persons may have been surgically altered by a choice of parents during infancy and/or, increasingly, may maintain physical manifestations of both genders.

Embracing change

Over time, YMCAs will have increasing interaction with the transgender community. To expand in the 21st century, YMCAs must embrace changing norms and establish themselves as inclusive community organizations in which diversity in all its forms is welcome. YMCA of the USA’s Managing Inclusion™ training, part of the National Diversity and Inclusion Imperative, helps local YMCAs focus on improving their efforts toward inclusion and increasing the engagement of all who are involved in YMCA work. Increased engagement results in high levels of performance from more people. It is important that YMCAs learn what might be preventing them from managing inclusion so that their efforts lead to continuous learning and improvement *for all*.

Diversity and inclusion are not always comfortable, but they provide a rich, dynamic environment. Further, welcoming everyone to the table and having all voices heard is at the core of the YMCA mission.

Reaching Out to the Transgender Community

Groundwork

Before establishing any formal policy, it is important to assess your YMCA’s current situation with regard to the transgender community. Asking the right questions will help in that effort:

- What is your YMCA board’s position?
- How much education have your YMCA board and staff had with respect to the transgender community? Does the board or staff need further education?
- What foundation does the law in your community provide with respect to the transgender community?
- How would you, as a manager or a senior staff member, respond when a transgender person inquires about membership or employment?

- Does your Y have transgender members, volunteers, or community representatives who can help with education and conversation, or who can refer others who can help?
- How does your Y's current response to the transgender community fit into the YMCA mission of inclusivity and its diversity and inclusion strategies? To the YMCA values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility?

Gaining board support is important, and once you have your board's support, it is critical to enlist staff to help make your YMCA welcoming to the transgender community. Frontline staff in particular are often the first point of contact for a transgender person. Whether the person is inquiring about membership, employment, or volunteer opportunities, frontline staff can model the mission of inclusivity.

A proactive approach yields the best results. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- When discussing and planning your YMCA's diversity practices, openly talk about all dimensions of diversity, including gender identity. It is important to note that sexual orientation and gender identity do not necessarily coincide: most transgender persons are not gay, lesbian, or bisexual (ICTLEP 1997).
- Check with your local and state agencies regarding antidiscrimination laws for your community. Review the law and verify that your YMCA is in compliance.
- Begin with the board and senior staff, then engage frontline staff on how your YMCA can be more inclusive, rather than exclusive, in its approach.
- Reach out to local GLBT organizations that serve the GLBT community. Invite representatives to attend a staff meeting and provide or suggest resources for staff and volunteers. Ask them to help you identify opportunities to support your staff in welcoming transgender staff, volunteers, members, and visitors.
- Communicate YMCA support of transgender persons and the YMCA mission's promise of inclusion. Discuss procedures for accommodation that include transgender members, staff, participants, or volunteers as appropriate situations arise.

YMCAs as employers

It is important not to discriminate and equally important not to be perceived as engaging in discrimination, especially where state or local laws protect transgender status. A transgender person may come to a YMCA as a job applicant, or a YMCA may employ a transgender person who is in transition from one sex to another.

From an employment perspective, the critical question is whether the person is qualified and can perform the essential functions of the job. The experiences of transgender persons may give them insight into the benefits of inclusion and the capacity to bring a new perspective to workplace diversity. It is important to recognize and value that capacity.

Encourage diversity in recruiting employees and fairness in hiring practices:

- What is the law in your state or community? Even where no law exists, would differential treatment of a transgender person be in keeping with the YMCA's reputation as a human services organization committed to inclusion and to serving community needs?
- Does your YMCA advertise vacancies in magazines, Web sites, and other media frequently used by members of the transgender community?
- Do employment interview questions make members of the transgender community feel welcome as potential YMCA employees?
- Are the staff who will work with or supervise a transgender employee committed to diversity and inclusion? Are further conversations necessary to ensure workplace behaviors that uphold YMCA core values?

Transgender acceptance

When a YMCA staff member transitions from one gender to another, additional questions may arise:

- What are management's expectations for the transitioning employee and other staff in facilitating a successful transition?
- Who is responsible for supporting the employee through the workplace transition?
- Does your organization's health insurance policy cover the costs of transition surgery? Counseling? Medications?
- What is the leave-of-absence policy for transition procedures and follow-up therapy?
- What is the best way to educate staff and members regarding use of a transgender person's new name and gender? What measures can be taken to avoid violating that person's right to privacy? Can you manage communication with YMCA parents, members, staff, volunteers, and members in regard to the transition in a way that protects that privacy?

