



*Commonwealth of
Massachusetts*

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Youth Services

Official Policy

Policy Name: Prohibition of Harassment and Discrimination Against Youth

Policy #: 03.04.09 **Effective Date:** July 1, 2014

Repeals: None

References: DYS Guidelines for Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Intersex, and Gender Non-Conforming Youth
DYS Grievance Policy, 03.04.01

Signature:  1/29/ 2014

Peter Forbes, Commissioner

Applicability: This policy shall apply to DYS employees, volunteers and interns. Providers are expected to have their own policy covering this topic area consistent with this policy.

Policy

It is the policy of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) to provide a safe and discrimination-free environment for youth in all of its locations. All DYS state and contract provider employees, interns, and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any form of discrimination against or harassment of youth on the basis of actual or perceived membership or association with a member of a protected category. In addition, any act of discrimination against or harassment of youth by another youth will not be tolerated. Pursuant to G.L. 151B, protected categories include race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, intersex condition, military status, and criminal record (for employment applications only). DYS is committed to providing a healthy and accepting setting for all youth placed in locations by providing training for its employees and educating youth to respect each individual.

For youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex or gender non-conforming, DYS shall provide services based on professional standards as found in the MA DYS Guidelines for Practices with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Intersex and Gender Non-Conforming Youth (Guidelines). DYS shall apply this policy and the Guidelines to provide services for

youth in a fair, respectful and culturally competent manner recognizing and addressing the individual needs of youth.

Procedure

A. Definitions

1. The following definitions shall have the meanings assigned to them in this policy for purposes of interpreting this policy.

Disability – A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.

Discrimination - Any act, policy or practice that regardless of intent has the effect of subjecting an individual to differential treatment based on actual or perceived membership in or association with a protected category.

Harassment – Any unwelcome, offensive or intimidating verbal, visual, physical or sexual conduct or behavior based on actual or perceived membership in or association with a protected category that is directed at or made in the presence of an individual or group.

LGBTQI and GNC Youth: Youth who have self-identified or are known or perceived by others to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, queer, or gender non-conforming as to their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex condition. For an explanation of additional terms, see the Glossary of Terms in the LGBTQI and GNC Youth Guidelines.

Sexual Harassment – Any repeated and unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a sexual nature that includes demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing or obscene language or gestures. Reporting of this type of behavior falls under the DYS Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment of Youth Policy.

Third Parties: Individuals who can report a grievance on behalf of a youth or assist a youth in filing a grievance including other youth, employees, family members, attorneys, and outside advocates.

Youth Education Materials: Information presented to a youth that includes but is not limited to the DYS approved intake presentation; the DYS Policies on the Youth Grievance Process and Prohibition of Harassment and Discrimination Against LGBTQI and GNC Youth, and Guidelines; the toll-free number for the Department of Children and Families Child At Risk Hotline and listing of Massachusetts Rape Crisis Centers.

