

# TRANS GENDER VISIBILITY

## A GUIDE TO BEING YOU



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

™

“ Every day, I get to experience the joy of living an open, honest life and engaging in relationships as a whole and authentic person. ”



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# Welcome

**From the time they are born, children are taught that there are girls and there are boys. But our history books, like our communities, are rich with people who have blurred, blended or crossed those lines.**

While gender is traditionally presented to us as either male or female — mutually exclusive and unchangeable opposites — the truth is that gender is a rich, broad spectrum that comes in as many forms as there are people.

For many, expressing gender is unconscious. It's as simple as styling your hair or tying a tie. It causes no angst or uncertainty.

But for those whose gender identity or innate sense of their own gender doesn't match with that assigned to them at birth, unraveling and expressing it can be complex and difficult.

Many of these individuals come to identify as "transgender," an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people who experience or express their gender in different, sometimes non-traditional ways.

Those of us who identify as transgender must make deeply personal decisions about when and even whether to disclose and be open about who we are with ourselves and others — even when it isn't easy.

We express that openness by being our full and complete selves among our friends, our family, our co-workers and, sometimes, even strangers.

Each of us makes decisions about meeting this challenge in our own way and in our own time. Throughout the process of self-discovery and disclosure, you should always be in the driver's seat about how, where, when and with whom you choose to be open.

This guide aims to help you and your loved ones through that process in realistic and practical terms. It acknowledges that the experience of coming out or disclosure covers the full spectrum of human emotion — from paralyzing fear to unbounded euphoria.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation hopes this guide helps you meet the challenges and opportunities that living as authentically as possible can offer to each of us.

## **A Special Note**

No resource can be fully applicable to every member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Beyond this general guide, the HRC Foundation has published *Transgender Americans: A Handbook for Understanding*, with the supporting partnership of the National Center for Transgender Equality and the Transgender Law & Policy Institute. The handbook offers a more comprehensive look at the many issues faced by transgender Americans. Download it by visiting [www.hrc.org/transgender](http://www.hrc.org/transgender).

The National Center for Transgender Equality also offers a range of resources at [www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org) that can help transgender people and their friends, family and co-workers wherever they are on the path to understanding and acceptance.

The HRC Foundation's other resources include materials specifically designed for transitioning in the workplace, coming out in places of worship and coming out in African-American, Latino/a and other communities. See [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org).



# Being Open with Yourself

**From birth, most of us are raised to think of ourselves as fitting into a certain mold. Our culture and often our families teach us that we are “supposed to” look, act and carry ourselves in specific ways.**

Few of us were told that we might have a gender identity that differs from the body into which we were born, or that we might feel compelled to express our gender in ways that aren't traditionally associated with the gender we were assigned at birth.

That's why so many of us are scared, worried or confused when facing these truths in ourselves. We can spend a lifetime attempting to hide it, hoping against hope that it's not true or that it might someday simply go away.

There is no one moment when it's “right” to be open with yourself. Some transgender people have long struggled to live the lives they think they're supposed to live instead of the lives they know they were meant to live. And some come to question or recognize their gender identities and expressions suddenly.

Transgender people come out during all stages and walks of life — when they're children or teens, when they're seniors, when they're married, when they're single, when they have children of their own.

Some transgender people come out simply by having the courage to be different. This can range from women who express themselves in traditionally masculine ways to men who do things that are generally considered feminine. For them, there is often no question of disclosure. They live openly and authentically by simply embracing their differences.

Some transgender people may feel little need to disclose themselves to others. Some cross-dressers, for example, may only express this aspect of themselves in private, considering it a fulfilling and beneficial part of their personalities.

Other transgender people may have a sense of gender that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Whether by asking friends, family and co-workers to call them by another name and pronoun, or by undergoing medical transition, disclosure to others can be both critical and stressful.

Given the diversity among transgender people, there's no single rule to be applied as to whether a person will or even should disclose this aspect of themselves to others.

But one thing we all have in common is that we take our first step by being open and truthful with ourselves.

