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**Today's HR Daily Advisor Tip:**

## Gender orientation, Gender identification, Gender expression: A Sexual Harassment Glossary for Today

Topic: [Harassment](#)

Sex discrimination used to seem simple (or so it appeared) but it has morphed into a miasma of complexity—transsexuality, gender identity, gay, straight, transgender. What do these terms mean? How are they used? Here's what you need to know:

Before you begin talking sexual harassment to supervisors, employees, or lawyers, you need to get your terms straight.

A good place for HR managers to start is with some definitions commonly encountered in harassment cases. As these types of situations come to court, it's important to choose your words carefully. The definitions are courtesy of GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

**--Sex.** The classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals.

Does your antiharassment program meet government guidelines for avoiding lawsuits? Make sure with BLR's highly-regarded *Sexual Harassment: Essentials of Prevention and Response*. Try it free. [Read more.](#)

**--Sexual Orientation.** The scientifically accurate term for an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual orientations. (**Closeted** describes a person who is not open about his or her sexual orientation.)

**--Gender Identity.** One's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or boy or girl). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match.

**--Gender Expression.** External manifestation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through "masculine," "feminine," or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, or body characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than match their birth-assigned sex.

**--Transgender.** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include, but is not limited to, transsexuals, cross-dressers, and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). They may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a man who becomes a

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woman and is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

--**Transsexual.** An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Many transgender people prefer the term "transgender" to "transsexual."

**Transition.** A complex process altering one's birth sex that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following cultural, legal, and medical adjustments:

*Telling one's family, friends and/or co-workers;*  
*Changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents;*  
*Hormone therapy; and*  
*Possibly (though not always) some form of surgical alteration.*

--**Bisexual.** An individual physically, romantically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to men and women. Bisexuals need not have had equal sexual experience with both men and women, nor any sexual experience at all, to identify as bisexual.

Once harassment lawsuits are filed, you're in for an expensive ride, even if you "win." Take control now with BLR's *Sexual Harassment: Essentials of Prevention and Response*. For more information or to order at no-risk, [click here](#).

--**Civil Union.** Legal recognition of committed same-sex relationships in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Vermont.

--**Domestic Partnership.** Civil or legal recognition of a relationship between two people that sometimes extends limited legal protections to them.

--**Gay.** The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex.

--**Heterosexual.** People whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction is to people of the opposite sex. Also called straight.

--**Homosexual.** Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people.

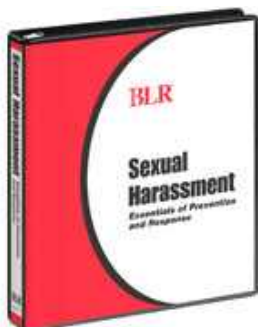
--**Lesbian.** Women whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction is to other women.

--**LGBT / GLBT.** Acronyms for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender."

--**Sex Reassignment.** Refers to surgical alteration, which is a part of "transition."

--**Cross-Dressing.** To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it.

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## Is Your Company Protected Against Harassment Claims?

Claims of sexual and other types of illegal harassment continue to rise. However, there are many steps employers can take to prevent illegal harassment in the workplace and to protect the company if an employee files a lawsuit. BLR's guide, *Sexual Harassment: Essentials of Prevention and Response*, shows you how to develop a policy against harassment, conduct an investigation when a

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