The Problem

Currently, there are no programs in Mississippi exclusively devoted to advocacy on behalf of transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) people. As state legislators in North Carolina and Texas have shown, state legislative bills that are discriminatory toward transgender and GNC people are becoming more common. It is imperative that Mississippi has a coalition to directly combat harmful legislation and general public misinformation surrounding transgender and GNC individuals.

The Solution

TEAP-MS is an advocacy driven program established by the ACLU of Mississippi. The program consists of a coalition of transgender and GNC people, LGBT organizations, and allies from across the state.

Support Our Work!

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#TEAP-MS #iBelongHere #WeAreAllMS
Problematic: “biologically male,” “biologically female,” “genetically male,” “genetically female,” “born a man,” “born a woman”
Prefered: assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth or designated male at birth, designated female at birth
Problematic phrases like those above are reductive and overly simplify a very complex subject. As mentioned above, a person’s sex is determined by a number of factors - not simply genetics. Gender identity, like many components of sex has a biological basis so it is factually inaccurate to simplify biology to genitals or chromosomes. Finally, people are born babies - they are not “born a man” or “born a woman.”

DEFAMATORY TERMS

Defamatory: “deceptive,” “fooling,” “pretending,” “posing,” “trap,” “passing” or “masquerading”
Gender identity is an integral part of a person’s identity. Do not characterize transgender people as “deceptive,” as “fooling” or “trapping” others, or as “pretending” to be, “posing” or “masquerading” as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are defamatory and insulting. Though it is more common to talk about “passing” especially within the trans community, it should generally not be used. A transgender person does not “pass” as their gender, they “are” their gender.

Defamatory: “tranny,” “she-male,” “he/she,” “it,” “shim”
These words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used in mainstream media. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, “The person used a derogatory word for a transgender person.” Please note that while some transgender people may use “tranny” to describe themselves, others find it profoundly offensive.

Defamatory: “bathroom bill”

TEAP-MS Key Areas of Focus:
1. Coalition building and organization
2. General advocacy, direct advocacy, and lobbying
3. Public education and strategic communications
4. Leadership development

TEAP-MS focuses on strategies that reduce discrimination faced by transgender and GNC people by collaborating directly with them in educating the LGBTQ community, the public at-large, media, and lawmakers. The ultimate goal is to pass the Mississippi Civil Rights Act on a state-level and comprehensive non-discriminatory ordinances on a local level. If discriminatory legislation is introduced (such as the “bathroom bills” of North Carolina and Texas), the coalition will work through the aforementioned four key areas to inform public opinion about the damage brought on by these bills.

The TEAP-MS program is part of a larger ACLU nationwide campaign called OUT for Freedom, and a continuation of the already established We Are All Mississippi (WAAM) Coalition.

Main Points:
• Transgender and GNC people have no discrimination protection at the state or federal level.
• There are approximately 15,000 Mississippians and 1,600 youth who identify as transgender.
• TEAP-MS establishes a working coalition and strategies to combat discriminatory legislation/policies while educating on the need for non-discrimination policies.
• Transgender and GNC people belong here, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, feel safe, and have an affirming environment.
We need you!

Join us as we fight for trans rights and promote visibility.

The ACLU of Mississippi champions transgender and GNC people and their right to be themselves, which often carries a great risk. We’re fighting discrimination in employment, housing, and public places. We’re working to make sure trans people live freely as anyone else. We’re taking action to protect the rights and safety of all transgender and GNC people including students. Thank you for standing with us!

General Tips for Working with Trans Communities

Recognition & Affirmation

- Accept and respect every person’s gender identity.
- Call people by the words they choose (pronouns, names) in every situation; correct yourself if you make a mistake and correct others if they make a mistake.
- Recognize and respect the fact that people may use different names and pronouns in different situations (i.e., using assigned birth name and sex with family of origin).
- Avoid using words for anyone if you are unsure about their gender preferences. Never out someone as trans without permission.
- Avoid assumptions about sexuality and gender.
- Avoid complimenting trans people based on gender norms.
- Respect confidentiality, choices, and fluidity of identity.
- Do not criticize how masculine or feminine a trans person looks or acts.
- Trans women are women and trans men are men.