**Throughout the disclosure process, it's common to feel:**

- Scared
- Unsafe
- Confused
- Guilty
- Empowered
- Exhilarated
- Relieved
- Proud
- Uncertain
- Brave
- Affirmed

## FINDING A COMMUNITY

For many of us who identify ourselves as transgender, it is important to find others who share similar experiences and emotions. Finding a community of peers can help us feel less alone on our new paths and can answer questions we might have about next steps.

If you live near a major city, you may find support or social groups nearby. For those living in suburban or rural areas, finding a formal group might be more difficult. But transgender people live in every corner of the world, and you are not alone. One place to start is the Internet. A wide range of transgender communities exists online. Whether by subscribing to an e-mail group, reading or participating in blogs or joining an online community, you can find numerous resources on the Web.

# Deciding to Tell Others

Some transgender people who wish to disclose this truth about themselves to others have reached a breaking point in their lives where it's too difficult to hide who they are any longer.

Whether it's the cross-dresser burdened with a secret he or she has hidden from his or her spouse, or a young lesbian who feels she doesn't fit into a traditional gender role, transgender people often feel compelled to share who they are in order to build stronger and more authentic relationships with those closest to them.

After disclosure, many people feel as if a great weight has been lifted from their shoulders. In the process of sharing who they are, they may also break down stereotypes and other barriers by living more open lives.

While there are benefits, there can also be serious risks and consequences involved. The decision is yours and yours alone. It's important to weigh both risks and rewards before making a choice to tell others.



**“There are just as many gender identities as there are individuals. Being transgender is just one part of who I am.”**







### **Some Benefits of Disclosure:**

- Living an authentic and whole life
- Developing closer, more genuine relationships
- Building self-esteem from being known and loved for who we really are
- Reducing the stress of hiding our identity
- Having authentic and open friendships with other transgender people
- Becoming a role model for others
- Making it easier for younger transgender people who will follow in our footsteps
- Being more productive at work

### **Some Risks/Consequences of Coming Out:**

- Not everyone will be understanding or accepting
- Family, friends and co-workers may be shocked, confused or even hostile
- Some relationships may permanently change
- You may experience harassment, discrimination or violence
- You may be thrown out of your home
- You may lose your job
- Some young people may lose financial support from their parents

Remember, there's no right or wrong way to disclose being transgender or to live openly. It may not mean you have to be out at all times or in all places. You have the right and the responsibility to decide how, where, when and even whether to share your identity with others, based on what's right for you.

# A Note on Transitioning

**It's important to remember that "transgender" is a broad term describing many different people who express gender in many different ways, each as authentically as the next.**

For many transgender people, the process of transitioning, and the period of time when a person changes from living in one gender to living in another, is when we feel most exposed and the decision to disclose becomes most critical to our lives.

Transitioning does not always involve medical treatment. By dressing in preferred-gender clothing, changing their bodies through exercise, adjusting mannerisms and speech patterns or requesting that friends and family address them with preferred names and pronouns, transgender people can use non-medical options to live their gender identities or expressions.

Others who transition pursue medical treatment — hormone therapy, surgery or both — to align their bodies with the gender they know themselves to be.

In many parts of the world, the accepted clinical guidelines for those who undertake medical transition are known as the Standards of Care. These standards are developed by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, or WPATH (formerly known as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association), a widely recognized professional organization devoted to the understanding and treatment of gender identity disorders. Information on the WPATH Standards of Care can be found online at [www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org).

Another increasingly common treatment protocol is known as Informed Consent. Through this protocol, transgender people are made aware of the effects of medical treatment and then asked to provide consent, much like with other medical procedures. Some doctors supervise medical transitions through a combination of both protocols.

Regardless of how a person lives his or her gender identity, transitioning can be a very public “outing.” It involves disclosing to family, friends, employers and healthcare providers. For most transgender people, transitioning by its very nature is not something that can be hidden from everyone.

