

## **LGBTQ Definitions**

**LGBTQ** – refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth. The Q can sometimes refer to queer.

**Homosexuality** – refers to a person whose sexual, physical, and affectional attraction is primarily directed toward persons of the same gender.

**Heterosexuality** – refers to a person whose sexual, physical, and affectional attraction is primarily directed toward persons of the opposite gender.

**Gay** – refers to a person (either man or woman, although perhaps more commonly associated with males) whose homosexual orientation is self-defined, affirmed, or acknowledged as such. Not all people who acknowledge a homosexual orientation self-identify as gay.

**Lesbian** – refers to a woman whose homosexual orientation is self-defined, affirmed, or acknowledged as such.

**Bisexual** – refers to a person whose sexual, physical, and affectional attraction is toward persons of the same and opposite gender and who may form intimate relationships with persons of the same and opposite gender, although not necessarily at the same time.

**Transgendered** – a broad umbrella term for persons who have a self-image or gender identity not traditionally associated with their biological sex. The term encompasses a variety of gender expressions, including drag queens and kings, bi-genders, crossdressers, transgenderists, transvestites, and transsexuals.

Some transgendered persons wish to change their primary or secondary sexual anatomy to be more congruent with their self-perception, whereas others do not have such a desire. There is no absolute correlation between sexual orientation and gender identity. A transgendered person may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

**Questioning** – refers to a person for whom a fixed sexual orientation and/or gender identity is not clear. Some questioning individuals may ultimately “come out” as LGBT, whereas others may be seeking additional resources to help address their internal questions. It is not developmentally uncommon for adolescents to question their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sexual Orientation** – the commonly accepted, scientific term for the direction of sexual, emotional, or physical attraction. Examples of sexual orientation are heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality.

**Gender Identity** – an individual’s basic self-conviction of being a man or a woman or some combination thereof. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual’s biological sex. The exact process by which boys and girls come to see themselves as

males or females is not known. Research indicates, however, that gender identity develops, but is not necessarily fixed, some time between birth and 3 years old.

**Closeted** – denotes an individual who is not open about his/her sexual orientation.

**Coming out** – a lifelong process of self-acceptance.

**Heterosexual privilege** – the basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives that are systematically denied a gay, lesbian, and bisexual person simply because of their sexual orientation. Also the assumption that all people are heterosexual.

**Heterosexism** – systems and ways of thinking that reinforce a belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating the lives and relationships of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people.

**Homophobia** – negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people or people perceived to be any of the above. It may also manifest as a person's fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

\* **Child Welfare League of America**

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