Definitions Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The following terms and definitions related to sexual orientation and gender identity are often associated with and provide a common, working language for ADL’s educational anti-bias programs and resources. The definitions are written for older youth to adult reading levels, unless otherwise specified, and some include age-appropriate versions for younger ages.

A-C

F-G

H-L

P-Q

S

T

A

**Anti-LGBTQ Bias**: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people who are or who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer/questioning (LGBTQ).

**Asexual**: A person who does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience other forms of attraction (e.g., intellectual, emotional).
Biological Sex: The biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. These are characteristics people are born with that do not usually change over the course of their lives. Although sex is typically defined as being male or female, in actuality, there are more than two sexes. About 1.7% of the population is intersex (see definition below).

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically and/or romantically attracted to some people of more than one gender.

C

Cisgender: A term for when someone’s gender identity/expression matches the gender they were assigned at birth.

Coming Out (of the Closet): To be “in the closet” means to not share a part of one’s identity. Some LGBTQ people choose to disclose that part of their identity in some situations (to be “out”) and not in others (to be “closeted”). To “come out” is to publicly declare one’s identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. Coming out is a lifelong process. In each situation, a person must decide where they are at that point in time with their identity. In each new situation, a person must decide whether or not to come out.