When it comes to transitioning, a broad range of medical personnel — from psychologists or psychiatrists to surgeons, endocrinologists and/or voice therapists — may be consulted. If possible, it’s very helpful to find healthcare professionals in your geographic area who are experienced in serving transgender patients. If there are no such providers in your area, an open-minded provider who is willing to learn about the specific health needs of transgender people, and who is willing to speak with more experienced providers, may be sufficient.

### **Questions for Healthcare Providers:**

- Have you treated transgender patients in the past?
- Do you understand hormone regimens appropriate for transgender patients?
- What treatment protocol do you follow for transitions?

Remember: Do your research first. Even doctors who have had transgender patients in the past may not be experts on transitioning. Many websites and advocacy groups can offer guidance on medical transitioning. It’s important to be your own health advocate.

For more information on healthcare and providers, you can visit [www.gлма.org](http://www.gлма.org), Gay & Lesbian Medical Association.

While this guide is primarily for transgender people who are in the early stages of disclosure, some of us may confront the issue again after transitioning, among new friends, family and co-workers.

Some transgender people choose to lead “stealth” lives. While they may or may not disclose their transgender status to healthcare professionals, they either do not discuss or are very selective in disclosing their transition or gender assigned at birth with others.

Other transgender people find that being more open about their lives and stories can be safe and affirming, as many lesbian, gay and bisexual people do.

Some even choose to speak out publicly about being transgender, becoming advocates for other transgender people by sharing their stories in media interviews or by speaking to students at local colleges and universities or to business and community groups.

The pages that follow can help you decide which path is right for you, no matter where you are on your journey.

**“ You have the right and the responsibility to decide how, where, when and even whether to share your identity with others, based on what’s right for you. ”**



# Making a Disclosure Plan

When you're ready to tell that first person — or even those first few people — give yourself time to prepare. Think through the options and make a deliberate plan of whom to approach, the right time to do so and how to do it. Ask yourself the following questions:

## **Do I know what I want to say?**

Particularly at the beginning of the disclosure or coming out process, many people are still answering tough questions for themselves and are not ready to identify as transgender. Or they may know they are transgender without knowing exactly what that means to them or to others. That's OK. Maybe you just want to tell someone that you're starting to ask yourself these questions. Even if you don't yet have all the answers, your feelings and your safety are what matter. To get a better idea of what it is you want to communicate, try writing it down to help organize your thoughts.

## **Whom should I tell first?**

This can be a critical decision. You may want to select people who you suspect will be most supportive, as their support can help you share with others. If you're coming out at work, who is the point person, or who can be your champion? Your human resources representative? A manager or co-worker? Someone at another transgender, LGBT or social justice organization? Do your homework before deciding. Also, know that this

kind of news can travel quickly. If you'd prefer that the people you tell keep your news confidential, be sure to tell them so, and plan for the chance that someone you tell may not stay silent. Don't be surprised if someone, intentionally or not, shares your news with others before you have a chance to do it yourself.

### **What kinds of signals am I getting?**

Sometimes you can get a sense of how accepting people will be by the things they say. Maybe a transgender-themed movie or a transgender character on a TV show can get a discussion started. Or maybe someone in your life has told you that they joined an LGBT rights organization. But don't read into these conversations too closely. The most LGBT-friendly person in the office may react negatively, and the person who said something insensitive about transgender people might end up being your strongest supporter.

### **Am I well-informed and willing to answer questions?**

People's reactions to the news that you're transgender can depend largely on how much information they have about transgender issues and how much they feel they can ask. While more and more people are familiar with lesbian, gay and bisexual people and issues of sexual orientation, issues surrounding gender identity and expression aren't yet as widely understood. If you're well-informed and open to answering questions, it can go a long way toward helping others to understand. Some helpful facts and frequently asked questions can be found later in this guide. More information is available at [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) and at other sites referenced there.

### **Is this a good time?**

Timing is key, and choosing the right time is up to you. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out. If they're dealing with their own major life concerns, they may not be able to respond to your disclosure constructively.

