

# Glossary<sup>1</sup>

**Ally:** A member of a historically more powerful identity group who stands up against bigotry. For example, a man who confronts his friend about harassing women, a Christian who helps paint over a swastika, or a heterosexual person who objects to an anti-gay joke.

**Bisexual:** Romantically and sexually attracted to people of both genders. Does not presume non-monogamy (or, for that matter, *any* sexual activity). Some people self-identify as *bi* rather than *bisexual*.

**Coming out:** The process of first recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation or trans-gender identity to oneself and then sharing it with others. Developmentally, many sexual minority youth will initially erect emotional barriers with acquaintances, friends and family by pretending (actively or through silence) to be heterosexual and congruent. *Coming out* means dropping the secrecy and pretense and becoming more emotionally integrated. This usually occurs in stages and is a non-linear, life-long process.

**Congruent:** Having a gender and a gender identity that match. Non-transsexual and post-operative transsexual people are *congruent*.

**Co-parents:** Grown-ups who are raising a child together, who may or may not be biologically related to the child. Sometimes refers to the partner of a biological parent. Sometimes refers to both (or all) parents, step-parents, partners and other guardians.

**Cross-dressing:** Wearing clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of the other gender.

**Dyke:** Pejorative term for a lesbian. Some young women self-identify as *dykes*, but it is still a slur in many contexts and is generally prohibited in schools with anti-harassment policies.

**Fag, faggot:** Pejorative terms for a gay man. As unacceptable at school as racial or religious slurs.

**Failure-to-report:** The crime (a gross misdemeanor, in Washington State) committed by certain professionals who are required by law to contact child protective services and/or law enforcement when they know or suspect that a child or teen has been neglected or physically or sexually assaulted, when they fail to do so.

**Failure-to-protect:** Refers to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. This clause states that all citizens are due equal protection under the law and cannot be discriminated against through selective enforcement. This means that schools are responsible for equally protecting *all* students. Sexual harassment policies, for instance, must be applied consistently, regardless of a student's (or an employee's) gender or race or religion *or sexual orientation*.

**GLBTQ:** Abbreviation for *gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning*. Sometimes used, for example, to identify the young people who attend a school-based support group. Some groups also welcome heterosexual friends and allies and/or students with GLBT family members.

**Gay:** Preferred synonym for *homosexual*.

- K-3: "A man who loves another man or a woman who loves another woman."
- 4-8: "A man who gets strong crushes on other guys more often than on women, or who falls in love with a man. Or a woman who falls in love with another woman (but she might prefer to call herself lesbian than gay)."
- 9-12: "A person who is romantically and sexually most attracted to people of his or her own gender. The term refers to people of both genders, but when possible, it's more respectful to use the terms *gay and lesbian*."

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from glossaries produced by the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association; by GLSEN-CT & Planned Parenthood of CT in *Tackling Gay Issues in School*; and by Public Health - Seattle & King County in *Family Life and Sexual Health* (for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) and from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force report *Transgender Equality*.

**Gay relationships:** Gay, lesbian and bisexual people date, court, and sometimes make homes together. They use various terms to describe their commitments (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, lover). Ask the individual what term he or she prefers, if possible. If not, *partner* is generally acceptable.

**Gender identity:** One's understanding or feeling about whether one is emotionally or spiritually male or female or both or neither. A person may be congruent (i.e., his/her gender identity and physical gender are consistent) or transsexual (born biologically one gender; but emotionally and spiritually, the other) or not quite either one.

**Gender role:** One's gender expression and one's beliefs and feelings about the appropriate and/or comfortable expression of one's gender. To some degree, gender role is clearly learned (socially constructed and culture-specific). To some degree, people are probably biologically predisposed to be more "feminine" or "masculine."

**Heterosexism:** Presumption that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality or bisexuality. Also: prejudice, bias or discrimination based on that presumption.

**Heterosexual:** Clinical synonym for *straight*.

- K-3: "A man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man."
- 4-8: "A man who gets strong crushes on women more often than on men, or who falls in love with a woman. Or a woman who falls in love with a man."
- 9-12: "A person who is romantically and sexually most attracted to people of the other gender."

**Homophobia:** Originally coined to mean, in classic psychological terms, irrational fear of homosexuality. Now refers usually to bias against or dislike of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people or of stereotypically gay/lesbian behavior, or discomfort with one's own same-sex attractions, or of being perceived as gay or lesbian. A less inflammatory term is *anti-gay* (as in *anti-gay harassment*).

**Homosexual:** Avoid this term; it is clinical, distancing and archaic. Sometimes appropriate in referring to behavior (although *same-sex* is the preferred adj.). When referring to people, as opposed to behavior, *homosexual* is considered derogatory and the terms *gay* and *lesbian* are preferred, at least in the Northwest.