- What are the transgender person's preferences? Discuss with the person the best way to educate staff and members without invasion of privacy.

The periods before, during, and after a staff member's transition provide additional opportunities for education:

- Reinforce with staff your YMCA's policy and position on inclusion.
- Have the CEO or a senior staff member meet with the transitioning or transitioned employee to explore and understand any concerns the employee may have and come to agreement on how to address them.
- Identify opportunities for increasing the staff's and board's awareness, education, and sensitivity to the concern(s).
- Ensure that the transgender employee is treated with respect and dignity.
- Engage the transgender employee in determining how staff can best address parents' concerns, media inquiries, and member questions.

You may be surprised at how receptive your community is to an open discussion. An editorial from the *Oregon Statesman Journal*, included in Appendix B, speaks to how a broad-based conversation on this topic can increase understanding, acceptance, and respect.

YMCA volunteers

The guidelines and practices presented in this document apply to volunteers as well as staff, both to volunteers who are transitioning and volunteers who interact with a person who is transitioning.

YMCAs as public places

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to YMCAs, not just as employers but as facilities open to the public (in the words of the Act, "places of public accommodation"). The ADA and many state laws prohibit discrimination in places of public accommodation. Currently, the ADA does not protect against discrimination based on gender identity, but YMCAs should nevertheless make every effort to be inclusive and accommodate transgender members and participants, in accordance with the YMCA mission.

Accommodating transgender persons during a transition

The most common question that YMCAs ask with respect to accommodating a transgender person is “Which locker room does a transgender person use?” Although some YMCAs’ policies differ, YMCAs with experience in accommodating transgender persons have most often answered the question with reference to each person’s stage in the transition.

Those who are transgender and *not going through a transition* use the family locker room (a locker room separate from the men’s and women’s locker rooms, designed for parents with opposite-sex children). For YMCAs that do not have a family locker room or other private space, the person uses the locker room of the sex assigned at birth. The transgender person and YMCA staff and management may consider other options for accommodations.

The following guidelines accommodate those who *are going through a transition* from male to female or from female to male:

- Pre-surgery: The transitioning person uses either the family locker room or the locker room of the sex assigned at birth.
- Post-surgery: The person uses the locker room of the new gender.

Welcoming new members

When a transgender person joins a YMCA as a new member or inquires about membership, some simple practices can make that person feel welcome:

- Ensure that the transgender person is treated with respect and dignity.
- Educate all staff who interact with members and program participants about your YMCA’s inclusion policy and procedures.
- Invite the new or potential member to come to staff with any concerns, just as you would for any new member.
- Should an issue or concern arise, direct staff to involve the CEO or a senior staff member. The CEO or senior staff member can then meet with the person to discuss the concern and come to agreement on how to address it.
- Identify opportunities to educate staff and board members and to increase their awareness and sensitivity to the issues faced by transgender persons.

Conclusion

YMCAs have extensive visibility in their communities and often take the lead in demonstrating diversity and inclusion. Focusing on the YMCA mission, a YMCA can help bring people together to increase the understanding that people are more alike than they are different—an essential step toward inclusion. This path of action is clearly supported by YMCA of the USA’s Diversity and Inclusion vision: YMCA volunteers and staff are culturally competent and inclusive, and they understand, respect, and value the diversity of others as an intuitive and preferred way of operating.

Over time and in a variety of contexts, YMCAs will have increased and varied interactions with transgender persons. It is both good mission practice and good business practice to make these interactions positive experiences. This resource offers some suggestions to help YMCAs comply with the letter of the law and the spirit of diversity and inclusion. YMCAs that are successful will reap the rewards of a broad employee base, a diverse and inclusive membership, and an improved capacity to lead in their communities.

Appendix B presents the experiences of some YMCAs and their efforts toward fulfilling the mission’s promise of inclusivity.

Appendix A

Sample YMCA policies

Shih Yu-Lang Central YMCA Transgender Policy

Reprinted with permission by the YMCA of San Francisco.

Transgender people have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity and have a right to safe and appropriate locker room and restroom facilities.

