

LAMBDA (Library Anchor Models for Bridging Diversity Achievements) Glossary of Terms

As with any group you serve at your agency, it's important to use respectful and appropriate vocabulary. We hope this glossary will help.

General terms related to homelessness

Experiencing homelessness

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), homelessness can be divided into four categories:

- People who are living in a place not designed for human habitation, or who are in emergency or transitional housing
- People who are about to lose their primary night-time residence
- Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed
- People who are fleeing or are attempting to flee domestic violence

Chronic Homelessness

- A homeless individual who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more
- An individual who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years

Invisible Homelessness

- No accurate count
- Includes couch surfing, sleeping outside or in vehicles
- Nighttime shelter can be more fluid for young people than for adults – couch surfing one day, shelter the next, a friend's floor the next, the streets the next

Homelessness and youth

RHY

- Runaway and Homeless Youth

Youth Experiencing Homelessness (or Homeless Youth)

- Ages 12 to 24
- Unaccompanied youth – youth who are not with family or guardians
- They may be or may have been part of the juvenile justice system
- Youth are homeless for many reasons, including:
 - Family poverty or homelessness
 - Family conflict
 - Parental or sibling alcohol and/or drug abuse
 - Physical and/or sexual abuse at home
 - Leaving the foster system

LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning) Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Same bullet points as homeless youth
- There may be conflicts over sexual orientation or gender identity

Throwaway youth

- Youth who
 - Are abandoned/deserted
 - Are told to leave home by a parent or other adult in the household
 - Leave and are prevented from returning home
 - Run away and whose parents/caretakers make no effort to recover them/do not care if they return

Runaway youth

- Minors age 14 years or younger who have left home for one or more nights without parental permission
- Age 15 and older who have left home for two or more nights

System Youth

- Youth who have been involved in foster care, mental health and/or juvenile justice

Street Youth

- Youth who spend a significant amount of time on the street and in other areas (such as abandoned buildings) that increase their risk for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and drug use

TAY (Transitional Age Youth)

- Usually defined as youth ages 18 to 24, although sometimes includes age 16 to 24
- Transitioning out of state care, foster care – “aging out”
- A vulnerable time when many youth end up unstably housed

Housing

Emergency housing/shelter

- Temporary
- Emergency basis
- Limited time
- Can be first step in housing

Transitional housing

- More stable
- Specific period - can be 1 to 2 years
- Next step after emergency housing

Supportive housing

- Can be transitional or permanent
- Tied to supportive services, like having a case worker

Permanent housing

- No limit on stay
- Own or abide by lease

SRO

- Single resident occupancy
- Can get rental assistance
- Permanent housing within Continuum of Care

Housing First

- Different from past traditional approaches to homelessness
- Centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed

Rapid Re-Housing

- Intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing
- Three components: Housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and rapid re-housing case management and services

Low Threshold Housing

- Low occupancy requirements, including sobriety and background checks
- Related to harm reduction approach
- Applies to all kinds of housing

Social services

Caseworker

- Helps a client locate and coordinate needed services, such as mental health, housing, educational resources
- Relationships are key: One of most important relationship a person experiencing homelessness can have is between themselves and their caseworker

Case management

- Arranges for provision of an array of services; addresses unique identified needs
- Creates opportunities to be involved in the larger community

Continuum of care

- Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals
- CoCs represent communities of all kinds, including major cities, suburbs and rural areas

Harm reduction

- Non-judgmental philosophy
- Allows the person to have input into their own treatment plan
- Begins with person - they set pace
- Needle exchange is an excellent example of harm reduction
 - Needle exchange involves doctors or other social agents giving free clean needles to patients to help prevent the spreading of disease like HIV

Trauma-Informed Care

- An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma
 - A traumatic event can involve physical, emotional or sexual abuse, war, community violence, neglect, maltreatment, loss, natural disasters, terrorism, witnessing violence or experiencing violence vicariously, or chronic adversity
- Trauma interferes with one's ability to cope

