

A GUIDE TO NEED-TO-KNOW TERMS FOR

Families and Friends of Transgender Children

An important part of creating a supportive environment for transgender children is **understanding – and using appropriately – the terms they may use to describe themselves.**

Words are powerful expressions of identity. They can also signify acceptance or exclusion, which is why it's important to use them with care and compassion. Children who identify as transgender may use a variety of terms to represent themselves and their life experiences. These terms may be confusing for parents, relatives and friends, but the glossary below can help clarify some of the confusion.

SEX VS. GENDER

Sex:

A collection of physical characteristics, such as genitalia, that are representative of males or females. A child may be assigned male or female at birth based on physical traits.

Gender identity:

The way a person views themselves, which may differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity may be male, female, both or neither.

Intersex:

People born with reproductive anatomy and sex attributes not typically defined as exclusively male or exclusively female

Sexual orientation:

Instinctive attraction to others that is distinct from gender identity.

EXPRESSING GENDER

Gender expression:

The ways in which someone communicates or demonstrates gender identity to others through physical characteristics, clothing

Gender-expansive:

Identifying or expressing gender more broadly than male or female, often as part of exploring one's gender identity and gender expression

Gender-fluid:

A person whose gender identity is subject to change

Gender-nonconforming:

A person who does not identify or behave in a way that matches the typical cultural expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Some gender nonconforming people may identify as transgender.

Nonbinary:

Identifying as neither exclusively male nor exclusively female. A nonbinary person may identify as one or more genders, such as male and female or neither, transgender or genderqueer.

Transgender:

Individuals whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the characteristics typically linked with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender identity is separate from sexual orientation, which varies among transgender people.

Transgender boy:

A child assigned female sex at birth who identifies as male.

Transgender girl:

A child assigned male sex at birth who identifies as female.