

## Transgender/Transsexual & GLBT Resources

- **Wingspan:** Southern Arizona's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center. 300 E. 6th St., Tucson, AZ 85705. (520) 624-1779 (<http://www.wingspan.org>)
- **Southern Arizona Gender Alliance:** offers support, social, and discussion groups that reflect the various aspects of gender and society. These include educational forums and trainings for businesses, service providers, and community members to learn more about the issues facing transgender people and how our allies can be supportive and inclusive. The SAGA Speakers Bureau provides speakers and panelists for your class, event, business, or training. c/o Wingspan, 300 East Sixth St. Tucson, AZ 85705. (520) 867-0083. (<http://www.sagatucson.org>)
- **Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA):** National educational resource on gender diversity, focused on the needs, issues, and concerns of gender variant people. Home of the renowned "Remembering Our Dead" pages. ([www.gender.org](http://www.gender.org))
- **PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays):** Provides support and resources to the parents, families, and friends of GLBT people. 1726 M St., NW, STE. 400, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 467-8180. ([www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)) **Tucson chapter:** PFLAG Tucson, P.O. Box 36264, Tucson, AZ 8574 ([www.pflagtucson.org](http://www.pflagtucson.org))
- **Intersex Society of North America:** Education, advocacy, and support for intersex people. P.O. Box 3070, Ann Arbor MI, 48106-3070. ([www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org))
- **The International Journal of Transgenderism (IJT):** Multicultural, peer-reviewed journal of scholarly work in the area of transgenderism. Excellent source of medical, social, psychological documentation of the transgender issues. ([www.symposion.com/ijt](http://www.symposion.com/ijt))
- **Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. (HBIQDA):** Professional organization devoted to understanding and treatment of gender identity disorders. 1300 S. 2nd St. - Suite 180, Minneapolis, MN 55454. (612) 625-1500. ([www.hbigda.org](http://www.hbigda.org))

## Recommended Reading

- *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism-For Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals* (1996). Mildred L. Brown, Chloe Ann Rounsley. Jossey-Bass. 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 433-1740.
- *Physician's Guide to Transgendered Medicine.* Dr. Sheila Kirk, MD (1996). Together Lifeworks. PO Box 93, Watertown MA, 02272-0093
- *Our Trans Children.* Xavier, J., Sharp, N., & Boenke, M. (1988). PFLAG: Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. ([www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org))
- *Recommendations for treatment: Intersex infants and children.* (Pamphlet) Intersex Society of North America. ([www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org))
- *Transsexual Workers: An Employer's Guide.* Janis Walworth, MS (1998). Center for Gender Sanity. PO Box 451427, Westchester, CA 90045
- *Body Alchemy: Transsexual portraits.* (Photography). Loren Cameron (1996). Cleis Press. (800) 780-2279
- *Coping With Crossdressing.* JoAnn Roberts, Ed. (1992). Creative Design Services. (610) 640-9449

## Other Publications Available from SAGA

- *Gender Identity 101: A Transgender Primer* (Full version) Also available online at [www.sagatucson.org](http://www.sagatucson.org)
- *Trans In The Workplace: A Guide For Managers, Supervisors, and Human Resources Personnel* (brochure)
- *Trans In The Workplace: A Guide For the Transgendered, Transsexual and/or Gender-Variant Employee* (brochure)
- *TransMedia: Resources for Journalists*

# Gender Identity 101: A Transgender Primer

A resource guide for educators, health care professionals, businesses, social service organizations and interested allies & community members

## Southern Arizona Gender Alliance



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**Transgender** (or TG) refers to people whose appearance and behavior don't conform to the cultural "norm" for the gender into which they were born. In other words, TG people, to varying degrees, "transgress" cultural norms as to what a man or a woman "should be". Of course, not all people who transgress cultural norms in regards to gender are, or should be, considered TG as we are discussing here. In that case, that would include a male nurse or a woman who works as a pipe fitter. However, when transgender is used in the case of a "sexual minority", we are generally referring to one of the following five categories:

- **Transsexuals** were born into one gender but identify psychologically and emotionally as the other. Those born physically male but who present as female are called Male to Female or MTFs. Those born female but who present as male are called Female to Male or FTMs. The primary way transsexuals differ from other TG people is that in almost all cases, they seek to modify their bodies through hormonal treatments, Sexual Reassignment Surgery or both.
- **Intersexed** people were born exhibiting some form of "indeterminate" genitalia (subjectively judged so by a doctor to be either a clitoris that is "too large" or a penis that is "too small."), a combination of both male and female genitalia, or ambiguous chromosomes. At birth, the attending physician or parents (or both) "choose" which gender to raise the child, necessitating ongoing surgical and/or hormonal treatments.
- **Crossdressers** identify as, and are completely comfortable with, their physical gender at birth, but will occasionally dress and take on the mannerisms of the opposite gender. Most crossdressers are heterosexual men.
- **Drag Performers** dress and act like the "opposite" sex for the entertainment of an audience. For them, drag is a job - not an identity. Some are gay - some are not. Some identify as transgendered - most do not.
- **Gender blenders, bi-gendered, and others** - Some TG people find characterizations of gender more limiting than liberating. They may or may not identify as one or the other in a binary gender system and many times will assume a mixture of male and female dress and characteristics, combining elements of both.

## **Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation: What's The Difference?**

There is a great deal of unnecessary confusion about this. To put it simply, Gender Identity is who you are; Sexual Orientation refers to whom you love or have sex with. Some view them as two completely separate concepts. For others, the two are intricately entwined. Either way, what is most important to remember is that a certain gender identity does not necessarily mean a certain sexual orientation. A person who is TG may be gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight. Additionally, there are MTFs who identify as lesbian and FTMs who identify as gay men.

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## **Hormones & Surgeries**

For some TG people, hormonal and/or surgical modifications are not necessary in order for them to express their gender identity. Others find that the financial costs are prohibitive, or that they have a physical condition that precludes their being able to take advantage of the procedures. And still others may object to hormonal and/or surgical modifications for personal, spiritual, or political reasons.

Of those who do elect to modify their bodies, hormones and Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) are typically used. Hormones are controlled substances used to either masculinize or feminize physical characteristics and must be prescribed by a medical doctor. Various surgical procedures are also used by both MTFs and FTMs, ranging in cost from \$3,000 to over \$100,000 depending upon the procedure. Any medical doctor or psychiatrist can prescribe hormones once they determine their patient is suitable. However, SRS requires highly specialized surgical expertise and should be done only by those experienced in such procedures.

In order for a transsexual to receive hormones and SRS, they must, in most cases, go through stringent reviews by medical doctors and psychologists to determine if the person is indeed transsexual and if they are emotionally and psychologically suited for sexual reassignment.

## **Issues Facing Gender-Variant People**

- Few communities include "gender identity" or "gender expression" in their protection ordinances.
  - Most insurance plans specifically exempt coverage for SRS, hormones, counseling and electrolysis, forcing TG people to cover all these expenses out of pocket.
  - Of the fifty states, only Minnesota and Rhode Island protect TG people from job and housing discrimination.
  - TG youth living on the streets are more likely than other youth to engage in prostitution or consensual sex with a variety of partners without using safe sex techniques.
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## **How Do I Deal with a Transgender Person?**

- It is extremely important to refer to a TG person by the pronoun appropriate to their *presented* gender. When in doubt, ask. NEVER use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgendered, either in their presence or to others when they are not present. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful.
- Do NOT "out" someone (tell others that they are TG) without his or her permission. Also, do not assume that everyone knows. Some TG people "pass" very well and the only way someone would know would be if they were told. The decision to tell someone about their gender issues should be left to the TG person themselves.
- Never ask a TG person how he or she has sex or what their genitals look like. That is inappropriate in every situation.
- Do NOT assume a TG person is straight. Do not assume they are gay, lesbian or bisexual, either.