## Can I be patient?

Just as it took you time to come to terms with being transgender, some people will need time to think things over after you disclose that news to them. The reason you've chosen to be open with these people is that you care about them or that you found it necessary. If they react strongly, it's probably because they care about you, too. Be prepared to give them space and time to adjust. Rather than expecting immediate understanding, work to establish an ongoing, non-judgmental, respectful dialogue.

## Is it safe to disclose?

If you have any doubt at all as to your safety, carefully weigh your risks and options. Transgender people face the real threat of harassment and violence, and some transgender people choose to disclose being transgender in a safe space with friends by their sides to ensure their safety. Also, while more and more localities are passing laws that ban discrimination against transgender people, most transgender Americans are not legally protected from workplace discrimination. As a result, disclosure to someone at work could cost you your job and sometimes your livelihood. Visit [www.hrc.org/transworkplace](http://www.hrc.org/transworkplace) for a comprehensive guide to being transgender in the workplace.





# Having the Conversation

It's common to want or hope for positive reactions from the people you tell, but that may not happen immediately. It might help to try to put yourself in their shoes to try and understand their likely reactions, potential questions and next steps.

## **The person to whom you disclose being transgender might feel:**

- Surprised
- Honored
- Uncomfortable
- Scared
- Unsure how to react
- Distrusting
- Supportive
- Skeptical
- Relieved
- Curious
- Confused
- Angry
- Uncertain what to do next

You may want to verbalize the range of feelings they might be having and reassure them that it's OK to ask questions. People will generally take their cues from you as to how they should approach things, so if you're open and honest, you're more likely to get openness and honesty in return.

Appropriate and gentle humor can also go a long way toward easing anxiety for both you and the person with whom you're speaking. Always remember to give them time. It has taken you time to get to this point. Now they might need time to understand things, too.



**“It’s up to you to decide when and where you come out. Coming out as transgender is just one step along the path toward living openly.”**



## **Telling Parents**

Regardless of your age, you may be afraid your parents will reject you if you tell them you are a transgender person. The good news is that most parents are able to come to a place of understanding. Some may never quite get it, but others may surprise you by becoming advocates themselves. However, if you are under 18 or financially dependent on your parents, consider this decision very carefully.

### **Some reactions you may want to prepare for:**

- Parents may react in ways that hurt. They may cry, get angry or feel embarrassed.
- Some parents will need to grieve over the dreams they’ve had for you before they see the new, more genuine life you are building for yourself.
- Some parents may say things like, “Well, you’ll always be a daughter to me — never a son.” Or they may be unkind about the way you express your gender. It may take time for them to get used to seeing you as you know you are.
- They may ask where they “went wrong” or if they did something to “cause this.” Assure them they did nothing wrong and didn’t cause you to be transgender.
- Some may think of being transgender as a sin or attempt to send you to a counselor or therapist in hopes they can “change” you.
- Some parents or family members may already know or have an inkling that you are transgender. For some, hearing your news may come as a sense of relief.
- Supportive or not, their initial feelings may not reflect their feelings over the long term. Keep in mind that this is big news and there’s no timetable for how long it takes parents to adjust.

## **Telling Partners and Spouses**

One of the biggest reasons transgender people don't disclose being transgender is fear of how a partner or spouse will react. They wonder if their spouse will ask for a divorce or if their partner will suddenly stop loving them.

The good news is that love is hard to stop suddenly. But even a relationship built on the strongest love may confront insurmountable challenges when a partner discloses being transgender. In these cases, separation may be inevitable. A husband or wife may find it difficult to trust a spouse who has kept their feelings secret, or that they're no longer able to have a romantic relationship with a partner who is transitioning. But there are many others who discover that they can. More and more couples and families are staying together through transition, and disclosing that you're transgender to those you love the most doesn't have to lead to separation.

Before disclosing to a partner or spouse, it's important to remember that they'll need time and patience — just as you'd expect time and patience while working through your own feelings. Counseling can be helpful to many couples, as can talking with other couples who have been through similar situations.

