



National Center for
**TRANSGENDER
EQUALITY**

FACT SHEET ON WRITING ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AND ISSUES

January 2014

COVERING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE GENERALLY

Download GLAAD's media reference guide for reporters covering transgender issues, which includes information on respectful and disrespectful language: <http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>.

Name and Pronoun

Use the name and pronoun the subject prefers. See:

The Associated Press Style Book (2011 Edition):

Reporters should “use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics of the opposite sex or present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth. If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly.”

New York Times Style Book (2005) says:

“Cite a person's transgender status only when it is pertinence is clear to the reader. Unless a former name is newsworthy or pertinent, use the name and pronouns (he, his, she, her, hers) preferred by the transgender person. If no preference is known, use the pronouns consistent with the way the subject lives publicly.”

Surgery and Medical Treatment

Media outlets often gratuitously and sensationally focus on a transgender person's body, surgery, and other medical treatment, or their changing appearance. Please consider instead telling the deeper stories of courage, struggle, and other experiences that make up a transgender person's full human experience. If referring to medical treatment, do so using terminology in the GLAAD guide.

KEY ISSUES

Download the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey to learn more about the issues: <http://www.endtransdiscrimination.org>.

Violence: Transgender people and particularly transgender women of color are frequent victims of violence.

Healthcare: Transgender people often lack access to basic, comprehensive healthcare. Many medical providers do not provide sex-specific care for transgender patients, or outright deny all care to people who disclose their gender identity.

Identification records: A patchwork of state and local laws make it difficult for transgender people to update drivers licenses, birth certificates and other identification records with accurate name and gender markers. The inability to update these records makes it difficult for transgender people to secure bank accounts, attend school, or get a job and make people vulnerable to discrimination and violence in everyday life.

Employment: Anti-transgender bias often plays a subtle role in recruiting, hiring, training, and promoting transgender employees. Transgender people experience twice the rate of unemployment as the general population. Transgender people often have trouble even getting minimum wage, entry level jobs, and are forced into criminalized activities to survive.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Terminology within the transgender community varies and has changed over time so we recognize the need to be sensitive to usage within particular communities. Download a complete list of key terminology: http://transequality.org/Resources/TransTerminology_2014.pdf.

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.” (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus “transgender people” is appropriate but “transgenders” is often viewed as disrespectful.)

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender person who currently identifies as a man (see also “FTM”).

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender person who currently identifies as a woman (see also “MTF”).

Gender Identity: An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one’s body to better reflect a person’s gender identity. This may include many different procedures, including those sometimes also referred to as “top surgery” (breast augmentation or chest reconstruction) or “bottom surgery” (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. These surgeries are medically necessary for some people, however not all people want, need, or can have surgery as part of their transition. “Sex change” is considered a derogatory term by many.

Transition: The time when a person begins living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one’s first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, including taking hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents (e.g. driver’s license, Social Security record) to reflect one’s gender identity. Medical and legal steps are often difficult for people to afford.