- Transgender people have a right to use the locker room of their choice. Please ask them their preference.
- We do ask that if they are pre-operation they use a bathroom stall or enclosed shower area to change.
- We will assign gender as male or female in *Focus* (our membership system) based upon their preference.
- We can assign the name they want to be called in *Focus*, but we must indicate their real name under their account as well.
- We can print out a membership card with the name they identify with.
- Please use the pronoun and name of the member's choice.

Transgender FAQs

Why do people identify as transgender? You might have heard that people who are transgender feel like they are “a man trapped in a woman’s body” or vice versa. While this is sometimes true, transgender people do not necessarily identify solely with either the male or the female gender. Instead, many view gender as a spectrum with male and female at either end, with themselves somewhere in between.

Do transgender people get sex changes? *Transgender* is sometimes used as an umbrella term that includes all people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. However, by the more narrow definition, transgender people do not usually get sex changes. People who choose to alter their sex surgically usually identify as transsexual. More specifically, the terms *pre-op* and *post-op transsexual* are used, depending on whether an individual has already gone through sex-reassignment surgery. Sometimes transgender people are referred to as *non-op transsexuals*.

Why wouldn't we ask them to use the locker room based on pre-op or post-op? Most people who identify as transgender cannot afford to have surgery. It may not be that they even want to have surgery, but they still feel more comfortable using the locker room that is different from their biological sex.

Salem Family YMCA Policy

Reprinted with permission by the Salem Family YMCA, Salem, Oregon.

The Salem Family YMCA is an inclusive organization. We welcome employees and members of all ages, genders, races, faiths, economic backgrounds, and orientations without discriminating and without being judgmental.

The Salem Family YMCA follows the Oregon Equality Act, Public Law Number 100, as well as the Salem Ordinance §97.97.020, both of which prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. In addition, to maintain our not-for-profit status, YMCAs must not discriminate in accordance with federal civil rights law.

YMCAs serve people of all religious backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and income levels and are open to all members of the public. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well-being for all, YMCAs unite men, women, and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities, and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Salem Ordinance §97.97.020 prohibits discrimination based upon sexual orientation [or] gender identity.

Oregon Equality Act, Public Law Number 100, Oregon SB 2 (2007) extends to sexual orientation, which is defined as an individual's actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or gender identity, regardless of whether the individual's gender identity, appearance, expression, or behavior differs from that traditionally associated with the individual's sex at birth.

Appendix B

Articles and case studies

Editorial appearing in the *Statesman Journal*

Copyrighted and originally published on November 14, 2008, in Salem, Oregon, the Statesman Journal. Reprinted with permission.

Let me preface this commentary by stating that I unequivocally support parents' right to protect their children and to decide what is and isn't appropriate for their [children].

That said, I think that J. Hampton missed a teaching moment with his 7-year-old this week, and the community is a sadder place as a result.

Hampton's son is a member of the Salem Family YMCA before- and after-school child care program at Chapman Hill Elementary School in West Salem. Apparently, he and his wife thought their son was being cared for by three women.

Recently, Hampton discovered that one of the women is a transgender woman—in this case, a man rejecting the gender ascribed to him at birth and now assuming the identity of a woman. The person refers to herself as “she.” Hampton said he's not ready to answer his son's questions about the woman's sexual reassignment and that there is nothing subtle about the individual's “dolled up like a woman” appearance that includes painted fingernails, makeup, and done-up hair.

Hampton complained.

The YMCA staff told him that Oregon outlawed in 2007 discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression and that there had been no complaints about the employee's performance in the three years of her work for the nonprofit. The Y has not disclosed the employee's name.

“In my opinion, the Y is not taking this seriously,”

Hampton told me. “If this was a TV show or a movie, it would be deemed inappropriate for my son's age group. I maintain that the standard level of decency for the job being performed should be appropriate to all ages in society.”

Hampton would have been within his rights to pull his son from the child care program. Instead, he took his grievance to the airwaves via the Lars Larson talk show.

Larson declared that sexual orientations such as this employee's are "illegal, disgusting, grotesque, and perverse." Hampton urged the conservative talk-radio fans to call the Y and make sure that other children were not "left in jeopardy."

So Wednesday, the Y spent the day staffing its phones instead of focusing solely on children, which, having paid to have them care for my child years ago, I know it does well.

Parents entering and exiting the Y Thursday told me that this employee is "much beloved" and "adored by children and parents alike."

Hampton admits that the Y said there have been no other complaints against this individual, but he insists that the Y's job is to protect the children, not the employee.

Protect them from what, I asked?