Wrap-around services

- "Intensive individualized care planning and management process"
- With wraparound services, all aspects of a person's life are considered and coordinated: Housing, education, health, etc

Mental Health-Related Terminology

Mental Health and Homelessness

- In the general population about 1 in 5 people experience mental illness
- In the homeless population that number increases to almost half
- Recovery is always a goal

People-first Language

- An objective way of acknowledging, communicating and reporting on disabilities
- Puts the person before the disability
- Eliminates stereotypes and misrepresentations
- Example: A person who has depression (not "who is depressed") or a person living with bipolar disorder (not "a bipolar person") or a person with mental health life experiences (not "the mentally ill")

Offensive or Negative Language

- Words or phrases that imply something is wrong or abnormal with the individual
- Negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, struggles
- Do not use special to mean segregated
- Avoid euphemisms such as physically challenged, inconvenienced and differently abled

Stigma

- The result of false ideas that people have when they describe someone they see as “different”
- Separates the individual from the rest of their community
- People First Language helps a person feel respected rather than labeled as “abnormal” or “dysfunctional,” eliminating the stigma of a mental health diagnosis
- Stigmatized words include:
 - Mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, insane, crazy, odd, abnormal, psycho, maniac, lunatic, loony, wacko, cuckoo, mental, deranged, mad, loopy, out of it, slow, nuts, disturbed, demented, screw loose, brain dead, delusional, issues, schizophrenic

Common Diagnoses

**Knowing the correct terminology does not mean we know anything about an individual’s experience. Each person is unique, with unique circumstances. Knowing the disease does not define the individual, but it can begin to help us understand.*

General Anxiety Disorder

- A disorder in which it is extremely difficult or impossible for an individual to control their worry over a possible bad outcome

Major Depressive Disorder

- The presence of sad, empty, or irritable mood, with accompanying physical changes
- Frequently makes day to day tasks, such as getting out of bed, a struggle

Manic-Depressive Disorder

- Unusually intense emotional states that swing from high to low and back called “mood episodes.”
- Each mood episode is a drastic change from a person's usual mood and behavior

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

- Can occur when an individual
 - Directly experiences the traumatic event
 - Witnesses the traumatic event in person
 - Learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend
 - Experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event
- The event causes significant distress or impairment in the individual’s social interactions, capacity to work or even day to day functioning

Psychosis

- A disconnection from reality
- May occur in illnesses on the schizophrenia spectrum, in manic or depressive episodes, and in other serious mental illnesses

Schizophrenia

- Individual may experience delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behavior, and other symptoms that cause social or occupational dysfunction
- A spectrum, so the illness may be severe, or an incident may occur rarely

LGBTQ-Related Terms

Note: Many of these terms are evolving and changing and may be replaced or added to other terms. Just as gender and sexuality are fluid, so is the vocabulary used.

We are grateful to GLAAD and Heartland Trans Wellness Group for many of the following definitions.*

LGBTQIAA

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer/questioning
- Intersex
- Asexual
- Ally

Gender Expression

- External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Binary Gender System

- An unspoken cultural system that defines and allows for two and only two distinct, natural and opposite genders - male and female
- Understood to represent mutually exclusive poles on a spectrum
- Disregards any ambiguity or intermingling of gender traits

PGP

- “Personal Gender Pronoun”
- Sometimes called “preferred gender pronoun” - but this definition is becoming less popular, as people object to the idea of their pronoun being “preferred”
- Allows a person to state what pronoun they use and would like to be used when being referred to

Sex

- The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written

on the birth certificate.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender

- A social combination of identity, expression, and social elements all related to masculinity and femininity. Includes gender identity (self-identification), gender expression (self-expression), social gender (social expectations), gender roles (socialized actions), and gender attribution (social perception).

