

FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

A basic guide to common words and concepts.

Gender Identity

A person's internal sense of their gender.

Some common terms used to label one's gender identity are: man, woman, non-binary, genderqueer, and trans. There are many more possibilities, and some people identify with more than one term!

Gender Expression

The way a person presents their gender externally, including clothing, hairstyles, and behavior. It is important to know that a person's gender identity cannot be assumed from their gender expression.

Transgender (Trans)

A person who identifies with a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth.

For example, a person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman is a transgender woman.

A person assigned female at birth who identifies as genderqueer may also call themselves trans.

Sex/Gender Assigned at Birth

How a person's gender is identified by a doctor when they are born (typically based on external genitalia). Common terms: male, female, intersex.

Transition

A process of making changes in one's life related to gender identity and/or gender expression.

Cisgender (Cis)

A person who identifies with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman is a cisgender woman.

Transphobia

Negative or fearful attitudes towards trans people, discrimination against transgender people, or hatred that targets the transgender community. Examples include refusing to use a person's pronouns, telling a trans person that they are "faking it", or physical violence against a trans person.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does transitioning mean?

In general, transitioning means that a person is making changes related to their gender identity and/or gender expression. Transitioning looks different for every person. There is no right or wrong way to transition!

The transitioning person may ask to be referred to by a new name and/or a new set of pronouns. They may change legal documentation to reflect their identity.

Physically, transition may include changing one's appearance, including taking hormones or receiving surgery. However, these physical changes are not required for a person's gender identity to be respected, and not all trans people make physical changes as part of transitioning. (NOTE: It is not appropriate to ask a trans person whether they plan to make these physical changes.)

Someone has told me they want to transition. What do I do?

1. First, recognize that it takes a lot of courage and trust to disclose this. Thank the person for trusting you with this personal information.
2. Ask the person what name and pronouns they would like you to use for them.
3. It may be helpful to ask whether the person has come out to anyone else. It is inappropriate to disclose the person's trans status to others without permission.
4. Do not ask the person inappropriate personal questions, such as whether they plan to have surgery, unless you are their medical provider and it is relevant to their healthcare services. It is inappropriate to ask out of curiosity.

What is a pronoun?

How do I know which one to use?

Pronouns are a way to refer to someone, often used in place of the person's name. For example, you might say, "That's his desk."

Common sets of pronouns include she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. However, there are other possibilities!

They/them/theirs pronouns can be used to refer to a single person. For example, "Chris is coming today. They should be here in five minutes."

It is very important to use every person's correct pronouns- it shows that you respect the person and their gender identity. You cannot tell which pronouns someone uses based on appearance. Because a person's gender identity cannot be assumed from their gender expression, it is important to make space for all people to share their pronouns if they want to. You can respectfully ask others, "What are your pronouns?" or "Which pronouns do you use?"

If someone uses pronouns that are unfamiliar to you, there are online resources (such as www.practicewithpronouns.com) that can help you learn about using new pronouns.

If you accidentally refer to someone with the wrong pronoun, simply apologize, correct yourself, and move on. For example: "The other day he- sorry, I mean she, told me that she's moving to Philly."

It is never appropriate to refer to a person using dehumanizing language such as "it". If you are unsure of someone's pronouns, you can use a gender-neutral pronoun such as "they" until you have the chance to ask the person which pronouns they use.

When do people who are transitioning start to use the restrooms that match their gender?

The City of Philadelphia has an inclusive restroom policy, which states that anyone may use any restroom that corresponds with their gender identity. This means that every person, including someone in transition, has the right to use the restroom of their choice without being questioned or harassed.

Many places of public accommodation (such as restaurants, City offices, and retail stores) in Philadelphia have single-stall restrooms that are gender neutral, so anyone can use them regardless of gender identity.

