

# Useful Terminology We All Should Know

Comprehensive sexuality education (also called “Abstinence-based”)—emphasizes that abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent HIV/STI’s and unintended pregnancy, but not to the exclusion of medically accurate, age-appropriate information and instruction about condom use and other forms of contraception.

**Asexual** – a person who is not interested in or does not desire sexual activity with another person, either within or outside of a relationship. Asexuality is not the same as celibacy, which is the willful decision to not act on sexual feelings. While not physically sexually active with another person, people who identify as asexual can have loving, affectionate, romantic ties to others.

**Abstinence-only sexuality education** – emphasizes that abstinence is the only responsible choice outside of a long-term, monogamous relationship and medically accurate information about condom use and other forms of contraception is usually not included.

**Abstinence-only until marriage sexuality education** – emphasizes that abstinence is the only choice outside the context of a heterosexual marriage and medically accurate information about condom use and other forms of contraception is usually not included.

**Age/developmentally-appropriate** - curricula designed to teach concepts, information, and skills based on the social, cognitive, emotional, and experience level of students.

**Assigned sex/gender** – sex/gender recorded at birth, usually decided through visual examination of external genitalia.

**Balanced** – instruction that provides information with the understanding of the preponderance of evidence.

**Bi-sexual/Bi** – self-identified as capable of being physically, sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the same or other gender.

**Best practice** - a practice/curriculum that is based in proven theory and practices, and has some evidence of effectiveness, but has not specifically gone through a randomized controlled trial that is needed to become an evidence-based practice.

**Cisgender** – a term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify as the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Comprehensive plan of instruction** - (as defined by Oregon education statutes) means k–12 programs that emphasize abstinence, but not to the exclusion of condom and contraceptive skills-based education. The human sexuality information provided is complete, balanced, and medically accurate. Opportunities are provided for young people to develop and understand their values, attitudes, beliefs and decisions about sexuality as a means of helping young people exercise responsibility regarding sexual relationships and sexual health decisions.

**Consent** - the presence of a "yes" when "no" is a viable option. Or "a freely given, enthusiastic yes."**Culturally inclusive** - using materials and instruction strategies that respond to culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities in a respectful and effective manner.

**Culturally sensitive** - materials and instruction that respond to culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities in an inclusive, respectful, and effective manner.

**Gay** - someone whose emotional, romantic, and sexual energies are geared to people of their own sex/gender.

**Gender binary** – the assumption that there are only two genders (male and female), rather than multiple genders or gender fluidity.

**Gender expression** - how people express their gender based on mannerisms, dress, etc. A person's gender expression/presentation may not always match their gender identity.

**Gender identity** - a person's internal sense of being male, female or some other gender, regardless of whether the individual's appearance, expression or behavior differs from that traditionally associated with the individual's sex assigned at birth.

**Gender role** - the socially determined sets of behaviors assigned to people based on their biological sex.

**Gender sensitive** - materials and instruction strategies that is sensitive to individual's similarities and differences regarding gender role, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

**Healthy relationship** - one in which both people feel a healthy sense of "self". Each person feels comfortable and safe when spending time with the other person. Two individuals try to meet each other's needs, and each can ask for help and support, within and outside of the relationship without fear of criticism or harm.

**Heterosexual** – sexual orientation in which romantic and sexual attraction is to someone of the other sex/gender.

**Homosexual** – people whose sexual preference/orientation is to members of the same sex. Male homosexuals are usually referred to as gays, and females as lesbians.

**Inclusive language** - language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude particular groups of people or types of sexual relationships.

**Intersex** – a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Though we speak of intersex as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy does not always show up at birth. Sometimes a person is not found to have intersex anatomy until he or she reaches the age of puberty, or finds himself an infertile adult, or dies and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing.

**LGBTQI** – “Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex”

**Lesbian** – A woman who’s emotional, romantic, and sexual energies are geared towards other women.

**Masturbation** - The act of touching one’s own body, including the genitals, to produce a sensation of sexual excitement/pleasure. Often accompanied by some sort of mental, visual, or audio stimulation to enhance pleasure.

**Medically accurate** - information that is established through the use of the ‘scientific method.’ Results can be measured, quantified, and replicated to confirm accuracy, and are reported or recognized in peer-reviewed journals or other authoritative publications.

**Non-consensual sexual behavior** - any sexual act that is inflicted upon a person who is unable to grant consent or that is unwanted and compelled through the use of physical force, manipulation, threats, or intimidation.

**Queer** - Originally pejorative for gay, now being reclaimed by some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people as a self-affirming umbrella term.

**Research-based** – an intervention is based on theoretical approaches that have been shown through scientific evaluation to be effective in achieving the intended outcomes. Evaluation based on studies using scientifically based designs; results published in recognized, peer-reviewed journals.

**Sex** – any physical or non-physical, act or thought that is connected, or associated with sexual gratification or reproduction.

**Sexual intercourse** - sexual contact or activity involving one of the following:

(A) Vaginal sex (Penis or finger penetration into the vagina, or vagina to vagina);

(B) Oral sex (Mouth to vagina, mouth to anus, or mouth to penis); or

(C) Anal sex (penis or finger penetration of the anus).

**Sexual orientation** - an individual’s actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality or other romantic and/or sexual attraction.

**Shame or fear based** - means terminology, activities, scenarios, context, language, and/or visual illustrations that are used to devalue, ignore, and/or disgrace students who have had or are having sexual relationships. Not all curricula or activities that describe risks of sexual activities can be considered “fear-based”.

**Skills-based** - instructional strategy that has students practice the desired skill.

**(Student) bystander behavior** - behaviors in which students that witness or learn about a peer’s harmful behaviors or attitudes intervene when it is safe to do so.

**Transgender** – an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. The state of being transgendered may or may not have any bearing on sexual preferences.

**Sexually transmitted infections (STI)/Sexuality Transmitted Diseases (STD)** – are infections that are commonly/have a high probability of being spread from person to person through sexual contact. The term STI is broader and more encompassing because some infections are curable and may not cause any symptoms. If the infection results in altering the typical function of the body, it is then called a disease. The term STI is technically more accurate and also reminds people that there are often no symptoms so it's important to get tested.<sup>1</sup>

**STD** – Sexually Transmitted Diseases. May be considered “long-term”, or more difficult to cure, or incurable in comparison to STIs.

**STI** – Sexually Transmitted Infections. May be considered “short term”, or easily curable in comparison to STDs.

**Sexual Health** – Sexual Health is the integration of the physical, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of sexuality in ways that positively enrich and enhance personality, communication and love. Sexual health includes not only the physical aspects of sexual development and reproductive health, but also valuing one's own body, developing interpersonal skills to achieve meaningful relationships, interacting with others in a manner that reflects respect and equality and expressing love and intimacy.

**Transsexual** – One who wishes to be considered by society as a member of the opposite sex, because they have the external genitalia and secondary sexual characteristics of one sex, but their personal identification and psychosocial configuration is that of the opposite sex.

**Transvestite** – A cross dresser. A person who dresses and acts in a style or manner traditionally associated with the opposite sex. This term is seldom used and may have harmful meaning to some.

**Virginity** – Never having had sexual intercourse.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.health.umd.edu/healthpromotion/sexualhealth/sti>