Gender identity

- One's psychological sense of self; one's identity; who someone is intrinsically
- One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender fluid

- Being fluid between two or more genders
- Shifting naturally in gender identity and/or gender expression/presentation

BiGender

- Having two genders; exhibiting cultural characteristics of male and female roles

Cisgender

- A gender identity that society considers to match the sex assigned at birth
- The prefix cis- means on this side or not across from
- A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not transgender or gender non-conforming

Transgender

- An umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from expectations associated with the sex assigned to them at birth
- People who are transgender may or may not have gender affirming surgery or other surgeries and may or may not use hormone therapy
- Transgender people may be heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian or asexual. In other words, knowing a person is transgender doesn't tell you anything about that person's sexual orientation

Transsexual (adj.)

- An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions (including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries). Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*.

It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

Gender Affirming Surgery

- Surgical procedures that alter or change physical sex characteristics in order to better express a person's inner gender identity. May include removal or augmentation of breasts/chest or alteration or reconstruction of genitals. Also written as Gender Confirming Surgery or Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). Preferred term to "sex change surgery."

Transgender woman

- A person who was assigned male at birth but it wasn't consistent with her sense of self
- May describe themselves as a trans woman or simply a woman

Transgender man

- A person who was assigned female at birth but it wasn't consistent with his sense of self
- May describe themselves as a trans man or simply a man

Gender Non-Conforming

- A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity.
- **Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.**
- Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional - that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming.
- The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

Genderqueer

- A term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for *transgender* or *transsexual* and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer.

Queer

- Generally used to recognize someone on the LGBTQIAA spectrum
- Use cautiously! This term has different meanings to different people. Some still find it offensive, while others reclaim it to encompass a broader range of identities, politics, and histories

Questioning

- Questioning sexual orientation

- Experimenting
- Questioning gender

Intersex

- Born with a sexual or reproductive anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that is not typically male or female. There are many sex anatomy variations.
- The outdated and offensive term for intersex is hermaphrodite

Sexuality

- A person's exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire

Asexuality

- A sexual orientation generally characterized by not feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. This does not eliminate the capability or desire for a romantic relationship
- Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity

Sexual Orientation

- A pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to men, women, both genders, neither gender, or another gender

Heterosexual privilege

- The idea that being a heterosexual in society carries with it power and privileges

Homosexual

- A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex
- An outmoded term used by "others" to define the LGBTQ community
- Places emphasis on sex, rather than culture or social interactions

Bisexual

- A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women

Gay

- Often used to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic or sexual nature
- Can be used as an umbrella term for men and women

Lesbian

- Term used to describe females attracted romantically and/or sexually to other females

Omnisexual/Pansexual

- People who have romantic, sexual, or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes. Used by many in place of bisexual, which implies that only two sexes or genders exist
- Sometimes described as the capacity to love a person romantically irrespective of gender
- Some people who identify as pansexual also assert that gender and sex are meaningless to them

Coming out

- “The process of first recognizing and then acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation in oneself, and then disclosing it to others” (Mallon, 2010)
- Often in stages
- Nonlinear
- A time when supportive information is critical

Ally

- Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than their own. Reaching across differences to achieve mutual goals.

LGBTQ Ally

- Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and gender-straight privilege in themselves and others

Other Terms

Civic Engagement

- “Civic engagement is a deliberate, consistent and purposeful outreach that creates an environment in which people of all ages and from all backgrounds believe they have a voice and role in decisions and actions that affect their lives” (Urban Libraries Council, 2011)

Social capital

- “Social capital theory assumes that people acquire at birth and accumulate through their lives unequal shares of capital that incrementally alter and determine their life chances” (Rosenberg, 1975, p.228)

Cultural Humility

- Includes:
 - Lifelong learning and critical self-reflection
 - Recognizing and challenging power imbalances
 - Institutional accountability
- No endpoint – there is no point at which we are “competent” and now know everything we need to know about a culture different from our own

- For library staff and LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, there are four cultures involved:
 - Library culture
 - Youth culture
 - Culture of homelessness
 - LGBTQ culture
- Cultural humility helps us create a **professional** sense of self that may be different from our **personal** sense of self

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