Glossary

**Gender Identity:** An individual’s inner sense of their own gender, of being male, female, something in between, or any other gender.

**Gender Expression:** How a person expresses their gender (or how others perceive their gender) through clothing, grooming, speech, body language, social interactions and other behaviors.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of people whose gender identity or expression may not match the sex they were assigned at birth, including (but not limited to): transsexuals, cross-dressers, intersexed individuals, androgynes, butches, bigendered persons, genderqueers, femmes, SOFFAs (significant others, friends, family and allies) and others.

**SOFFA:** Significant Others, Friends, Family, and Allies. Everyone has a SOFFA circle; in this context, SOFFA refers to individuals who are personally affected (discriminated against) by their association with a person whose gender identity or expression transgresses societal norms.

**Association:** Anyone who is a friend, family member, partner, co-worker, ally or other loved one of someone whose gender identity or expression deviates from traditional societal expectations.

**Gender identity vs. sexual orientation:** In the United States, there is widespread confusion between gender identity and sexual orientation. Therefore, it is important to understand that gender identity and sexual orientation are two separate characteristics. Gender identity refers to how a person sees themselves as male, female, or another gender; sexual orientation refers to the gender(s) a person is generally attracted to physically or emotionally.

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**Fast Facts about Gender Rights**

**What are gender rights?**

Gender rights include the right to live without discrimination (in the workplace, in housing, or in public accommodations) based on how well you or someone close to you fits into the traditional ideas of what “masculine” and “feminine” are.

**Isn’t this just about transgender people?**

Transgender people - including people who visibly change genders from male to female or vice versa and people who are hard to immediately classify as “male” or “female” - are the most vulnerable to gender-based discrimination, but the threat reaches far beyond the transgender community.

**Who else is affected?**

Discrimination based on gender cuts across all identities and sexual orientations. In fact, statistics from GenderPAC show that at least 1/3 of discrimination against LGB people happens not because of our sexual orientation or who we have relationships with (which may not even be known by those discriminating against us), but because we do not visibly match traditional ideas about women looking and acting “feminine” or men looking and acting “masculine.” You do not have to identify as transgender to be the target of discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

Even heterosexuals are subject to discrimination based on gender expression or identity. There have been reports of discrimination against “metrosexuals,” women who work manual labor jobs, men who wear earrings, and women who do not use makeup or wear dresses. In addition, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions have reported experiencing discrimination once it became known that they had a loved one or family member who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.

**How many people are affected by gender-based discrimination?**

We don’t really know how many people are affected, both because statistics on the size of the LGBT community are much disputed, and because much discrimination against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals is classified as “sexual orientation” discrimination when the perpetrator is really objecting to the victim’s “inappropriate” “masculinity” or “femininity,” (i.e., gender expression). Because discrimination against SOFFAs of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and gender non-conforming people is legal everywhere, there have been no attempts to put a number on this problem.
What is discrimination?

Discrimination based on gender identity, expression, or association can come in many overt or subtle forms, including:

Housing
- Being denied a rental lease
- Being unable to sell your home due to discrimination
- Real estate brokers and salespeople, landlords, owners, managers may act inappropriately
- Getting unequal terms or conditions on a lease or mortgage
- Landlords refusing to make repairs or improvements
- Banks or other lending institutions refusing to finance loans when the borrower is otherwise qualified

Employment
- Being denied a job even though you are the best candidate
- Being fired without cause
- Not being promoted when you are qualified
- Being paid less than similarly-qualified work peers
- Not receiving job assignments you are qualified for
- Being refused training opportunities offered to your peers
- Being denied equal benefits
- Receiving job performance reviews or reprimands that are not justified
- Being denied access to restrooms or locker rooms
- Being forced to adhere to a different dress code than your co-workers

Why should I care about discrimination based on gender identity, expression, or association?

Discrimination of any kind should not be tolerated, by anyone! Not only are individuals and their family members hurt when they lose a job or housing, but society as a whole is hurt when people are punished for not being properly “feminine” or “masculine” enough. The threat of such discrimination makes it harder for ANYONE to express ANY type of non-traditional identity or even idea.

What you can do:

- **Share your stories.** If you or someone you know has been discriminated against based on gender, please share your stories. (Email your stories to LoreeCD@aol.com)
- **Take the survey.** One way to share your stories and experiences is through taking the Center Advocates survey. www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=604323840039
- **Speak up.** If you hear or see discrimination, find a way to safely speak up. Talk to your human resources department, your boss, a colleague. If speaking up would put your job or housing in jeopardy, consider writing an anonymous letter, or passing around a petition for others to also sign.
- **Volunteer.** Contact Center Advocates to support our effort to stop discrimination based on gender identity, expression and affiliation. (Call Deon at 414-271-2656)