



## LGBTQ Terms You Need to Know

**Advocate** – **1 noun**: a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. **2 verb** : to actively support or plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance or educate others.

**Ally** – *noun*: a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. Active allies are people who take action in support of and respect for the LGBTQ community.

**Biological Sex** – *noun*: the sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. This is also referred to as "assigned sex at birth."

**Cisgender** – *adj*: a gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to "cis."

**Closeted** – *adj*: an individual who is not open to others about their sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one's safety, peer or family rejection, or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being "in the closet." When someone chooses to break this silence they "come out" of the closet. (See coming out)

**Coming Out** – **1 noun**: the process by which one acknowledges, accepts, appreciates, and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to "come out"). **2 verb** : the process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others.

**Gender Expression** – *noun*: external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms (which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine).

**Gender Identity** – *noun*: one's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither. 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.

**Gender Queer** – *adj*: a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender, but rather a fluid or unfixed gender identity. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters.**

**Heteronormativity** – *noun*: the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. This leads to the invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities, for example, *when learning that a woman is married, asking her what her husband's name is*. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**Homophobia** – *noun*: the fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

**LGBTQ+** – *abbr*: an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.” The plus (+) sign indicates an abbreviated version for LBGTTTQQIAA, which includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual, two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and ally.

**Outing** – *verb*: involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

**Questioning** – *adj*: a term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**QPOC / QTPOC** – *abbr*: initialisms that stand for queer people of color and queer and/or trans people of color.

**Transgender** – *adj*: an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.