WORKING WITH CLIENTS FROM LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES:

TIPS FOR ATTORNEYS AND ADVOCATES

Best Practices - Understanding Terminology

The LGBTQIA+ community includes people with marginalized sexual orientations or gender identities, including lesbians, gay men, bisexual and pansexual people, transgender people, queer people, intersex people, asexual and aromantic people, and others. The acronym LGBTQIA+ is not static and may have different meanings to different people. Below, please find common terminology and definitions for reference:

Sexual Orientation: An individual's physical and/or emotional attraction to the same and/or other genders. This is distinct from a person's gender identity and expression.

Lesbian: A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women.

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

Bisexual: When a person is attracted to both men or women, or anyone attracted to two or more genders.

Pansexual: When a person has the capacity to be attracted to anyone regardless of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Asexual: When a person does not experience sexual desire or attraction. Asexual people may still desire romantic, affectionate partnerships regardless of a need for sexual interaction.

Questioning: When a person is in the process of understanding and/or exploring their own sexuality or gender identity.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. It may or may not align with an individual's sex assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex that is assigned at birth, often based on physical anatomy.

Intersex: An identity of a person who is born with sexual anatomy or other biological characteristics that do not fit "typical" definitions of male and female.

Cisgender: An identity of a person whose gender identity is congruent with their sex assigned at birth.

Transgender: An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth, and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.

Gender Expression: An individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, clothing, speech patterns, mannerisms, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine, feminine, or something else.

Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Variant: An identity of a person whose gender characteristics and/or behavior does not confirm to traditional or societal gender expectations.

Nonbinary: An umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the traditional concepts of female and male. Nonbinary people may also use more specific information to describe their identity (e.g. genderqueer, agender, bigender, genderfluid, etc.) , and may prefer that others use gender neutral pronouns such as they/them/their when referring to them, but everyone is different.

Queer: A term used by many LGBTQIA+ individuals who do not feel their identity is wholly captured by other letters in the acronym. The term is also used to refer to the LGBTQIA+ community as a whole. It is a reclaimed term, and some may not be comfortable with its use. Allies should discuss use of this term with LGBTQIA+ clients or organizations prior to its use.

Ally: A person who constantly and consistently shows up as an advocate, friend, and defender of others.

Create a Welcoming Environment for LGBTQIA+ Clients

- When meeting, speaking, or emailing with a potential client, do not make assumptions about the person's gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Offer your pronouns when introducing yourself, and ask for the client's pronouns at the start of the conversation ("Hi, my name is Heather and my pronouns are she/her/hers. What are yours?").
- Review intake and record-keeping procedures to see if your current processes respect individuals' gender identity and chosen names.
- Update data systems and intake forms to allow clients to record their pronouns in the way that makes them feel most comfortable, allows for both chosen and legal names, and offers gender neutral options (for example, including Mx. in addition to Ms., Mrs., and Mr.).
- Include your own pronouns in your email signature as a showing of allyship with the LGBTQAI+ community.
- Avoid gendered language when it is not necessary.
- Be aware of the ways you may be perpetuating assumptions of hetero-/cisnormativity, which is the promotion of being heterosexual and cisgender as being preferred to other sexual orientations and gender identities.

Refer to Local Organizations that serve the LGBTQIA+ Community

FreeState Justice

A state-wide organization that works to improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders and their families through direct legal services, policy advocacy, outreach, education, and coalition building. For more information, please visit https://freestate-justice.org/ for further information.

Chase Brexton Health Center

Offers LGBTQ inclusive medical, behavioral health, case management and other health based services in several centers across the state. Please visit www.chasebrexton.org for further information.

ACLU of Maryland

The ACLU of Maryland fights for the right of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders to live openly and receive fair treatment in employment, education, housing, public accommodation, health care, and government programs. Please visit https://www.aclu-md.org/en/issues/civil-rights/lgbtq-rights for further information.

PFLAG

Offers parent and LGBTQ youth support groups in chapters across the state. Please visit www.community.pflag.org for more information.

This tipsheet was created as part of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project (HTPP), a collaboration between the University of Baltimore School of Law and Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.

Terminology and definitions drawn from STAR TRACK Adolescent Health Program "LGBTQQIAA2SP NB SGL - A STAR TRACK Cheat Sheet" (see http://startrackhealth.org/ for more information); GLAAD Media Reference Guide (available at https://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq), and the Human Trafficking Prevention Project webinar "Human Trafficking and LGBTQIA+ Populations: Cultural Readiness, Risk Factors, and a Plan for Action" (available at https://mvlslaw.org/recorded-trainings/).

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