

National Center for Transgender Equality

Transgender Terminology:

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus "transgender people" is appropriate but "transgenders" is often viewed as disrespectful.)

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man.

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics.

Transition: The process through which transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. *Social transition* may include things such as changing names, pronouns, hairstyle and clothing. *Medical transition* may include medical components like hormone therapy and gender affirming surgeries. Not all transgender individuals seek medical care as part of their transition or have access to such care. The decision about which steps to take as part of one's transition is a deeply personal and private choice. You should never ask someone if they have had any medical procedures, and you should respect the privacy of a student's transition process.

Transgender and gender non-conforming youth face challenges at home, at school, in foster care, and in juvenile justice systems. Thanks to the hard work of parents, youth, educators, and state equality advocates, many states and local school districts have adopted anti-discrimination and anti-bullying laws and policies that explicitly include gender identity and expression, as well as developing specific policies and training that spell out what nondiscrimination means for trans students.

Today's society is recognizing the experiences and needs of transgender people as never before. This trend is most evident in our nation's schools, where an increasing number of transgender and gender-expansive students live openly as their authentic selves. At the same time, parents, students, educators, administrators and other stakeholders are working together to determine the best ways to support these students. Creating a more welcoming environment for students' gender diversity is a more effective and lasting strategy than trying to "solve" the concerns associated with an individual transgender student. Accordingly, many schools are working to develop more gender-inclusive environments for all students, knowing that they are also creating more affirming spaces for transgender students in the process. Such work represents a systematic approach to improving a school's overall climate and will ultimately increase all students' sense of safety, engagement and inclusion.