A person different from themselves? A person who has enough to deal with as she struggles to reject a gender assigned by genitals, but not borne out by feelings?

As a parent, I can commiserate a little with Hampton. The unknown and the different can be scary, especially if we grownups do not have the answers ourselves. However, our children's minds are malleable. We do not have to give them big, age-inappropriate words and descriptions for them to understand acceptance and respect.

We should take these opportunities to teach tolerance. Salem-Keizer's elementary education department told me they would have been happy to talk with Hampton about how to have a broad-based conversation with his son.

If Hampton would prefer not to tackle the topic at all or to wait until whatever age he deems appropriate, that's his parental prerogative. He'd get no argument from me. All he needed to do was pack up his son's lunch pail and get another day-care provider.

Symposium Addresses Issues, Challenges for GLBT Youth

Originally published on November 10, 2009, in the South Florida Sun Sentinel. Reprinted with permission.

The Pride Center at Equality Park, along with other supportive agencies, is seeking to open up an exchange of ideas and solutions to help the community understand the needs and social circumstances of gay, lesbian, and transgender youth in Broward County.

So, this Friday, the GLCC Pride Center is hosting a conference from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at their new location: 2040 N. Dixie Highway, in Wilton Manors.

Co-hosts include SunServe, the YMCA of Broward County, Safe Schools South Florida and Equality Florida. “Trapped in the Margins: Challenges of Meeting the Needs of Broward’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth” will highlight issues and challenges, provide information, and create dialog as a way to assist our GLBT youth.

Medical and clinical professionals, elected officials, youth service providers, business owners, legal and protective service professionals, and the general public will present case studies and speeches.

For more information about the symposium, call 954-463-9005. To learn more about the GLCC Pride Center and its programs, visit www.glccsf.org.

Metro Is Playing Catch Up, Say Supporters of Gay Protections

Originally published on July 26, 2009, in Nashville, Tennessee, the Tennessean. Reprinted with permission.

The argument that protecting Metro government's gay employees would force the private sector to follow suit is all backward, supporters of a new anti-discrimination measure say.

Around the country, 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies' anti-discrimination policies include sexual orientation or gender identity. In Nashville, some of the city's largest private employers—Vanderbilt University and Hospital Corporation of America—put similar policies into place.

Against that landscape, the new measure's supporters say, it should have a better chance of passage than a similar one proposed in 2003. But opponents say following the private-sector pack isn't the way to go.

“Just because someone else does something doesn't mean it's right, and we learned that when we all took off from kindergarten,” said David Fowler, a former state senator and president of the Family Action Council of Tennessee. “So unless we are going to act like lemmings and just blindly do what everybody else is doing, we need to stop and think before we make this a law.”

The city already has protections based on race, sex, religious affiliation, and national origin in place, Fowler said, and protection based on sexuality is incongruous. He also said such a law could expose the city to lawsuits by people who feel it was broken.

The new law would bar biased decisions in hiring, firing, and promotions on the basis of sexual orientation. It doesn't grant benefits to domestic partners and covers only city employees.

Others go even further

The earlier measure failed, in part, over the argument that Metro's protections could be forced on the private sector.

“This idea of spread to the private sector—it's already happened,” said Councilwoman Megan Barry, who is sponsoring the bill. “There are a lot of major companies that go even further as it relates to sexual orientation and identity and into things that we are not even talking about here, like offering benefits.”

“The fact is the private sector is way beyond us. This is us trying to catch up.”

At Vanderbilt, where the hospital and university together employ about 20,000 people, domestic partner benefits and a policy barring discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation have been in place for at least nine years.

In May, the school expanded its nondiscrimination policy to bar workplace discrimination on the basis of gender identity. A committee is developing new hospital and clinic intake forms that use more inclusive terms that cover various sexual orientations, said Terrell Smith, Vanderbilt University Hospital and Clinics' director of Patient/Family-Centered Care.

For example, the terms *parent 1* and *parent 2* may be used instead of the terms *mother* or *father* on forms. The terms *partner* and *transgender* also may appear.

The YMCA of Middle Tennessee, a Nashville-based nonprofit agency with 178,819 members in its 12-county region, changed the fee structure for its various memberships this year. The changes were made to make membership affordable for more people and be more inclusive of the different types of families living in the area, said Jessica Fain, the agency's spokeswoman.

"The task force that looked at the restructuring also looked at the census data and that was one thing that they saw—multigenerational households and households that don't fit into that traditional mold," she said.

