

Why is this important for me to know?

Similar to people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual, there is a coming out process for transgender individuals, which may cause them to lose support from family and friends. Additionally, transgender individuals may have particular concerns and barriers to completing their education such as...

- Being identified as the wrong sex by others causes discomfort and makes it difficult to negotiate everyday situations.
- When seeking employment transgender individuals may have to provide identification, references, transcripts, or job histories related to their former gender. Employers are confused and the transgender individual has been “outed.”
- When moving into the residence halls, transgender students may be assigned to the incorrect floor for their gender or they may have a roommate that does not understand them.
- When using restrooms, transgender people are often assumed to be in the incorrect restroom, and may be confronted or harassed.

Why haven't I heard about transgender before?

Transgender people have been documented at least since the Roman Empire ruled. However, often transgender people have been forced to “pass” or “blend in” and not draw attention to themselves as transgender individuals. If they did so, they might be at risk physically, emotionally, financially and socially.

In recent years there has been a political movement to protect the rights of transgender people, which has brought awareness of their existence to the foreground and placed less necessity on passing. As a result, more people are stepping forward and identifying openly as transgender.

Please direct further questions to:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
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Understanding Transgender Identity

An Informational Pamphlet

Provided by

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender
Resource Center

Division of Student Affairs
Northern Illinois University

Holmes Student Center
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www.niu.edu/lgbt

What is Transgender?

Transgender is a relatively new term that is still evolving. You may hear variations on the definition. Following are some important words and phrases associated with transgender identities.

Transgender: An umbrella term encompassing all manifestations of blending, challenging, or crossing gender roles. Or, an identity label for a person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

Gender Variance: Alternative term for transgender, meaning one who varies from traditional masculine and feminine gender roles.

Gender / Gender Identity: A psychological gender role. A person's sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

Gender Expression: How one chooses to express one's gender identity.

Transsexual: Someone whose core gender identity, their self-perception as male or female, is different than their biological sex. Their internal sense of self does not match their biological sex. Some transsexuals transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transition / Gender Transition: The period of time when a transgender individual alters their gender presentation (physical or otherwise) to more accurately reflect their internal gender identity.

Androgynous: One who is or the quality of simultaneously exhibiting masculine and feminine characteristics. A blending of gender roles, which blurs the distinction between masculine and feminine. Alternative terms include gender bender, genderqueer, gender blending.

Is transgender the same as lesbian, gay, or bisexual?

No. Everyone has both a sexual orientation and a gender identity, which exist separately.

Sexual orientation refers to the direction of an individual's emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to others, which may be toward people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

Gender identity refers to an individual's self-perception of themselves as male/masculine, female/feminine, or other gendered.

A person who is transgender may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual. Transgender identity is often grouped with lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity because these identities all in some way challenge the traditional or conventional gender-based expectations of our society.

What are some examples of concerns transgender people might have on campus?

- Ability to change admissions, registration, financial aid or employment records during or following gender transition.
- Access to health care and mental health care providers with experience and knowledge in gender identity care issues.
- Availability of appropriate room and floor assignments in residence halls
- Availability of single stall restroom facilities on campus and private shower and changing areas in recreational and athletic facilities
- Availability of career counselors knowledgeable about employment and internship issues related to gender identity
- Availability of public safety officers knowledgeable about transgender identity
- Availability of legal advice and support during gender transition
- Ability to participate in gender-defined student organizations (greek life organizations, sports clubs and teams)
- Inclusion of gender identity information in courses addressing gender issues or topics