



BASIC TIPS FOR HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR WORKING WITH TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE

1. **Outing:** Remember that revealing the transgendered status of any transgendered person without his or her expressed permission is outing that person, and it has the same potential for harm as outing a gay man, lesbian, or bisexual man or woman. Outing is Invasion of Privacy.

2. **Appearance:** Do not assume that someone who appears to be crossdressed is a "transvestite". Someone who appears to be crossdressed to you may or may not be living full-time in their presenting gender, or they may intend to do so in the future. The appropriate term for someone who engages in crossdressing on an occasional basis is *crossdresser*.

Usage Tips: Instead of the stigmatizing "transvestite", use *Male Crossdresser* or *Female Crossdresser* if it's clear that they are not living full-time nor intend to do so.

3. **Living Status:** If a transgendered person is living full-time in a gender not associated with their birth sex (i.e., someone who appears to be a "man living as a woman" or a "woman living as a man") that person should be referred to at all times with terms appropriate to their presenting gender, regardless of their surgical status or body state (see below).

Usage Tips: *Transgendered Woman* is appropriate for Male-To-Female persons.
Transgendered Man is appropriate for Female-to-Male persons.
Transgendered Person is appropriate for someone of either above types.
Transgendered People is appropriate for mixed groups (both gender vectors).

4. **Surgical Status:** Almost all transsexuals – pre-operative, post-operative or non-operative – and many transgendered people are extremely sensitive about their surgical status and/or their body's physical state. Accordingly, questions about this should be avoided or, if medically necessary, asked very sensitively. Moreover, this information should be considered confidential and should not be shared with others unless it is medically necessary.

Usage Tips: Regardless of their surgical status, the appropriate term for a Male-To-Female transsexual is Transsexual Woman, and for a Female-to-Male transsexual, Transsexual Man.

5. **Avoid Aspersion by Using Quotation Marks:** Never put the appropriate pronouns or possessive adjectives of transgendered persons in quotes. Never put their sexual orientations or genitalia in quotes.

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- 6. Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives:** It is extremely offensive to refer to transgendered persons using pronouns and possessive adjectives that refer to their birth sex (i.e., "he" or "his" for Male-To-Female persons, "she" or "her" for Female-to-Male persons). It is equivalent to calling a gay man a "faggot" or a lesbian a "dyke", or misperceiving or mislabeling anyone's gender.

Usage Tips: At all times, use pronouns and possessive adjectives appropriate to the gender expression presented by a transgendered person.

If you are uncertain, ask what they prefer.

Some transgendered persons, especially transgendered youth, prefer the new pronoun **ze** (pronounced "zee") in lieu of he/she, and the new possessive adjective **hir** (pronounced "here") in lieu of his/her.

- 7. Self-Identification:** Transgendered people are found in all races, classes, cultures and ages, and thus some variance in terminology should be expected. Self-identification is an important personal right, and many transgendered people like to describe themselves very uniquely. Accordingly, when in doubt, just ask an individual transgendered person how they wish to be identified.

Usage Tips: If you're not sure how to address someone, just ask: "Please excuse me, but I'm not sure how I should address you."

Or simply use their first name or last name. It's sometimes customary for patients or clients in clinical situations to be asked by their last name when it's time to see their providers.

- 8. Safer Sex Counseling:** If you're not sure about a transgendered person's anatomy, use sensitive terminology for both MTFs and FTMs that avoids specific anatomical references.

Usage Tips: Do you have unprotected genital-genital contact with an exchange of body fluids (including semen, vaginal fluids and ejaculate, or blood) ?

Do you have unprotected manual/genital contact (genital or anal fisting, hand jobs, masturbating your partner, etc.) ?

Do you have unprotected oral-genital contact (blow jobs, going down, etc.) ?

Do you have unprotected oral/anal contact (rimming) ?

Do you share an FTM prosthetic device, a dildo or other sex toy without washing OR without using or changing the condom ?

Do you have unprotected genital/anal contact (anal penetration) ?

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GEA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of all gender variant people regardless of their social identities.