



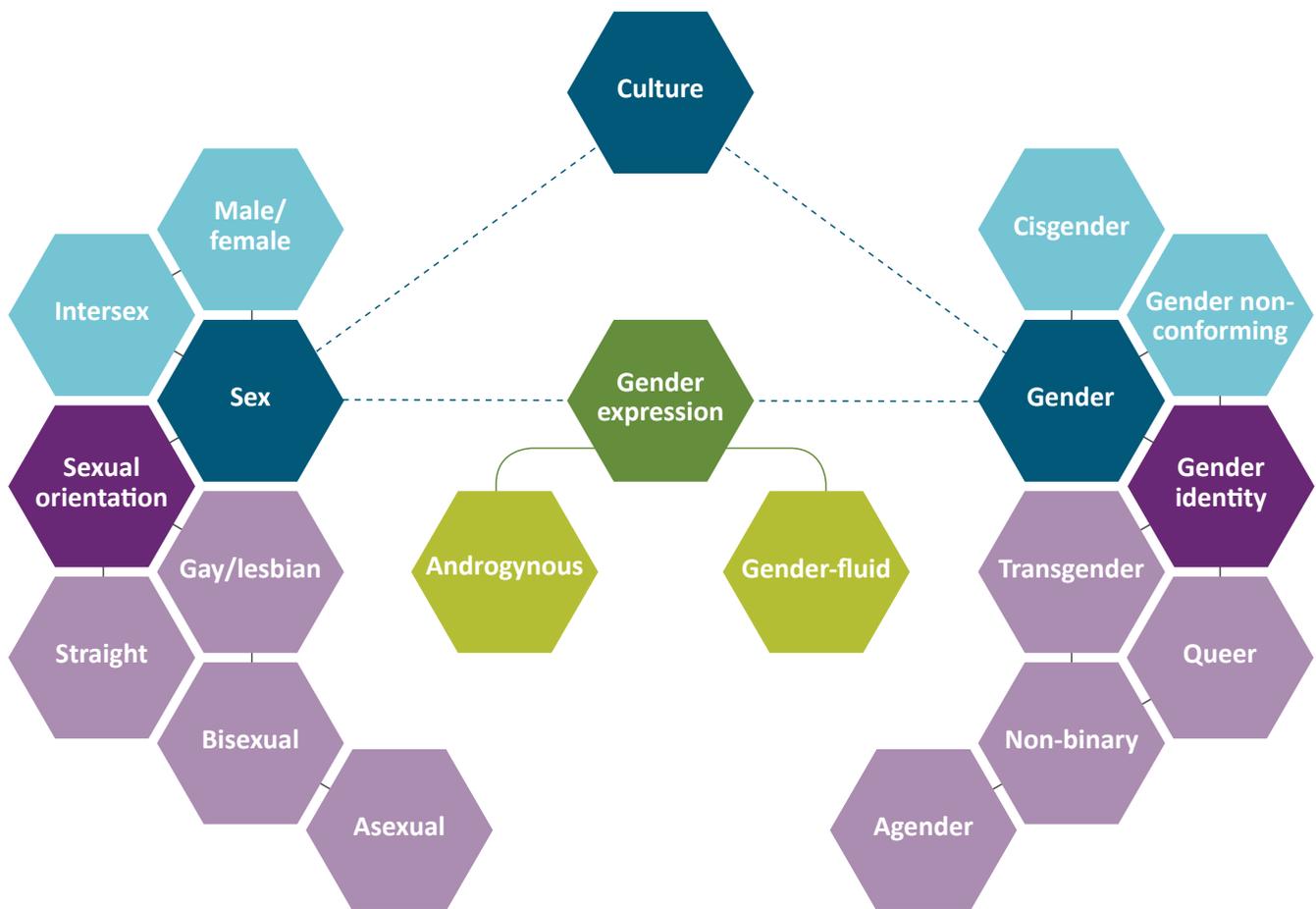
ACTS Facts™

Definitions for SOGI Affirmation

To relieve social stigma and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes, many healthcare organizations are beginning to collect information regarding patients' sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) patients are vulnerable to discrimination and disparities in care. In response to these challenges, leading healthcare organizations are participating in the Human Rights Campaign's Healthcare Equality Index survey, joining local Pride events, and providing their staff with training on LGBT+ issues in care. A first step towards engaging LGBT+ patients, families, and co-workers in a more welcoming and affirming manner is to provide healthcare staff with education about SOGI vocabulary. Key concepts and the relationships between terms are illustrated below and then defined on page two.