2. Terms that are defined in Policy #01.01.04, “Policy Definitions”, shall have the meanings assigned to them in that policy, unless a contrary meaning is clearly intended.
 3. Terms not defined in Policy #01.01.04 or in this policy shall have the meanings assigned to them by reasonably accepted standard dictionary definitions of American English.
- B. Training for Employees: DYS shall provide training regarding this policy and the Guidelines, including what behavior constitutes discrimination or harassment and the procedures for preventing and reporting such behavior. These trainings will include how to communicate effectively and professionally with all youth including LGBTQI and GNC youth.
- C. Resource and Policy Dissemination to Youth
1. DYS shall provide written information to all youth in DYS residential locations regarding this policy and the Guidelines through the youth education materials during the first scheduled clinical session, including their rights and responsibilities under this policy, the Guidelines and the procedures for reporting complaints through the DYS Youth Grievance Policy. For youth in a DYS Alternative Lockup Program, information will be disseminated upon intake to the program.
 2. At all DYS locations youth shall have access to LGBTQI and GNC related resources, including a booklist, website list of community resource supports, and other appropriate materials. DYS will strive to provide these resources in languages other than English, as needed.
- D. Employee’s Duty to Report Discriminatory or Harassing Behavior towards Youth
1. Conduct by Employees: DYS state and contract provider employees shall report alleged discriminatory and/or harassing behavior by an employee against a youth that may be in violation of this policy and the Guidelines by immediately reporting the allegation to a supervisor. Such allegation shall be reported further using the Serious Incident Reporting Policy.
 2. Conduct by Youth: DYS state and contract provider employees shall take immediate steps to intervene in any situation that involves discriminatory or harassing behavior by a youth against another youth. Employees shall document the behavior and the intervention in accordance with current policy and practice including but not limited to the Unit Log, incident reporting process, Individual Support Plan Policy, and/or progress notes within JJEMS. The location manager may also report to CIC circumstances that they believe rise to the level of a serious incident requiring an investigation in accordance with the Serious Incident Reporting Policy. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to a youth who continues to engage in this behavior repeatedly or the statements by a youth that are coupled with assaultive type action.

3. The appropriate administrator shall evaluate whether to file a 51A report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as set forth in DYS Legal Advisory. A 51A report should be filed if there is reasonable cause to believe that a youth was abused or neglected by an employee or that an employee was complicit in the harassment or discrimination against a youth.
- E. Incident Reporting for Youth: Youth may use multiple ways to report concerns regarding their care and treatment including conduct by an employee or other youth prohibited under this policy by:
- a. Reporting an incident through the Youth Grievance Process;
 - b. Reporting an incident to an employee verbally or in writing;
 - c. Reporting an incident to a third party who may report directly to any employee or utilize the Youth Grievance Process;
- F. Enforcement: In accordance with DYS policy and procedures and consistent with current collective bargaining agreements, supervisors and managers shall promptly address and investigate any reported incident of alleged discrimination and/or harassment against a youth by an employee or another youth and, if determined to have occurred, will result in corrective action and may result in disciplinary action. Failure to report an allegation of harassment or discrimination against a youth by another youth or a DYS state or contract provider employee will result in discipline up to and including termination

MA DYS GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICES WITH LGBTQI and GNC YOUTH

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) is committed to providing quality services to all youth in its care. Dys prohibits discrimination by or against an employee, volunteer, contract provider, or youth on the basis of race, creed, color, age, sex, national origin, religion, marital status, mental or physical disability, gender identity, gender expression, intersex condition, sexual orientation, veteran status and criminal record. No person shall unlawfully discriminate against another individual in the course of their duties. Dys is committed to respecting the dignity of all youth, and keeping them safe and secure, regardless of individual differences.

The DYS Policy on Prohibition of Harassment and Discrimination Against Youth protects youth from any form of discrimination against or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived membership in or association with a member of a protected category, including those who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, or gender non-conforming (LGBTQI and GNC).

In conjunction with the above referenced Policy, the following operational guidelines and glossary of terms establish good practices with LGBTQI and GNC youth in order to provide services in a respectful and culturally competent manner.

SECTION I: TRAINING

In order to raise the awareness of and capacity for staff to respond to gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition issues in all Dys locations, all Dys state and contracted provider employees, volunteers and interns shall attend LGBTQI and GNC training as required by Dys.

SECTION II: DISCLOSURE

- A. The only way that anyone knows someone's sexual orientation or gender identity is if they tell you.
- B. All state and contract provider employees shall create an environment that is safe and welcoming for LGBTQI and GNC youth. Youth may disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when, and if, they feel ready and when, and if, a safe environment and trusting relationship has been established. For example, an employee should not assume that a youth is heterosexual and use gender neutral pronouns when discussing dating relationships. An example may be asking a youth "Are you dating someone?"