Problematic & Preferred Terms

Problematic: “transgenders,” “a transgender”
Preferred: transgender people, a transgender person

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, “Tony is a transgender;” or “The parade included many transgenders.” Instead say, “Tony is a transgender man;” or “The parade included many transgender people.”

Problematic: “transgendered”
Preferred: transgender

The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous “-ed” tacked onto the end. An “-ed” suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. It also brings transgender into alignment with lesbian, gay, and bisexual. You would not say that Elton John is “gayed” or Ellen DeGeneres is “lesbianed,” therefore you would not say Chaz Bono is “transgendered.”

Problematic: “transgenderism”
Preferred: none

This is not a term commonly used by transgender people. This is a term used by anti-transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to “a condition.” Refer to being transgender instead, or refer to the transgender community. You can also refer to the movement for transgender equality.

Problematic: “sex change,” “pre-operative,” “post-operative”
Preferred: transition or simply transgender

Referring to a “sex-change operation,” or using terms such as “pre-operative” or “post-operative,” inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition. Usually there is no reason to discuss a person’s medical care and the proper approach is to simply refer to the transgender person as transgender or just as whatever their gender is – Tony is a man.
**Gender Identity Disorder (GID)**
*outdated, see Gender Dysphoria*

**Gender Dysphoria**
The formal diagnosis used by psychologists and physicians to describe people who experience significant [dysphoria](discontent) with the sex and [gender](they were assigned at birth).

**Cisgender**
A term used by some to describe a person with a gender that aligns with the sex assigned to the person at birth.

**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 and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

**Non-Binary**
*Less frequently used: “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 and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary or genderqueer.

- Avoid inappropriate or invasive questions about trans people’s bodies or medical histories—ask yourself, “Is this question/comment really needed for our work together?”
- Do not offer suggestions about how a trans person could look or act more like a man or woman, even if you think you’re helping.

**Structures (steps to take when possible)**
- Make restrooms gender neutral.
- Hire trans staff and include trans people in leadership roles without tokenization or outing.
- Put trans-affirming posters or signs on the walls in your office to create a welcoming environment.
- Make sure intake forms allow people to share their identities. Have a blank for gender and make it clear that people can share their preferred names.
- Make sure people don’t need to show ID to access your organization’s spaces or events.
- Make trans issues part of your organization’s priorities.
- Eliminate any gender specific dress codes.
- Get trans awareness training for people in all roles in your organization—reception, security, director, etc.
Transgender-Specific Terminology

To build inclusive communities, it is essential to utilize a vocabulary that is respectful towards everyone. Education is key. Here is a list of trans-specific terms plus definitions.

**Transgender (adj.)**
A term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms including *transgender*. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to alter their secondary sex characteristics. Some transgender people undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and being transgender is not dependent upon medical procedures. Medical care does not make someone a particular gender, it merely brings a person’s body into alignment with how they understand the gender that they already are.

**Trans**
Used as shorthand to mean *transgender* or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities. Many transgender people use *trans* interchangeably with *transgender*.

**Transsexual (adj.)** Do not use this term
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. Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is not an umbrella term.

**Transgender man**
**Transgender men are men.**
Describes people who were assigned female at birth but are men. Transgender men, like non-transgender men, live and identify as men. They may shorten it to trans man. [Note: *trans man*, not “transman.”]

**Transgender woman**
**Transgender women are women.**
Describe people who were assigned male at birth but are women. Transgender women, like non-transgender women, live and identify as women. They may shorten it to trans woman. [Note: *trans woman*, not “transwoman.”]

*PLEASE NOTE:* Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are generally men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the individual. Do not use the word “transvestite” at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

> When a transgender woman uses a women’s restroom, there are still zero men — biological or otherwise — in that restroom.

**Transition**
Altering one’s birth assigned sex. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time and is based on a person’s individual needs. Transition may include any or all personal, medical, and legal steps. **Avoid the phrase “sex change.”**

**Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) or Gender Conforming Surgery (GCS)**
Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions. There is no one surgery that constitutes “sex reassignment surgery.” There are many surgeries that a transgender person may undergo as part of their treatment and as noted above, many transgender people will have no surgery at all. **Avoid the phrase “sex change operation.”** **Avoid (over) emphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process.**