

## LGBTQ\* TERMS

The aim of this handout is to help AHS employees understand terms people might use to talk about sexual and gender diversity and/or to identify themselves. **When a health care worker understands the terms a patient is using, they are better able to provide good patient care.**

A health care worker would use these terms ***to reflect the language the patient is using and would avoid using them to label people.*** If a patient uses a term to identify themselves, it can be useful to check understanding, such as asking “can you tell me more about what that means?” This can make sure that the patient and worker have the same understanding of a term.

Language is fluid. Some terms may have a negative meaning for some and go out of favor, their use changes and new terms become more accepted.

**Asexual:** A person who does not experience sexual attraction; may or may not experience emotional/romantic attraction.

**Ally:** A person who advocates for human, civil and sexual rights for sexual minorities and who challenges discrimination and heterosexism.

**Bisexual:** A person who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to people of any gender or sex. Also a person who has sexual attraction to males and females.

**Cisgender:** A person whose identity conforms to the cultural expectations of the sex assigned at birth.

**Gay:** A person who has emotional or sexual attraction to people of the same sex or gender. Often used for a male who has emotional or sexual attraction to males.

**Gender/Gender Identity:** A person’s identity as female, male, both or neither, regardless of biological sex.

**Gender Fluid:** The gender identity, behaviors and appearance of a person moves along a gender spectrum and/or challenges gender restrictions and norms. Related terms can include gender queer, gender non-conforming, gender neutral, pangender, tri-gender, agender, non-binary gender.

**Heterosexism:** Discrimination based on the assumption that all people are heterosexual and cisgender and that these are the normal and/or superior sexual orientation and gender identities.

**Heterosexual (Straight):** A person who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex.

**Homosexual:** A dated and potentially offensive term for a person who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to people of the same sex.

**Homo/ Bi /Trans phobia:** A fear and/or hatred of homosexuality/bisexuality/transgender shown by prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence.

**Intersex:** The reproductive, sexual or genetic biology of a person is unclear, not exclusively male or female or otherwise does not fit with traditional definitions of male or female.

**Lesbian:** A female who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to females.

**Pansexual:** A person who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to people of any gender or sex.

**Polyamory:** Having more than one sexual loving relationship at the same time with consent of all partners involved.

**Queer:** A reclaimed term used by some people who identify as a sexual minority and also used as a positive collective term to describe communities and social movements.

**Questioning:** A person who is exploring, or is unsure of, their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sex:** Categories (male, female, intersex) to which people are typically assigned at birth based on reproductive biology and genetics. Also used to refer to sexual activity.

**Sexual Orientation:** A person's emotional and sexual attraction to others. It can be fluid and may or may not reflect sexual behaviors.

**Transgender (Trans, Trans-identified):** A person whose gender identity is non-conforming with cultural expectations of the sex assigned at birth. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for transsexual, cross-dressing and drag individuals, such as:

- **FTM:** Female to male transgender person.
- **MTF:** Male to female transgender person.

**Transition:** A process of change from the sex assigned at birth to one's self-identified gender. This may include physical, legal and social changes.

**Transsexual:** A transgender person expressing their self-identified gender through transition which could include medical intervention.

**Two-Spirit:** A cultural term used by some Aboriginal people to mean a person has both male and female spirit which may include concepts of spirituality, sexual orientation and gender identity.

These definitions have been created by AHS Sexual & Reproductive Health Education Services, Calgary Zone, with some adaptations from:

[http://www.cfsh.ca/Your\\_Sexual\\_Health/Gender-Identity-and-Sexual-Orientation/](http://www.cfsh.ca/Your_Sexual_Health/Gender-Identity-and-Sexual-Orientation/)

[http://sexualhealthcentresaskatoon.ca/qyouth/prov\\_terms.php](http://sexualhealthcentresaskatoon.ca/qyouth/prov_terms.php)

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/glossary/>

<http://librarypdf.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26289E.pdf> (Public Health Agency of Canada, Questions & Answers: Sexual Orientation in Schools, 2010)

<http://librarypdf.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26289E.pdf> (Public Health Agency of Canada, Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools, 2010)