If youth disclose that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, queer, or gender non-conforming, it is important to talk with them about it in an open and understanding manner. An employee should never just "move on" as that may send a negative message; For example, an employee can talk about what it means for this youth.

- C. If a youth discloses this information to an employee, and taking into consideration positive youth development model, they shall ask the youth to what extent they want to disclose this information and to whom. It is important to respect a youth's confidentiality regarding their status as LGBTQI or GNC. Youth shall be told that information regarding their status as LGBTQI or GNC shall not be disclosed to their parent or legal guardian without the youth's consent whenever possible but in no circumstances without the youth's knowledge. In addition, DYS shall not disclose this information to outside 3rd parties such as but not limited to courts, schools, service referrals.
- D. Youth shall also be informed that, under certain circumstances, the youth's status as LGBTQI or GNC may need to be shared with other employees (i.e. in connection with a placement/transfer request) but shall not be disclosed to other employees without the youth's knowledge.
- E. In order better understand and help the population DYS serves, DYS will collect statistics on the number of LGBTQI and GNC youth in its care consistent with the youth's confidentiality requests. Youth that self-identify as LGBTQI or GNC will be asked if they will agree to such information being reported to a Central Office DYS Staff for record keeping purposes only.

SECTION III: YOUTH PLACEMENT

- A. DYS state and contract provider employees in all locations shall receive training on providing services for LGBTQI and GNC youth including how to create a safe space in all placements. LGBTQI and GNC youth shall not collectively be placed in one location and shall not be placed in particular housing, bed or other assignments solely on the basis of such identification or status.
- B. Intake Assessment at Detention Programs and Residential Programs: Upon conducting an intake of a youth, staff shall ask the youth in accordance with the provided intake questions how they identify by gender. A youth who identifies as a transgender or intersex youth shall be placed in a location consistent with the stated gender identity, absent a safety-based objection made in consultation with the Regional Director. Such safety-based objection shall have a specific, documented credible basis and shall not be solely based on a gender identity reason. If the youth is not currently at a location compatible with their stated gender, the program will move the youth to a location consistent with their stated gender identity at the most reasonable time, again, in consultation with the Regional Director, and consider a safety plan until such move is possible. All placements of a transgender or intersex youth shall be done in consultation with the Regional Director. A dialogue tree is available for those conducting the intake.
- C. Specialized Placement: Placement at specialized LGBTQI and GNC facilities operated by voluntary agencies will be considered, when appropriate, for an individual youth. A request by a youth for placement at or transfer to a location based upon gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition can

be made during the reception/intake process or at any other time and will be forwarded the Regional Review Team (RRT).

- D. Consultation regarding LGBTQI and GNC placement and other related issues may be referred to the DYS provider contracted for such services. Such consultation may be utilized through the Regional Clinical Coordinators for assistance in placement decisions and occur in person or via phone conference(s).
- E. Placement decisions for youth, especially transgender or intersex youth shall be reassessed at least at the Monthly Treatment Meeting or as needed to review any threats to safety experienced by the youth.
- F. Appeals of placement decisions shall be by a written request to the Deputy Commissioner within seven business days of receiving the notice of the decision.

SECTION IV: COUNSELING, MENTAL HEALTH and SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- A. Clinical services are available for all youth in the custody of DYS. Youth in Alternative Lockup Programs shall have access through emergency services provided through DYS or its contracted providers when needed.
- B. Clinicians should offer appropriate counseling and information to support LGBTQI and GNC youth through any issues they are having related to their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition, if needed.
- C. All adolescents' experience developmental and social challenges during this time. Clinicians should be aware of possible barriers for LGBTQI and GNC youth in seeking mental health care and make efforts to reduce these barriers by being open, non-judgmental, and empathic. Clinical staff should help youth reduce co-occurring problems or distress, related to their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition and help develop their strengths, coping skills and resiliency.
- D. Clinicians should not assume problems with a youth simply because a youth expresses a different gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition. However, LGBTQI and GNC youth frequently face additional pressures based on their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition. Clinicians are aware that difficulties in coping with these challenges frequently result in additional mental health or behavioral health problems including increased suicide risk, depression and anxiety, tobacco/drug/alcohol use, and school drop-out.
- E. Where clinically indicated, a committed client should be referred by the Regional Program Clinical Director in consultation with the Regional Clinical Coordinator for a diagnostic assessment by or in consultation with specialists in the field of LGBTQI and GNC youth or Gender Dysphoria.