Concept isn't new

The concept of a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity isn't new for municipal governments. In the 1980s, three cities—San Francisco, New York, and West Hollywood, California—pioneered the idea, said Andrew Cherlin, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The Human Rights Campaign, a Washington, D.C.-based group that describes itself as the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization, counts at least 27 state and municipal governments with such policies.

But 13 enacted and subsequently rescinded domestic partner benefits or sexual orientation-based anti-discrimination policies. The reasons were varied, ranging from a change in leaders' political leanings to concerns about cost.

Contact Janell Ross at 615-726-5982 or jross1@tennessean.com.

Appendix C

Federal and state laws

Laws regarding the rights and safety of the transgender population in the United States continue to change. As of January 2010, eight states have laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Massachusetts
- Maryland
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Wisconsin

In addition, 13 states and the District of Columbia ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression. Specifics of the state laws vary.

- California
- Colorado
- District of Columbia
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Maine
- Minnesota
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- Oregon
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Washington

YMCAs can find up-to-date information regarding non-discrimination laws at the Web sites of GLBT-focused organizations.

- The Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org/laws_and_elections/index.htm
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: <http://thetaskforce.org/>
- Transgender Law and Policy Institute: www.transgenderlaw.org/index.htm
- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): www.pflag.org

Resource List

YMCA of the USA resources

Best Practices

- Human Resources Best Practices
- Membership Best Practices

www.ymcaexchange.org/front/Ymovement/national_planning/ymca_best_practices_2009-02-15.aspx

GLBT Affinity Group

News, resources, and more

www.ymcaglbt.org

Other resources

American Psychological Association (APA)

Transgender questions and answers

www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/transgender.aspx

CenterLink

Directory of LGBT community centers

www.lgbtcenters.org

Human Rights Campaign

Resources for transgender employees and employers

www.hrc.org/issues/workplace/7204.htm

Metropolitan Community Churches

Guidelines and insights for inclusion of transgender persons

www.mcchurch.org

Out & Equal

Workplace equality resources

<http://outandequal.org/workplace-resources>

The Task Force

Transgender resources

<http://thetaskforce.org/issues/transgender>

Transgender Law & Policy Institute

List of states with nondiscrimination laws

www.transgenderlaw.org/ndlaws/index.htm#maps

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health

Health and health policy issues

www.wpath.org//index.cfm

Glossary

Definitions related to the transgender community

Androgynous: Refers to persons who have both male and female characteristics (Transsexual Roadmap).

Cross-dresser: Refers to a person who wears the clothing, accessories, and other accoutrements, such as makeup, that conform to the larger society's concept of the person's "opposite sex." Unlike transsexuals, cross-dressers typically do not seek to change their physical characteristics and manner of expression permanently, nor do they desire to live full-time as the opposite gender. Cross-dressers are sometimes called "transvestites," but that term is considered derogatory in many contexts (Human Rights Campaign).

Intersex: Refers to a group of conditions in which there is a discrepancy between the external genitals and the internal genitals (the testes and ovaries) (Google Health) The older term for this condition, *hermaphroditism*, comes from the Greek name *Hermaphroditos*, son of the god Hermes and the goddess Aphrodite. His lover, the nymph Salmacis, prayed for complete union with her beloved. The gods united them in a body with both male and female characteristics. (Online Etymology Dictionary)

Sexual orientation: Refers to a person's innate sexual attraction to men, women, both, or neither, as opposed to a person's sense of self as a man, woman, both, or neither. However, the term is sometimes used to include a person's transgender status.

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe persons whose gender identity or expression situates them differently than the traditional gender role they were assigned at birth. Some of the many categories grouped together under this term include cross-dressing, drag, transgenderism, transsexualism, androgyny, and many shadings between these larger groupings (Transsexual Roadmap).

Transgender(ed): An adjective, this term should be used to describe someone, not to label them as an object; it is not used as a noun. (Inappropriate usage: "I saw three transgenders walking out of a store yesterday." Appropriate usage: "I saw three transgender people walking out of a store yesterday.") (Transsexual Roadmap).

Transition: A complicated, multistep process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, sex reassignment surgery. Formerly called "sex change."

Transphobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of transgender people; it can be manifested in a number of ways, ranging from avoidance to name calling, harassment, or discrimination, and even to violence and hate crimes (Human Rights Campaign).

Transsexual: Refers to persons who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally (Gay Straight Alliance).

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