Facets of SOGI

To affirm someone is to acknowledge them in a positive manner so they feel seen and heard. Affirming LGBT+ patients can decrease the risk of harm, lets them know they are valued, and helps build trust with healthcare staff. Typically, staff think of sexual orientation and gender identity in a binary way—straight or gay, man or woman—but people are often more complex and unique than one or the other. Sexual orientation and gender identity vary and involve different facets of a person including their sex assigned at birth, culture and experience, and gender expression or presentation.¹ In addition, both sexual orientation and gender identity can change over time. Gender affirmation refers to the process of coming to recognize, accept, and express one's gender identity.¹ This transition period means that the gender expressions of patients or co-workers may change from one interaction to the next. For gender-fluid people, their gender presentation may even change from day to day.



KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Agender refers to a person who sees themselves as not having a gender. Some may consider themselves gender neutral, or just don't consider gender a central part of their identity.¹

Androgynous describes a gender expression that is not clearly masculine or clearly feminine. Someone who identifies as an androgyne usually adopts characteristics of both genders, or strives to attain a gender-neutral or non-gender expression.²

Asexual is a sexual orientation that describes a person who experiences little to no sexual attraction, but may experience romantic or emotional attraction to any sex or gender.³

Bisexual is a sexual orientation that describes a person who can be emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex or gender—but not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.⁴

Cisgender means that a person is not transgender. That is, a person's gender identity corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth. Therefore, it refers to males who identify as men and females who identify as women.²

Culture is understood as the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, collective identities, and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful. Cultures tend to differentiate racial, ethnic, and class groups, and produce group boundaries and inequalities.⁵

Female is a biological sex category usually assigned at birth based on the sexual/reproductive anatomy of a vagina and uterus and/or XX chromosomes.²

Gay is a sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same sex or gender. It is most commonly used to describe men who are attracted to other men.⁴

Gender refers to the social customs that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex and is often conflated with sex. Cultures consider certain roles and behaviors appropriate based on the sex a person is assigned at birth, and people are expected to conform to these expectations.⁶

Gender expression refers to the external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, and voice—any of which may or may not conform to the characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.⁴

Gender-fluid is a gender expression or gender identity that changes. Gender fluid people can move between genders and experience gender as something shifting rather than fixed or set.¹

Gender identity refers to an individual's inner sense of being a man, woman, a blend of both, or neither—it is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.⁴

Gender non-conforming describes a person whose gender identity, role, or expression does not conform to the typical cultural norms for their assigned sex in a given culture and historical period.²

Intersex is a general term that refers to biological variations in which a person's reproductive or sexual anatomy does not seem to fit the typical definitions of male or female. These differences in sex development (DSD) may be related to genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, and/or chromosomal make-up.² Intersex may indicate a person's sex/gender or gender identity. Note that the existence of intersex people complicates binary understandings of sex/gender, and even the concept of cisgender.

Lesbian is a sexual orientation that describes a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.⁴

Male is a biological sex category, usually assigned at birth based on the sexual/reproductive anatomy of a penis and testicles, and/or XY chromosomes.²

Man describes people who self-identify as a man, based on elements important to them that are associated with masculinity, relating to gender roles, behavior, expression, identity, and/or physiology.²

Non-binary describes a gender identity that is not strictly male or female. A non-binary person may not identify as a man or a woman, or not only as a man or a woman.⁴

Queer is a broad term that may describe anyone with a sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression that is outside of typical social norms. Some members of the LGBT+ community use the term as a positive and affirming way of describing their own diversity. Historically used as a derogatory term, queer has been reclaimed as inclusive, although it is still not embraced by all members of the LGBT+ community.³

Sex is a biological category understood as male or female and sometimes intersex. Sex is often conflated with gender. It is typically assigned at birth based on the appearance of anatomy. Sex also refers to other traits related to chromosomes, genetic expression, hormone levels and function, and internal reproductive organs.²

Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to other people. It is a social category typically defined in terms of relationships, specifically, one's sex or gender in relation to the sex or gender they are attracted to.⁶

Straight is a sexual orientation that describes either a man who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men.

Transgender describes people whose gender identity differs in varying degrees from the sex they were assigned at birth.² Transition is a period when a transgender person makes social, legal, and/or medical changes. They may change their clothing, name, or body. Transgender people do not typically think of transition as changing sexes or genders, but as aligning their body and outward gender expression to correspond with their internal gender identity.¹

Woman describes people who self-identify as a woman, based on elements important to them that are associated with femininity, relating to gender roles, behavior, expression, identity, and/or physiology.²

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2. World Professional Association for Transgender Health. (2018). *Standards of care for the health of transsexual, transgender, and gender non-conforming people*. Retrieved from <http://www.wpath.org/transgender/Documents/Glossary%20of%20Terms%20-%203%20sources.pdf>
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