- F. Counseling sessions for youth should include group and individual opportunities to discuss any gender identity questions or feelings that may arise as a result of having youth in program that is or is perceived to be “different.”

SECTION V: MEDICAL and HEALTH

- A. Health Services should provide appropriate medical information and health services education for all youth inclusive of LGBTQI and GNC issues.
- B. As a component of medical screening provided to all youth who enter DYS, staff shall identify medications that are currently prescribed to the youth through both history and third party reports. DYS shall continue providing to the youth hormone blocking and hormone therapy medications currently prescribed when the community-based provider recommends continuation and agrees to continue the medical management of such drugs. Staff shall seek to contact the prescriber of such medications within 24 hours.
- C. Youth who enter DYS using medications not prescribed will receive health services to determine the proper medical steps regarding the specific medication. When such case occurs, DYS contracted health care providers will refer to hospital or community based specialist who will evaluate for continuation..
- D. Youth who request to begin hormone therapy will be referred to a qualified medical professional in an expeditious manner and receive treatment consistent with the current standard of care. Referrals will be made consistent with DYS policy regarding informed consent.
- E. DYS Authorization for Medical Care Policy indicates only the parent, guardian and the youth, if 18 or older, may consent to elective or invasive medical care.

SECTION VI: LGBTQI and GNC LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

- A. Programs should affirm the diversity and cultural identity of the youth with respect to creating a supportive environment. It is important that educational books and other reading materials for youth interested in learning more about LGBTQI and GNC issues are available. Materials should be made available in languages other than English as needed and as funding is available.
- B. LGBTQI and GNC literature and other visible signs should be available in the common areas, office, etc., that indicate staff are knowledgeable and open to communication on these topics.
- C. Youth should have access to supportive resources with age appropriate LGBTQI and GNC information, including a book list, website list of community resource supports, and advocacy groups.

SECTION VII: GENERAL PROGRAM OPERATION

All DYS youth are accountable for their behavior, and for being respectful of others and the setting in which they are placed.

- A. Safety and security for employees and youth remain paramount in all DYS locations. DYS recognizes that creating safe places for LGBTQI and GNC youth provides greater safety and security for all youth.
- B. All youth, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition need to feel safe in their surroundings to achieve effective programming and positive outcomes.
- C. Rules must be maintained with dignity and respect for all youth, regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or intersex condition.
- D. Unless there is reason to the contrary, staff should not over-emphasize gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or intersex condition (i.e., youth are placed in DYS programs because of identified service and needs, not their gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression or intersex condition). All state and contract provider employees shall not do or say anything to try to change a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- E. All state and contracted provider employees shall set a good example and make youth aware that any threat of violence, actual violence, or disrespectful, derogatory comments or gestures based on actual or perceived LGBTQI and GNC status will not be tolerated concerning any DYS youth and youth can use the youth grievance process for any of these concerns.
- F. All state and contracted provider employees must maintain personal and professional boundaries for safe and appropriate behavior with all youth as trained by DYS. Violations of those boundaries are inappropriate regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression or intersex condition.
- G. All youth should be included in activities or jobs for which they qualify and/or show a positive interest in, regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and intersex condition.