## **Telling Children**

There's no one right or wrong way to have this conversation. Coming out to children can seem a daunting task. Depending on their ages, you may be worried about them rejecting you or about their safety at school if they tell friends.

If you have a partner, spouse, ex-partner or ex-spouse who is involved in your children's lives, you may want to have the conversation together, if that's possible. Or you might find that bringing a grandparent into the conversation is a good idea. Your children may have questions that they feel more comfortable asking someone else for fear that they'll hurt your feelings. Older children, especially, may need more time to think about the news you've shared with them before they're ready to talk.

It may be helpful to arrange a family counseling session to sort through feelings. Giving your children the ability to talk to other children of transgender parents can be enormously helpful.

# For Family and Friends

**If your friend or family member has come out to you as transgender, you may be wondering how to respond. Everyone does so differently. Many are confused and have questions. Some are relieved they know what's been on their loved one's mind, and others are hurt they weren't told sooner. You may feel a mixture of all three emotions and more. You may not even be able to understand what it is that you're feeling.**

Regardless of how you're feeling, it's helpful if you can reassure your family member or friend that your feelings for them have not suddenly disappeared. Let them know you will try your best to support them through this process. It's OK to tell them it's going to take some time to adjust. Be honest with them if you have questions you'd like to ask as they, too, had questions they had to answer along the way.

If you have questions you're uncomfortable asking, you can find resources elsewhere. Support groups — both online and in many cities and towns across the country — can help you get the answers you're looking for. There is also a range of books and websites that offer more information. You can find resources and answers to some common questions at the end of this guide.

In the end, knowing that you still care is what matters most to your friend or family member.

## **A Note for Parents of Transgender or Gender-Questioning Children**

While some transgender people only come to understand their identity as adults, there are many who deal with these questions at very young ages. If you're reading this guide, it means you're already well on the way toward providing a supportive environment for your child.

It's important to let your children explore their gender without trying to change or pressure them toward one mode of gender expression. There are some circumstances where this may prove difficult — if your child refuses to wear the school uniform for his or her sex assigned at birth, for example.

While you can't allow your children to get their way in every situation, these may be more than small refusals. Talk to your child to gauge how important these issues are to them. It may also help to talk to school authorities and work out a solution.

Many parents also pursue counseling with their children. But it's important to let your child know that there's nothing wrong with them if you decide counseling is necessary. Seeking out a supportive therapist who has experience with gender issues in children is also a wise step.

Above all, reassure your children that differences are to be celebrated and you love them no matter what. Acceptance of diversity is an important value for all children — and adults.

Specific resources and support groups for parents of transgender children are available to you. (*See the resources at the back.*)

**“ You are on a journey of self-disclosure that is ongoing. It’s one that unfolds at your own pace and gets exponentially easier with time. ”**



# The Disclosure Continuum

**The world is not the same today as it was 20, 10 or even five years ago for transgender people.**

For those who transitioned years ago, it was often a danger to do anything but move to another community and begin a new life. The pressure to stay in the closet about a gender transition could become almost as oppressive as the pressures they once felt to hide their true genders. But with a newfound sense of community, more and more transgender people are choosing to live openly and disclose to others their unique stories.

In the past, there were fewer safe options for people who felt confined by the traditional understanding of gender as “either-or.” Today, there are more and more people who choose to identify as neither male nor female and who express their gender in less traditional ways.

Regardless of where you fit on the spectrum of transgender identities, you are on a journey that is uniquely yours and that is ongoing. It’s one that can unfold at your own pace and that gets easier with time.

Living openly and authentically doesn’t mean the sole or even primary aspect of who you are is your gender identity or expression. It just means that this part of your life is as natural and acceptable as your eye color, your height or your personality.

But it’s not just about you. Living openly teaches others that there’s more to gender than they might have ever known. It paves the way for future generations of transgender youth to live better lives. And it shows others, especially those who are biased or judgmental, that their attitudes are theirs alone.

Almost every day, you will face decisions about where, when and how to disclose that you are transgender — or that when and why not to. Always remember, this is your journey. You get to decide how to take it.

