**PFLAG Glossary of Terms**

***PFLAG is a national organization of parents, family members, friends and allies united in support of LGBTQ individuals. Here are some of the terms they have listed in their glossary. For a more complete list, please go to www.pflag.org/glossary.***

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**Ally:** A term used to describe someone who is supportive of LGBTQ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Whereas allies to the LGB community typically identify as straight, allies to the transgender community also come from the LGBTQ community. Transgender individuals who identify as straight can be allies to the LGB community as well.

**Bisexual:** An individual who has the capacity for attraction—sexually, romantically, emotionally, or otherwise—to people with the same, and to people with a different, gender and/or gender identity as themselves.

**Gay:** The adjective used to describe people who are emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian is often a preferred term for women, though many women use the term gay to describe themselves. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction and self-identification that determine orientation.

**Gender expression:**The manner in which a person communicates about gender to others through external means such as clothing, appearance, or mannerisms. This communication may be conscious or subconscious and may or may not reflect their gender identity or sexual orientation. While most people’s understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through androgynous expressions. The important thing to recognize is that an individual’s gender expression does not automatically imply one’s gender identity.

**Gender identity:**One’s deeply held core sense of being a girl/woman, boy/man, some of both, or neither. One’s gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced as early as 18 months old.

**Gender nonconforming:**A term (considered by some to be outdated) used to describe those who view their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly man or woman. More current terms include gender expansive, differently gendered, gender creative, gender variant, genderqueer, nonbinary, agender, gender fluid, gender neutral, bigender, androgynous, or gender diverse. PFLAG National uses the term gender expansive.

**Homosexual:**An outdated clinical term often considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms, gay, lesbian, or queer.

**Lesbian:** Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

**LGBTQ:** An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender), GLBT (gay, lesbian, bi, and transgender). The addition of the Q is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term queer focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition, which recognizes more fluid identities; and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender expansive people. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender.

**Queer:** A term used by some people—particularly youth—to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, queer is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ community. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer (i.e. “My cousin identifies as queer”).

**Questioning:**Describes those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof.

**Sexual orientation:** Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. While sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one’s sexual orientation, sexual orientation is part of the human condition, One’s sexual activity does not define one’s sexual orientation; typically, it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

**Transgender:** Often shortened to trans. A term describing a person’s gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Other terms commonly used are female to male (or FTM), male to female (or MTF), assigned male at birth(or AMAB), assigned female at birth (or AFAB), genderqueer, and gender expansive. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as a broad umbrella term to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people with different histories and experiences are often included within the greater transgender community—such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

**Transition:**A term sometimes used to refer to the process—social, legal, and/or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one’s gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual’s gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.