



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

LGBTTTIQ TERMS

Asexual: a word describing a person who is not sexually and/or romantically active, or not sexually and/or romantically attracted to other persons

Biphobia: irrational fear or dislike of bisexuals (and also intersexed people). Bisexuals may experience stigmatization by heterosexuals, lesbians, and gay men

Bisexual: a word describing a person whose sexual orientation is directed towards men and women, though not necessarily at the same time

Coming out: the process in which LGBT people acknowledge and disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, or in which transsexual or transgendered people acknowledge and disclose their gender identity, to themselves and others. Coming out is thought to be an ongoing process. People who are “closeted” or “in the closet” hide the fact that they are LGBT. Some people “come out of the closet” in some situations (e.g., with other gay friends) and not in others (e.g., at work).

Dyke: a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for lesbians. Other terms include lezzie, lesbo, butch, bull dyke, and diesel dyke. Many women have reclaimed these words and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Fag: a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for gay men. Other terms include fruit, faggot, queen, fairy, pansy, sissy and homo. Many men have reclaimed these words and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Family of choice/chosen family: the circle of friends, partners, companions and perhaps ex-partners with which many LGTTTIQ people surround themselves. This group provides support, validation, and sense of belonging that is often unavailable from the person’s family of origin.

Gay: a word to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender or who identifies as a member of the gay community. This word can refer to men and women, although many women prefer the term “lesbian.”

Gender Identity: a person’s own identification of being male, female or intersexed; masculine, feminine or transgendered or transsexual. Gender identity most often corresponds with one’s anatomical gender, but sometimes a person’s gender identity doesn’t directly correspond to their anatomy. Transgendered people may use many terms to describe their gender identities including: pre-op transsexual, post-op transsexual, non-op transsexual, transgenderist, cross dresser, transvestite, transgendered, two-spirit, intersexed, hermaphrodite, fem male, gender blender, butch, manly woman, diesel dyke, sex radical, androgynist, female impersonator, drag king, drag queen, etc.



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Genderism: the belief that the binary construct of gender, in which there are only two genders (male and female), is the most normal, natural and preferred way of viewing gender identity. This binary construct does not include or allow for people to be intersex, transgendered, transsexual, or genderqueer.

Genderqueer: a very recent term coined by young people who experience a very fluid sense of both their gender identity and their sexual orientation, and who do not want to be constrained by absolute or static conceptualizations.

Heterosexism: the assumption expressed overtly and/or covertly, that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression which reinforces silence and invisibility for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Heterosexual: a term used to describe a person whose sexual orientation is to members of the opposite gender. Heterosexual people are often referred to as “straight.”

Heterosexual privilege: the unrecognized and assumed privileges that people have if they are heterosexual. Examples of heterosexual privilege include: holding hands or kissing in public without fearing threat, not questioning the normality of your sexual orientation, raising children without fears of state intervention or worries that your children will experience discrimination because of your heterosexuality.

Homophobia: irrational fear, hatred, prejudice or negative attitudes toward homosexuality and people who are gay or lesbian. Homophobia can take overt and overt, as well as subtle and extreme forms. Homophobia includes behaviours such as jokes, name-calling, exclusion, gay bashing, etc.

Homosexual: a term used to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender. Most people prefer to not use this label and prefer others such as gay or lesbian.

Internalized homophobia: the fear and self-hatred of one’s own sexual orientation that occurs for many lesbians and gay men as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. Once lesbians and gay men realize they belong to a group of people that is often despised and rejected in our society, many internalize and incorporate this stigmatization and fear or hate themselves.

Intersex: a person who has some mixture of male and female genetic and/or physical sex characteristics. Formally called “hermaphrodites.” Many intersexed people consider themselves to be part of the trans community.

Lesbian: a female whose primary sexual orientation is to other women or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community.

LGBTQQ: A common acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, two-spirit, intersex and queer individuals/communities. This acronym may or may not be used in a



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particular community. For example, in some places, the acronym LGBT (for lesbian, gay bisexual and transgendered/transsexual) may be more common. This longer acronym is used in order to be more inclusive of the diversity within these communities.

Polysexual: sexual orientation that does not limit affection, romance or sexual attraction to any one gender or sex, and which further recognizes there are more than just two sexes.