# Ten Things Every American Ought To Know

More than 77 percent of American voters believe it should be illegal to fire someone just because they are transgender.

(HRC/Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, 2011)

Fifty percent of the Fortune 500 — the country's most profitable businesses — offer **non-discrimination policies that cover gender identity**. More and more companies add these protections every year. (Human Rights Campaign, 2011)

Meanwhile, 26 percent of transgender workers report **losing their job because of their gender identity** and 97 percent report other negative experiences in the workplace (from verbal harassment to assault). (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force/National Center for Transgender Equality, 2009)

In 2009, gender identity was added to federal hate crimes law, explicitly protecting transgender people under federal civil rights law for the first time. **Hate crimes against LGBT Americans**, however, continue to be a significant problem and efforts to end hate crimes must continue.

Military regulations deny **transgender Americans the right to serve openly**, and transgender veterans face significant discrimination in the Veterans Administration medical system. (Transgender American Veterans Association/Palm Center study, August 2008)

In the majority of states, it is **still legal to fire someone** from his or her job simply for being transgender.



While challenges exist, there are many transgender and **transgender-friendly faith leaders** and communities throughout the United States and beyond.

Throughout history and across cultures, people have expressed themselves in ways that we might consider transgender. Some Native American cultures identify **“two-spirited” people as a revered class.**

According to some estimates, **0.25 to 1 percent of the U.S. population is transsexual.** But the actual percentage of those who identify under the broader transgender identity is thought to be much higher.

Transgender non-discrimination protections in colleges and universities are on the rise, with more and more focus on full protection among institutions of higher learning for students, faculty and staff, including all eight Ivy League institutions. Many colleges and **universities now offer gender-neutral housing options** for students living on campus.



# Glossary of Terms

Many Americans don't talk about gender identity and expression because they feel it's taboo or are afraid of saying the wrong thing. This glossary was written to provide people with the words and meanings to help make conversations easier.

**cross-dressers** — Transgender people who wear clothing and/or makeup and accessories that are considered by society to correspond to a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth.

**female-to-male transsexual (FTM) or trans man** — Someone who was born female and transitions to a male gender identity.

**gender expression** — How a person behaves, appears or presents oneself with regard to societal expectations of gender.

**gender identity** — The gender that a person claims for oneself, which may or may not align with the gender assigned at birth.

**gender variant, gender diverse, or genderqueer** — Terms people use to describe their own nonstandard gender identity or expression.

**GLBT or LGBT** — Acronyms for “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender” or “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.”

**male-to-female transsexual (MTF) or trans woman** — Someone who was born male and transitions to a female gender identity.

**sexual orientation** — A person's enduring emotional, romantic, sexual and relational attraction to someone else, which is different from an innate sense of gender.

**transgender** — An umbrella term describing a broad range of people who experience and/or express their gender differently from what most people expect. It includes people who describe themselves as transsexual, cross-dressers or otherwise gender nonconforming.

**transition** — A process through which some transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned at birth. This may or may not include hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery and other medical components.

**transsexual** — An older medical term used to describe people whose gender identity and birth-assigned sex do not match. Many people prefer the term “transgender” to describe themselves.

**transvestite** — An outdated term — often considered pejorative — used to refer to people who cross-dress.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation also offers a more detailed glossary, tailored for the media but also helpful for individuals who would like to learn more, at [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org).

### **A Note on Pronouns**

Transgender people should be identified with the pronoun that corresponds with the gender with which they identify. If you are unsure of someone’s gender, it’s appropriate to respectfully ask their name and what pronoun they prefer you use. In general, it’s considered insensitive to refer to someone by the incorrect pronouns once you have established which set of pronouns they prefer.



**“‘Transgender’ is a broad term describing many different people who express gender in many different ways.”**



# Some Myths and Facts

**Note:** This is by no means a comprehensive guide to transgender concepts. Instead, it is geared toward people who are just learning about transgender issues.

