

## The Alphabet Soup - Terminology

The acronyms commonly used for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community have changed over time. There are many variations on acronyms, with versions becoming increasingly more inclusive. LGB and LGBT have been used since the 1990s, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. More recently, letters have been added and used by different groups. For example, LGBPTTQQIIAA+ for lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, intergender, asexual, ally and more. For this course, gender-expansive and LGBTQ will be used, and these terms were defined within Lesson One. Listed below are other terms which may be helpful to understand and to best serve diverse populations, specifically the gender-expansive and LGBTQ population. With knowledge and understanding of this terminology, all program personnel—including program managers, training and curriculum specialists and caregivers—can be better equipped to listen to the experiences of children and family members who are gender-expansive or LGBTQ. When a family shares that their child or someone in their family is gay or transgender, program personnel must have the basic information to acknowledge every child's experience.

### Language

**Ally/Allies** – An individual(s) who strives to identify and combat societal and internal homophobia and transphobia in support of the LGBTQ community

**Asexual** – A person who defines as not sexually attracted to others

**Binary system** – A system with only two options (in the case of gender, male or female); LGBTQ people and allies work to challenge the gender binary

**Bisexual** – An individual who is attracted to more than one gender. Also, see pansexual

**Cisgender** – A term for people whose gender identity and gender expression are associated with the gender they were assigned at birth

**Gay** - This term applies to individuals who identify as male and are attracted to other males. Historically, gay has been used to describe anyone who is attracted to someone of the 'same sex', but in the spirit of being more inclusive, that is not as common today

**Gender identity** – One's internal, personal sense of being a boy, a girl, both, neither, or having fluidity in their gender expression or self-understanding

**Gender expansive (sometimes called gender creative)** – Individuals who do not confirm to stereotypical gender norms. Gender-expansive children are exploring gender expressions counter to binary constructs; they may say they are a boy at one time and girl at another time or reject gender labels. Sometimes also called gender-creative or gender non-conforming. (Gender creative and transgender are not interchangeable terms; gender creative children are not necessarily transgender)

**Gender fluid** – Individuals who do not identify with a fixed gender

**Gender expression** – How we show our gender identity to others, usually expressed through clothing, haircut, voice and body characteristics, activities; some related terms include: masculine, feminine, androgynous

**Gender pronouns** – Most commonly, he, she, her and him in English, but it is best to let people, including children, choose their own pronouns; some non-binary examples include the singular they and ze

**Gender-free pronouns** – Examples include ze, which is pronounced “zee” can also be spelled zie or xe, and replaces she, he and they; hir is pronounced like “here” and replaces her, hers, him, his, they and theirs

**Heterosexual or Straight** – Individuals who are attracted to a gender different than the one with which they identify

**Heteronormative** – A way of thinking, speaking, and behaving which assumes and promotes heterosexuality as the ‘normal’ way of being, reinforces stereotypical roles for males and females, and assumes that there are only two gender identity options available and these are opposite to one another

**Homophobia and Transphobia** – The dislike or fear of people who identify or are perceived as belonging to the LGBTQ community

### **Intersectionality**

Term coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, to highlight how different aspects of one’s identity can influence the kinds of experiences and oppression different individuals face

**Intersex** – An individual who was born with what a doctor determined was ambiguous genitalia (the intersex community uses the term “ambiguous genitalia” with caution due to the pathologization [i.e., characterization of medically abnormal] of one’s anatomy)

**Intergender** – A person who feels they do not belong to the male or female gender

**Lesbian** – Individuals who identify as female and are attracted to other females

**Pansexual** – An individual who experiences gender as non-binary and can be attracted to people of any gender

**Queer** - Everyone on the LGBTQ spectrum. Generationally, younger people feel more comfortable with this term as older generations may consider it offensive. Some groups feel the umbrella term is one that erases their unique identities, for example as lesbians or gays, though others may embrace and “reclaim” the term as reflective of their experiences and identities as individuals whose sexual identity is something other than heterosexual or “straight”

**Questioning** – An individual who is exploring their sexual or gender identity

**Sex** – The state of being male or female (or intersex) based on biology (chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals)

**Sexual orientation** - An individual's enduring physical, romantic, or emotional attraction to another person; gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same

**Transgender** - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth; similar terms are gender-expansive, gender creative, gender variant, or gender nonconforming. Individuals who are transgender may define themselves as male or female (boy or girl), both, or neither

**Transexual** - An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities to describe people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries. This term is no longer considered appropriate by most gender-expansive or LGBTQ people because of its overly clinical focus