Queer: traditionally a derogatory and offensive term for LGBT people. Many LGBT people have reclaimed this word and use it proudly to describe their identity. Some transsexual and transgendered people identify as queers, others do not.

Sexual Orientation: a term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction or affection for another person. Examples include heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality.

Transgendered: a person whose gender identity is different from his or her biological sex, regardless of the status of surgical and hormonal gender reassignment processes. Often used as an umbrella term to include transsexuals, transgenderists, transvestites (cross dressers), and two-spirit, intersexed and transgendered people.

Transphobia: irrational fear or dislike of transsexual and transgendered people.

Transsexual: a term for people who had an intense long-term experience of being the sex opposite to his or her birth-assigned sex and who typically pursued a medical and legal transformation to become the other sex. There are transmen (female-to-male transsexuals) and transwomen (male-to-female transsexuals). Transsexual people may undergo a number of procedures to bring their body and public identity in line with their self-image, including sex hormone therapy, electrolysis treatments, sex reassignment surgeries and legal changes of name and sex status.

Two-spirit: an English term coined to reflect specific cultural words used by First nation and other indigenous peoples for their individuals in their cultures who are gay or lesbian, are transgendered or transsexual, or have multiple gender identities. The term reflects an effort by First Nation and other indigenous communities to distinguish their concepts of gender and sexuality from those of Western LGBT communities.

Source: *Centre for Addiction and Mental Health*



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TERMINOLOGY SUGGESTIONS

Adapted from the Mautner Project "Removing the Barrier's Participant's Handbook"

Confused about what to say?

Due to experiences with homophobic prejudice and discrimination, lesbian and bisexual women are often quite sensitive to any signal that indicates that a professional may not be familiar or comfortable with same sex relationships and sexual behaviour.

As we have seen with many different cultural groups, self-referential language evolves as issues of status and identity change. One way you can demonstrate your willingness to provide lesbian and bisexual affirmative care is by the language you use. Here are some terms that generally fit what are preferred right now and that will increase your confidence that your language is culturally competent:

The terms **Lesbian**, **Gay**, or **Bisexual** are preferred over **Homosexual**. Homosexual used either as a noun or an adjective is too clinical and for your clients, it may connote anti-gay attitudes, as in the phrase, "Those sick homosexuals."

Queer is controversial. Women who use this term in reference to themselves are **reclaiming** it from being used as a tool of oppression. Some women still respond strongly to negative connotations of **queer**. Given with mixed response to this term on the LGBT community, you will be safest to use phrases such as **lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender or LGBT**, and to personally note the connotation a client who uses the term "**queer**" seems to give it.

Partner is generally preferred to **lover, friend, or roommate**. Partner is a good term you can use with all clients. Use of the terms friends or roommate to refer to a significant other communicates a discomfort or unwillingness to regard a same sex partner with the same validity as an opposite sex partner.

Sexual identity and **sexual orientation** are the terms preferred to **sexual preference**. **Sexual orientation** developed in response to the phrase **sexual preference** to combat arguments that sexuality is a choice and that homosexuality can be treated to change it to heterosexuality. Today **sexual preference** is often perceived as being a term that invalidates how true a lesbian, gay or bisexual identity feels for the individual. You can generally use both **sexual identity** and **sexual orientation** with your clients.

It is important to understand the difference between **homophobia** and **heterosexism**. **Homophobia** focuses on prejudices against lesbian, gay and bisexual people from individuals. It refers to overt negative reactions from people. **Heterosexism** changes the focus to the larger culture, to heterosexist prejudice, discrimination and assumptions. **Heterosexism** has both external, environmental manifestations as well as internally felt experiences of shame for some people with a non-heterosexual identity.



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Be aware of how you use **family**. Are you referring to “**family of origin**” or “**family of choice**?” Because of heterosexism, including forms of rejection from members of the family in which one was raised (family of origin), people may create familial relationships among friends (family of choice). Do not assume that members of your client’s family of origin are who she considers family. Frequently partners, former partners, friends, or even supportive members of others’ families feel and operate as family to lesbian and bisexual women. Do not inquire about who is in your client’s “**family of choice**” as you determine their real support network.