SECTION VIII: LANGUAGE AND NAME

- A. All youth shall be addressed in person by their preferred name that is associated with their gender identity as preferred by the youth as well the pronouns that reflect a youth's stated gender identity. Such preferred name shall not be used if it is believed to be associated with criminal activity or vulgar connotations. A request by a youth to use gender neutral pronouns such as the singular "they", "ze/hir", or other gender neutral pronouns should be honored, as well.
- B. DYS shall work with the youth where the youth indicates that notifying the youth's family of the preferred name will create an unsafe environment for them. Staff shall notify the youth that considerations should be made in the event the preferred name

appears where the family may see the name or it is used by staff in the presence of the family.

- C. Youth legal name shall still be used for all written records and documents including court documents, medical records, clinical or other service referrals, JJEMS entries.
- D. All DYS state and contracted provider employees shall note the preferred name of the youth in the youth's progress notes of JJEMS.

SECTION IX: CLOTHING

- A. All youth shall wear the clothing provided by the location or according to the clothing allowed by the location if there is no uniform required. Youth shall be not forced to wear clothing that does not match their gender identity or expression in any setting.
- B. Where clothing is provided, youth may receive undergarments of their choice among available agency supplies, regardless of gender.
- C. Transgender and gender non-conforming youth may possess items necessary to present their gender identity consistent with safety and security procedures including binders, packers, girdles, breast inserts, bras and other items as requested. DYS may supply items upon request through the Regional Clinical Coordinators.

SECTION X: HAIR AND OTHER PERSONAL GROOMING

- A. Personnel grooming rules and restrictions, including those regarding hair, make-up, shaving, etc., shall be consistent in all male and female programs. A youth should not be prevented from, or disciplined for, a form of personal grooming that does not match typical gender norms.
- B. Some examples of grooming rules and restrictions that may be relevant to LGBTQI and GNC youth include:
 - Long hair can be tied back with a hair tie.
 - Youth can receive a basic cut or/and shape haircut.
 - Fingernails must be maintained at a length that adheres to DYS safety and security practices.
 - Youth may shave their face and/or body, as permitted by DYS safety and security practices.
 - Jewelry can be worn as permitted by DYS safety and security practices.

SECTION XI: INDIVIDUAL BEDROOMS

- A. Any youth who report feeling safer in individual sleeping quarters shall be allowed to do so when available at that placement. No youth shall be forced into individual sleeping quarters. If individual sleeping quarters are not available, employees shall discuss safety planning with youth.

- B. Transgender, intersex or gender nonconforming youth shall be placed in a program that has individual sleeping quarters (one-person bedroom) to allow for privacy if such youth request such individual sleeping quarters. Any exceptions must be authorized by the Regional Review Team and documented in the youth's classification folder of JJEMS.
- C. All DYS state and contract provider employees shall consider a request by a youth for a room change and discretely inquire if the youth is feeling unsafe. If the youth answers yes, the employee should bring this to the attention of a supervisor and a clinician for further review.

SECTION XII: BATHROOM AND SHOWER FACILITIES

- A. A lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning or queer youth shall not be forced to shower separately or use different bathrooms based on actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- B. Transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming youth shall be provided access to all spaces including bathrooms at their location except where the youth or employee asserts a safety concern. In such instances, youth shall be provided with individual access to the space and/or the opportunity to shower separately. Any safety-based concern by an employee shall have a specific, documented credible basis and shall not be solely based on a gender identity reason.

SECTION XIII: SEARCHES

- A. All youth will be searched in accordance with DYS policy and procedure. In conducting the search of a youth, all state and contractor provider employees must ensure thoroughness while maintaining the dignity of and respect for the youth being searched.
- B. Transgender and intersex youth may request that male or female employee conduct a strip search when a search is required. This request will be accommodated, whenever possible, considering employee and youth and safety security.
- C. A state or contracted provider employee shall not search or conduct a physical examination of a youth for the sole purpose of determining the youth's genitals or genital status.