**Inclusive language:** The use of terms such as *family* or *parents/guardians*, instead of *mother-and-father* in a letter about an up-coming open-house. Or of gender-neutral terms (e.g., *partner*, instead of *boyfriend* or *girlfriend*) in a lesson on communication. Terms that allow every child and family to feel they belong at school, including those who are gay or lesbian (as well as children who live with a single parent or grandparents, etc.).

**Intersexed or intersexual:** An adjective to describe a person (referred to archaically as a *hermaphrodite*) who was born with an anomaly of the reproductive system – with genitals or chromosomes that were not clearly male or female. At least 1 in 2,000 children is born with genitals that make it difficult for even an expert to determine their sex. Some doctors consider such anomalies as hypospadias (in which the urethral opening is somewhere other than the tip of the penis) which occur in 1 of every 200 baby boys to be intersexed conditions.

**Lesbian:** Preferred term for *gay* women. Many lesbians feel invisible when the term *gay* is used to refer to men and women.

**Lifestyle:** An inaccurate term sometimes used to describe the lives of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Implies that the homes, careers, and relationships of all sexual minorities are identical. There is a GLBT *culture*, with its own performing arts and body of literature. There is a GLBT *community*, with gay- and lesbian-identified businesses, publications and holidays. But the degree to which people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender take part in this culture and community varies from not-at-all to almost-exclusively. There is no gay lifestyle, just as there is no straight lifestyle.

**Malicious harassment:** Physical injury, damage to property, or threats based on a person's (real or perceived) sexual orientation; race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; or mental, physical, or sensory handicap.<sup>2</sup>

**Openly gay/lesbian:** Preferred over *self-avowed* or *practicing*. For example: *He is an openly gay principal*.

**Outing:** Publicly revealing the sexual orientation of someone who has chosen not to share it.

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<sup>2</sup> RCW 9A.36.80

**Pink triangle:** A symbol originally used by the Nazis, who forced gay men to wear pink triangles on their clothing, imprisoned them in concentration camps, and put many thousands of gay men to death. Now, the downward-pointing, equilateral, pink triangle is a symbol of GLBT pride and the struggle for equal rights.

**Queer:** Pejorative term for *gay*. Now being reclaimed by some young gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people as a self-affirming umbrella term, but it is still a slur in many contexts and is generally prohibited in schools with anti-harassment policies.

**Rainbow flag:** A flag of six equal horizontal stripes (red, orange, yellow, green, blue and lavender or violet) adopted to signify the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community.

**Sex:** The sum of the biological (chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical) factors that make one male, female, or intersexual.

**Sexual harassment:** Any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature that alarms or annoys someone, or interferes with someone's privacy, or creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

**Sexual minorities:** Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

**Sexual orientation:** One's core sense of the gender(s) of people toward whom one feels romantically and sexually attracted. The inclination or capacity to develop intimate emotional and sexual relationships with people of the same gender, the other gender or both genders. Doesn't presume sexual experience/activity (i.e., sexual minority people are as capable as heterosexual people of choosing to abstain). To some degree, the qualities one finds attractive may be learned, probably in the first few years of life. There is growing evidence that people may be, however, biologically (hormonally, genetically) predisposed to be more attracted to one gender or the other or both. In all instances, use this term instead of *sexual preference* or other misleading terminology.

**Sexual preference:** Avoid this term; it implies a casual choice, which is rarely if ever the case. *Sexual orientation* is the correct term.

**Sissy:** Pejorative term for a gay man or a man who doesn't fit masculine gender role stereotypes. As unacceptable at school as racial or religious slurs.

**Stonewall:** The Stonewall Inn tavern in New York City's Greenwich Village was the site of several nights of rioting/rebellion following a police raid on June 28, 1969. Although not the nation's first gay-rights demonstration, Stonewall is now regarded as the birth of the modern gay-rights movement.

**Straight:** Heterosexual; non-gay. Term preferred by some straight people as less clinical and formal than *heterosexual*, but some dislike it because it gets confused with not using drugs or with being a rigid person. Some GLBT people object to it as implying that they must be, in contrast, bent.

**Transgender or Transgendered:** An umbrella term increasingly preferred by people whose appearance, personal characteristics or behaviors are gender role nonconforming ... individuals who might otherwise call themselves transsexual, cross-dressing or intersexed. Also preferred by some people who are emotionally *neither* sex or *both* sexes or whose gender role *expression* is significantly different from what society expects of people of their sex. Transgender people may be heterosexual or gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Some people self-identify as *trans* rather than *transgender*.

**Transsexual:** A person (pre, post or non-operative) who is biologically one sex (at birth), but emotionally and spiritually the other. Female-to-male transsexual (FTM) people are born with female bodies, but have a predominantly male gender identity. Male-to-female transsexual (MTF) people are born with male bodies, but have a predominantly female gender identity.

**Transvestite:** A person - not necessarily gay - who dresses in clothing most often associated with the other gender. The increasingly preferred term is *a person who cross-dresses*.