

Gender & Sexual Orientation Information for School Behavioral Health Providers

A Tip Sheet for Members of the DC CoP

This tip sheet from the DC School Behavioral Health Community of Practice (DC CoP) contains definitions of gender and sexual orientation to support school faculty, staff, and health partners to better understand the LGBTQ+ members of their school community. These terms were discussed during the DC CoP meeting, *Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth*, on April 20, 2022. A special thank you to Perrin Robinson of the [National Center for School Mental Health](#), who presented on this issue. The full presentation is available for viewing [here](#).

Understanding Gender

A person's gender is the complex interrelationship between three dimensions: body, identity, and social gender. At birth, we are designated with a specific sex: male, female, or sometimes intersex. Gender is then presumed. This presumption is not automatically correct. Instead gender is much more nuanced, shown in internal and outward expressions of self. Below are explanations of commonly used terms:

Identity

An individual's internal sense of self. Identity can include how one perceives oneself and calls oneself.

Below are examples of different types of gender identity:

- Man
- Woman
- Agender - an individual whose identity does not involve gender.
- Non-binary, Gender-fluid, or Genderqueer - an individual who's gender identity does not conform to the gender binary of either being a man or a woman.
- Gender expansive/diverse/non-conforming - a broad term referring to individuals who do not conform to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.



Expression

An individual's outward expression of self. Expressions can include behavior, clothing, hair, and voice among other indicators.

Below are examples of different types of gender expressions:

- Feminine
- Masculine
- Androgynous - an individual who has both masculine and feminine gender expressions, not always in equal amounts.
- Gender expansive/diverse/non-conforming - a broad term referring to individuals who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Pronouns

A form of gender expression.

Commonly used pronouns today can include:

- She/her/hers
- He/him/his
- They/them/theirs
- Neopronouns: ze/zir/zirs; fae/faer/faers

Experience

Whether the sex assigned at birth and gender identify are the same.

Below are examples of different types of gender experience:

- Cisgender - someone whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.
- Transgender - someone whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth.

Understanding Sexual Orientation

A person's sexual orientation refers to whom a person is attracted to physically and emotionally. These two things are not mutually exclusive; Some examples include:

- Straight or Heterosexual - women attracted to men, or men attracted to women
- Gay - someone attracted to people of the same gender
- Lesbian - a woman attracted to other women
- Bisexual - someone who can be attracted to someone of the same or a different gender
- Pansexual - someone who can be attracted to people regardless of their gender
- Asexual - someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction, or who experiences attraction but doesn't feel the need to act out that attraction sexually
- Demisexual - someone who feels sexual attraction only after an established emotional bond

Learn More

- For more resources developed by the DC CoP please visit [our website](#).
- For more information on resources shared during the meeting, please visit [this Padlet](#).
- [Glossary of Terms](#) from the It Gets Better Project
- [Understanding Pronouns](#) from Pronouns.org
- [Understanding Gender](#) from the Gender Spectrum

Two Spirit

A term used for and by some queer Indigenous people, meaning they have both a masculine and feminine spirit.

