

Terms and Phrases to Avoid*

* Used and modified with permission by AHS Human Resources from the *Guide To Creating Safe and Welcoming Places for Sexual & Gender Diverse (LGBTQ*) People* (2016)

Biologically Male/Biologically Female/Genetically Male/Genetically Female/Born a Man/Born a Woman

These terms over simplify a very complex subject. A person's sex and gender are determined by a variety of factors – not simply genetics. On the rare occasion that it's necessary to refer to an individual's gender history, many transgender people prefer a phrase similar to "... assigned male/female at birth but is a woman/man".

Fag, Faggot, Dyke, Homo, Fairy, Lez, Puff and other similar epithets

These are defamatory terms that should never be used. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to other vulgar words which are used to target other groups such as those protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* such as race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status and sexual orientation. Discrimination and harassment is not defined by the intent of the behaviour or word but the impact it has on the individual.

Homosexual

A dated and potentially offensive term for a person who has emotional and/or sexual attraction to people of the same sex. Please use gay or lesbian to describe people attracted to members of the same sex.

Lifestyle

There is no single lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender *lifestyle*. A phrase which includes "lifestyle" is often used to attack the character of lesbian women, gay men, bisexual people and transgender people by suggesting that their orientation is a choice or a phase.

Sex Change or Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)

Referring to a "sex-change operation" or using terms such as "pre-operative" or "post-operative" inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Many transgender people do not undergo surgery for a variety of very personal and private reasons. It is considered extremely inappropriate to ask a transgender person about what surgical or other medical procedures they may or may not have undergone. The phrase, **Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)**, is an older term which refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition for some. When there is the need to discuss surgery, many prefer the term "**gender confirming surgery**" or "**gender affirming surgery**".

Sexual Preference

The term “sexual preference” is often used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice. “Sexual Orientation” is the accurate description of an individual's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person of the same and/or opposite sex.

“That’s so gay”

Words and phrases like “that’s so gay” are used casually in everyday language yet contribute to the promotion of alienation, isolation, and discrimination. This particular phrase is problematic because it is most often used to describe something or someone with a negative connotation.

Transgendered (Verb). Transgender (Noun)

Using transgender as a verb (e.g. transgendered) suggests that being transgender is something that happened to a person rather than reflecting who they actually are. For example, we don’t say “John Smith is a gayed man”; therefore, we wouldn’t say “Joanne Smith is a transgendered woman”.

Similarly, we wouldn’t use transgender as a noun. For example, we wouldn’t say “we have many transgenders who work here” nor would we use “she is a transgender”.

The word transgender should only be used as an adjective as in “Joanne Smith is a transgender woman”.

Tranny, She-Male, He/She, It

These are defamatory words which dehumanize transgender people and should never be used. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to other vulgar words which are used to target other groups such as those protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* such as race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status and sexual orientation.

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Transgenderism

This term should not be used as it is often a term used by anti-transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to a “condition”.