



FACTSHEET

Understanding the Complexities: Providing Support to Trans Youth

Developed from a YouthREX workshop featuring Jay Jaxen Jonah, YouthREX Research Assistant, Masters of Social Work Candidate, York University

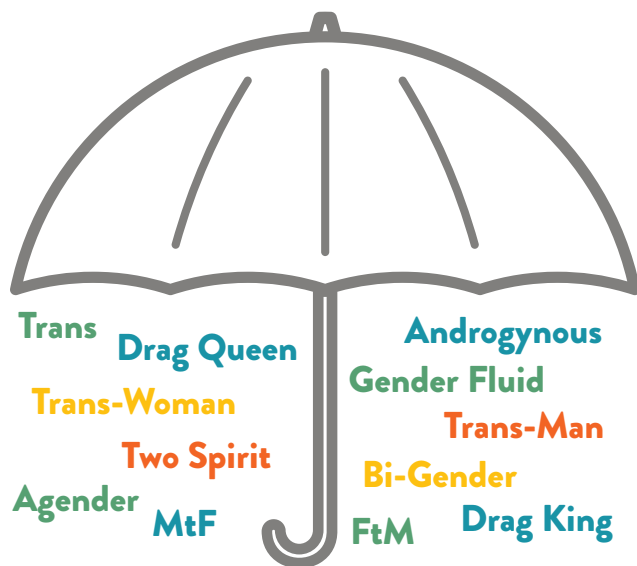
“Understanding does not always lead to acceptance, but it can pave the way for educated decisions that reduce hate and intolerance.” – Jay Jaxen Jonah

Transgender Defined:

- A person who does not conform or identify with the gender expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- A person who feels the binary gender system is an incomplete description of who they are.
- A person whose sex does not match their gender.

The Transgender Umbrella

There are many terms that can come under the larger Transgender umbrella:



Sex vs Gender

It's important to remember that sex does not mean the same thing as gender, and neither sex or gender determine a person's sexuality.

Sex refers to a person's biological make-up, our primary and secondary sex characteristics, and can only be changed through surgery and hormone treatments.

Gender, on the other hand, is an abstract concept; it is how a person chooses to self-identify and can be either fluid or static.

Gender Expression vs Gender Identity

Gender Identity: How people understand who they are based on their experience with masculine and feminine traits.

Gender Expression: How a person chooses to express their gender identity.

Gender identity does not equal gender expression. A person does not have to express the gender they identify as.

The Youth Sector and Trans Youth

Inclusive spaces, places where youth can feel safe, are especially essential for trans youth. A lack of these inclusive spaces can impede trans youth from attending programming, and can provoke anxiety, stress, and fear.

Things to consider about your youth program:

- Is your organization, program, or youth group trans inclusive?
- Evaluate your space, forms, programs and activities with this inclusiveness
- Remember: even if your organization does not specifically work with trans youth, chances are you will still have trans youth accessing your services.

Recommendations

- Don't ask for sex, gender, or sexual orientation unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must ask, make sure that your form is inclusive.
- Make your space inclusive.
- Educate yourself.
- Have anti-discrimination policies that include gender identity and gender expression.
- When doing introductions or ice breakers, have all people state their pronouns. That way trans identified youth do not have to out themselves.
- Keep in mind that youth who are accessing your organization's services/programs may have an intersection of identities (e.g. gender, sex, race, culture, religion, socioeconomic)

Rules to Live By

- DO NOT "OUT" PEOPLE.
- Use a person's preferred name and pronoun.
- There is a time and place for personal questions.
- Don't make assumptions.
- Don't stare.
- If you find yourself trying to figure out a person's gender, ask yourself, "Does it really matter?"

Learn More

For more resources on supporting trans youth wellbeing and to read YouthREX's [Moving The Dial Report: Trans Youth And The Right To Access Public Washrooms](#), visit [the eXchange](#).

The eXchange is YouthREX's online learning community. You can visit it anytime and find hundreds of intentionally curated and created resources focused on youth work, all in one place!

Key Stats: Trans Youth Experiences of Transphobia in Canadian Schools

- **90%** of trans youth reported hearing transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students
- **37%** of trans youth reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression
- **23%** of trans youth reported hearing transphobic comments made by teachers
- **74%** of trans students reported having been verbally assaulted about their gender expression
- **78%** of trans youth on the whole reported feeling unsafe at school
- **44%** of trans youth reported missing school due to feeling unsafe

*Stats taken from the Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools report released by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust in 2011.)