SECTION XVI: RELEASE AND DISCHARGE PLANNING

- A. It is critical to engage and collaborate with the youth's parent, legal guardian and/or family throughout placement to enhance community re-entry efforts.
- B. All DYS state and contracted provider employees working with LGBTQI and GNC youth shall identify and become familiar with community resources that can support a youth, parent, legal guardian and/or family and assist them with identifying and accessing supportive and professional resources.

- C. In identifying resources that may be helpful for youth, state and contracted provider employees should review whether or not the specific resource supports LGBTQI and GNC youth before a referral is made to that specific resource.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bisexual refers to a person who is attracted to, and may form sexual and romantic relationships with people of their same gender or another gender.

Gay refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Sometimes, it may be used to refer to gay men and boys only, but can also refer to women and girls who are attracted to people of their same gender. It is preferred over the term “homosexual.”

Gender Dysphoria refers to some individuals whose gender identity conflicts with the sex assigned to them at birth that may be diagnosed with this condition. Certain treatments, such as hormone therapy or gender confirmation surgery, may be recommended for individuals diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria.

Gender expression refers to the manner in which a person expresses their gender through clothing, appearance, behavior, speech, etc. A person’s gender expression may vary from the norms traditionally associated with their assigned sex at birth. Gender expression is a separate concept from sexual orientation and gender identity. For example, a male may exhibit an effeminate manner, but identify as a heterosexual male.

Gender identity shall mean a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth. Gender-related identity may be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held as part of a person's core identity; provided, however, that gender-related identity shall not be asserted for any improper purpose.

Gender Identity Disorder or GID is a diagnosis listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV). Recently replaced in the DSM V by the diagnosis Gender Dysphoria.

Gender transition describes the experience by which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another. For most youth, and for all young children, the experience of gender transition involves no medical intervention. Rather, most transgender youth will undergo gender transition through a process commonly referred to as “social transition,” whereby they begin to live and identify as the gender consistent with their gender-related identity. Some transgender youth who are close to reaching puberty, or after commencing puberty, may complement social transition with medical intervention that may include hormone suppressants, cross-gender hormone therapy, and, for a small number of young people, a range of gender-confirming surgeries. The decision about whether and how to undergo gender transition is personal and depends on the unique circumstances of each individual. There is no threshold

medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment requirement that any youth must meet in order to have their gender identity recognized and respected by the agency.

Gender Non-Conforming refers to People whose gender expression is (1) neither masculine nor feminine or (2) different from traditional or stereotypic expectation of how a man or woman should appear or behave.

Intersex refers to a spectrum of conditions involving anomalies of the sex chromosomes, reproductive ducts, and/or genitalia. The most traditional definition of intersex refers to individuals born with components of both male and female biological sex characteristics (genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics), or genitalia that are not clearly male or female.

Lesbian refers to a female who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other females

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to persons of the same or different gender.

Transgender may be used as a term to include all persons whose gender identity or gender expression do not match society's expectations of how an individual of that gender should behave in relation to their gender. For purposes of protection from discrimination and harassment, transgender refers to both self-identified transgender, individuals and individuals perceived as transgender, and gender non-conforming, without regard to whether they qualify for a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria.

Transgender female youth are young people who were assigned the sex of male at birth and who now identify as female. Similarly, the terms *transgender girls* and *transgender women* refer to those who now identify as girls or women.

Transgender male youth are young people who were assigned the sex of female at birth and who now identify as male. Similarly, the terms *transgender boys* and *transgender men* refer to those who now identify as boys or men.

Queer is a historically derogatory term for a gay man, lesbian, or gender non-conforming person. The term has been widely reclaimed, especially by LGBTQI youth, as a positive social and political identity. It is sometimes used as an inclusive, or umbrella, term for all LGBTQI people. Queer is also used as a term of self-identification by people who do not identify with more restrictive, binary terms. Some members still find this term offensive.

Questioning refers to a person, often an adolescent, who is exploring or questioning issues of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression in their life. Some questioning people will ultimately identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; others will self-identify as heterosexual and not transgender.