



# TRANS HEALTH & WELLNESS

A TOOLKIT



# INTRODUCTION

Established in 2015, TransWave Jamaica is the country's first non-profit organization solely dedicated to focusing on promoting the health and well-being of the transgender, gender non-conforming communities. At TransWave, we take a holistic approach to advocacy, addressing not only the socio-political issues we face but also the mental, emotional and physical health of our community through our various initiatives.

This toolkit seeks to provide the operational framework for defining 'trans people' which will hopefully form the basis on which trans people will be engaged by/with service providers in Jamaica. It seeks to recognize that trans people have distinct needs, problems, concerns, and expectations and that it is important that any entity that hopes to provide services to the community, meaningfully engage them around all their needs and priorities.



# DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

## SEX

The classification of a person 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.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

## GENDER

This refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

## GENDER EXPRESSION

The external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

## GENDER IDENTITY

This refers to a person's internal, deeply held sense of their 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.

## PASSING

This refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

## GENDER TRANSITION

The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.

# DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

## **GENDER DYSPHORIA**

The classification of a person 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.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

## **TRANSGENDER**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

## **TRANS IDENTITIES**

**Trans man-** A term which refers to a man who was assigned female at birth but identifies as a man.

**Trans woman-** A term which refers to a woman who was assigned male at birth but identifies as a woman.

**Gender Fluid-** A person who is Gender Fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more boy some days, and more girl other days. Being Gender Fluid has nothing to do with which set of genitalia one has, nor their sexual orientation.

**Bi-Gender-** The tendency to move between masculine and feminine gender-typed behavior depending on context, expressing a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona.

While an androgynous person retains the same gender-typed behavior across situations, the bi-gendered person purposely changes their gender-role behavior for the situation.

**Gender Non-conforming/Gender Queer-** is most commonly used to describe a person who feels that his/her gender identity does not fit into the socially constructed "norms" associated with their biological sex or their society's definition of gender.

# DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and want to have relationships with. Sexual orientations include gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, and asexual. A person's gender identity is different from their sexual orientation. Each person has both sexual orientation and gender identity.

## TYPES OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Some people are exclusively attracted to members of only one gender. Sexual orientation labels used by people include:

**Gay:** Generally refers to a man who is attracted to men. Sometimes refers to all people who are attracted to people of the same sex; sometimes "homosexual" is used for this also, although this label is seen by many today as a medical term that should be retired from common use.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to women. Sometimes also or alternately "same-gender-loving woman" or "woman loving woman."

**Straight:** A man who is exclusively attracted to women or a woman who is exclusively attracted to men; also sometimes generally used to refer to people whose sexualities are societally normative. Alternately referred to as "heterosexual."

**Bisexual:** Attracted to people of one's own gender and people of another gender (s). Often referred to as "bi."

**Pansexual:** Attracted to people regardless of gender. Sometimes also or alternately "omnisexual."

**Queer:** Similar to pansexual, queer can be an identity label meaning that a person is attracted to people of many genders; however, queer is a multi-faceted word with more than one definition and use and is viewed as offensive by some people.

**Questioning:** A term used to describe someone who is unsure of or exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Meaningful Engagement

Any organization that seeks to provide services or employ trans people need to commit to the safety and empowerment of the community. This can be done through the creation of a work and social environment within the organization that recognizes and responds to the autonomy, experiences, specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of trans people. It is important that it recognizes that the inclusion of trans people is integral to the creation of diverse and enriching programmes, activities and work environment.

An important element of engaging trans people is an understanding of their role as agents of social change and as having the capacity to be actively involved in their own development and not merely as passive participants. There must be a clear desire to engage them in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects, programmes and initiatives, including and especially where they are beneficiaries. Efforts must also be made to find ways to respect and value their agency and capacity and thereby allow them to take responsibility and leadership while engaged in any program.

### Safe and Trans-Friendly Spaces

Consideration must be given to several related factors to ensure that the events and activities do not unnecessarily expose trans persons to violence or harm and that their well-being is a paramount consideration when events are being organized for their involvement. They must also be involved in the planning and implementation of these events.

- A trans person will be involved in planning activities which may include the community, including though not limited to trans people formally engaged in all projects and programs or informally engaged as volunteers, to ensure that there is ongoing consideration of trans people's well-being.
- The planning committee for trans specific events must be chaired by a member of the trans community and must include trans people who serve the organization in a volunteer capacity.
- In selecting venues for events, the procurement process must involve consideration of how the third-party entity and its staff treat with the trans community, and steps should be taken to ensure that venues which are selected expose trans people to no or minimal discrimination or harassment from staff or employees.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Safe and Trans-Friendly Spaces

- Consideration must be given to the location of the venue, noting the community in which it is located and the possibility that trans people may encounter violent third parties when entering and leaving the venue. The organization should also identify ways to mitigate that risk.
- An adequate number of sufficiently trained security or police officers must be made available at venues and events where it is deemed necessary for the protection of trans people.
- Trans people must be allowed to introduce themselves at meetings and events and must be allowed to only provide information to third parties which they are comfortable sharing.
- Trans persons must never be prodded, coerced, forced or otherwise made to participate in an event or activity in a way in which they are uncomfortable or unwilling, or which may expose them to publicity with which they are uncomfortable or unable to handle.
- Members of staff, volunteers and contracted third parties must never publicly identify members of programmes who are trans-identified, as such unless it has been mutually agreed between the involved parties that the trans person is willing to be so identified.
- Trans-related symbols and iconography should be incorporated into event décor where appropriate and possible.
- Personal pronouns and names must be respected and used at all times once given by trans persons engaged with the organization.

## Visibility and Social Media

Some members of the trans community are completely ok with being on social media and having a public image. While this is the case for some members of the community it is not the reality or wishes for everyone. Therefore it is important to consider how visibility, especially on social media, may impact trans persons engaged by the organization. There is also a need for greater representation of the trans community which takes care to showcase the diverse gender identities that exist beyond the stereotypical images of trans men and trans women.

## Partnerships

In recognizing the need for holistic development of trans people, organizations are encouraged to create strategic partnerships and develop programmes to engage the stakeholders that support trans persons.

Organizations are encouraged to lobby for the deliberate inclusion of trans persons by partnering with Trans Wave Jamaica to ensure that the trans communities voice is present in legal and policy review processes.



# RESOURCE CENTER

**Jamaica AIDS Support For Life**  
3 Hendon Drive, Kingston 20


**Jamaica Network of Seropositives**  
3 Trevennion Park Road, Kingston.

**Jamaicans For Justice**  
2 Fagan Avenue, Grants Pen  
[admin@jamaicansforjustice.org](mailto:admin@jamaicansforjustice.org)

**Equality For All Foundation Jamaica Limited**  
[jflag.programmes@gmail.com](mailto:jflag.programmes@gmail.com)

**The Tabs Project**  
8 Cargill Avenue, Kingston 10

**Children's First**  
9 Monk Street, Spanish Town



For more details about this toolkit,  
email us at [hello@transwaveja.org](mailto:hello@transwaveja.org)





    
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