

August 4, 2022

DEFINITIONS & TERMINOLOGY

- **Gender:** A social construct, or idea, created by people to categorize and explain the world around them
- **The gender binary:** A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed “male or female” or “man or woman”
- **Gender identity:** An individual’s personal or internal sense of their gender
- **Gender expression:** The way an individual chooses to communicate their gender in public, e.g., clothing, hair, or voice characteristics
- **Cisgender:** A term that describes an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth
- **Transgender/Trans:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth
- **Nonbinary:** An umbrella term that describes someone who experiences their gender identity as outside of the male-female/man-woman gender binary

Other terms and definitions can be found in these glossaries created by the [Human Rights Campaign](#) and in the [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#).

Terms to Avoid	Reason	Better Terms
“Homosexual”	Has historically been used to pathologize LGBTQ people	Gay, lesbian, bisexual LGBTQ
“Normal”	Implies that transgender people are outliers and/or that there is something wrong with anyone who is not cis	Cisgender Cis
“Transsexual; cross-dresser”	Dated terms that originated in medical and psychological communities; often considered offensive	Transgender Trans
“Tranny”	Derogatory slur that dehumanizes transgender people	Transgender Trans
“A transgender; bisexuals; etc.”	Most descriptors should be used as an adjective, not a noun	A transgender person Bisexual people
“Biologically male/female”	Oversimplifies a complex subject; a person's biology does not overrule their gender identity.	Assigned male/female at birth

RESPONDING TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

- All forms of sexual misconduct are **boundary violations** driven by power and control—perpetrators violate boundaries by taking away a victim’s autonomy, choice, and ability to consent
- Trauma describes a response to an overwhelming experience where someone felt **powerless** and/or **unprepared**
- Victims may react in a variety of ways—many experience lingering feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, isolation, and hopelessness

Most of RAINN's hotline visitors who are survivors have never previously disclosed their experience to anyone. Common barriers to reporting include:

- Shame and self-blame
- Stigma
- Fear of retaliation
- Complexity of sexual misconduct

- Distrust in system
- Trauma reactions
- Lack of power
- Victim-blaming
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of getting in trouble
- Not wanting others to find out
- “Reporting won’t achieve anything.”

Additionally, LGBTQ survivors may also be navigating:

- Perpetrator power and control tactics, such as situational privilege or identity abuse
- Being outed, or fear of being outed
- Discrimination
- Stigma
- Bullying
- Fear of retaliation from their community

RESPOND IN AN UNBIASED, TRAUMA-INFORMED MANNER

Combat common stereotypes about LGBTQ people, such as:

- LGBTQ relationship violence is less harmful than heterosexual violence
- Sexual violence is about desire or attraction
- LGBTQ people (and especially bisexual people or gay men) are hypersexual
- LGBTQ people are deviant or immoral
- Transgender people are deceptive
- LGBTQ young adults are confused about or experimenting with their identity

APPLY TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES

- Convey understanding
- Express empathy
- Earn trust
- Prioritize safety

PRIORITIZE SAFETY WITH LGBTQ SURVIVORS

Safety is about creating *agency* and *predictability* wherever possible:

- Mirror the language of the person you’re speaking with and ask for clarification when necessary
- Display and/or share your pronouns when meeting for the first time, and offer the opportunity for others to share their pronouns with you
 - If you make a mistake, apologize briefly, correct yourself, and move on promptly
- Consider when someone actually needs to be asked about sensitive information such as legal name, sex assigned at birth, or gender identity

- *“Am I asking this question because I need to know the information to do my job to the best of my ability, or am I just curious?”*
- If someone *must* share that information, provide opportunities for them to share how they want to be referred to as well
- Reduce the number of times a survivor must “come out” or share personal information by streamlining systems while maintaining privacy
- Be transparent about the limitations of inclusion, and provide notice when a survivor may need to prepare for a distressing experience
 - *“Our meeting with the dean tomorrow is in Crouse Hall. As a heads up, the closest gender-neutral bathroom is across the quad.”*
- Identify and offer LGBTQ-affirming resources

PITFALLS

Avoid the following pitfalls in order to foster a trauma-informed, inclusive environment:

- Making light of or dismissing pronouns
- “I treat everyone the same here, I don’t see gender.”
- Unnecessarily sharing personal information with others
- Referring to pronouns as “preferred” or to sexual orientation as a “preference” or “lifestyle”
- Asking unnecessary or invasive questions for your own curiosity
- Failing to recognize abuse in LGBTQ relationships
- Over-apologizing
- Making assumptions
- Relying on the LGBTQ person you’re speaking with to educate you
- Questioning someone’s identity

RESOURCES

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline:

Free | Confidential | Anonymous

Available 24/7/365 in English and Spanish to anyone affected by sexual violence in any way.

- Call: (800) 656.HOPE (4673)
- Chat: hotline.rainn.org (accessible worldwide)
- Website: www.rainn.org
- For more information, visit the following pages on RAINN’s website:
 - [LGBTQ Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
 - [Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault](#)
 - [Types of Sexual Violence](#)
 - [Local resources and sexual assault service providers](#)
 - [Laws in your state](#)

- [Key Terms and Phrases](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)

RAINN-Operated Resources:

- DoD Safe Helpline for the military community: 877.995.5247: www.safehelpline.org
- In6 Support Line Online Chat Services for male survivors, ages 18+: www.lin6.org

Other Hotline Resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988: 988lifeline.org
- DoD Safe Helpline for the military community: 877.995.5247: www.safehelpline.org
- The Trevor Project: 866.488.7386; www.thetrevorproject.org
- Trans Lifeline: 877.565.8860: www.translifeline.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800.799.7233: www.thehotline.org
- LGBT National Help Center: 888.THE.GLNH (843.4564); www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org

Online Resources:

- **FORGE:** www.forge-forward.org
FORGE reduces the impact of trauma on trans/non-binary survivors and communities by empowering service providers, advocating for systems reform, and connecting survivors to healing possibilities.
- **National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs:** www.avp.org
AVP empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and supports survivors through counseling and advocacy.
- **The Network/La Red:** www.tnlr.org
The Network/La Red is a survivor-led, social justice organization that works to end partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, SM, polyamorous, and queer communities.
- **Trans Student Educational Resources:** www.transstudent.org
Trans Student Educational Resources is a youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender non-conforming students through advocacy and empowerment.