**Here are some common myths and facts about transgender people:**

**Myth:** Transgender people are confused.

**Fact:** Transgender people are no more and no less confused than most people. Gender is a much more complicated issue than most people are aware, and sorting through gender differences can be challenging. But by the time someone is ready to come out as transgender, they have thought long and hard and are generally secure in their feelings.

**Myth:** Being transgender is a “choice.”

**Fact:** Being transgender is no more a choice than being gay or straight, having brown eyes or blue, or being left- or right-handed. The choice is deciding whether or not to live your life honestly with yourself and others.

**Myth:** Transgender people are really gay.

**Fact:** Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different subjects. Some transgender people are lesbian, gay or bisexual in their sexual orientation, and some are straight.

**Myth:** Transgender people are sinners.

**Fact:** Many transgender people are people of faith. While some find hostility in their churches, synagogues, mosques or worshipping communities, still others are embraced by their spiritual peers. The number of transgender-friendly places of worship is large and growing.

**Myth:** Transgender people can't have families.

**Fact:** Whether they come out before a relationship or while in one, countless transgender people find love and happiness in their lives. In fact, most transgender people will tell you that after coming out, they feel a new sense of wholeness and happiness that makes them a better partner and parent.

**Myth:** Transgender people can be cured.

**Fact:** There's no "cure" for transgender people, although some do try to repress it. The most reputable medical and psychotherapeutic groups say you should not try to keep from expressing your true gender identity. Instead, they say to focus on ways to come to an understanding of yourself and share your life openly with those you love.

**Myth:** All transgender people have surgery.

**Fact:** Many transgender people have no desire to pursue surgeries or medical intervention. At the same time, many transgender people cannot afford medical treatment or have no access to it. Considering these truths, it's important that civil rights are afforded to all transgender people equally, regardless of their medical histories.

**Myth:** There are more male-to-female transgender people than female-to-male transgender people.

**Fact:** There are no reputable statistics on how many transgender people there are in the world, nor on how many people identify as male-to-female or female-to-male. But even the best estimates show there are more or less equal numbers of MTF and FTM transgender people.

## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

The HRC Foundation has a catalog of resources for transgender people and their families, friends, employers, clergy and other allies at [www.hrc.org/transgender](http://www.hrc.org/transgender). You can also find resources specific to transgender issues in the workplace at [www.hrc.org/transworkplace](http://www.hrc.org/transworkplace), and to issues in communities of faith at [www.hrc.org/religion](http://www.hrc.org/religion).

You may also find the following websites helpful:

### Legal Issues

National Center for Transgender Equality [www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org)

Transgender Law Center [www.transgenderlawcenter.org](http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org)

### Health Issues

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health  
[www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)

### Spiritual and Religious Issues

TransFaith Online [www.transfaithonline.org](http://www.transfaithonline.org)





# A Message from Chad Griffin

**President,  
Human Rights Campaign Foundation**

I want to thank you for taking time to read and think about *Transgender Visibility*.

Because of you and others, more and more Americans are coming to know transgender people, and the myths and fears surrounding gender identity are giving way to understanding and support.

That shift has already begun to occur. Nine out of 10 Americans believe that transgender people have the right to full equality, according to a 2011 study by the Public Religion Research Institute.

Of course, progress toward equality is made when we choose to share our lives with others. This simple yet profound step is the greatest political action any of us can take. When elected officials and voters know something about our lives, about our hopes, our aspirations and, yes, our struggles, we begin to see a change. We begin to change hearts and minds.

Through this work, we have seen issues of gender identity and expression be incorporated into city, state and federal law. Likewise, it inspires corporations to include gender identity and expression in their employee protection and benefits programs. What matters most, however, is not just the facts and figures. It's the difficult work of stepping forward, of telling our stories.

I'm so pleased that the Human Rights Campaign Foundation has compiled this booklet, making it available to many. It is our hope it will provide some guidance on this crucial journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad Griffin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chad Griffin

**The Human Rights Campaign Foundation** believes that all Americans should have the opportunity to care for their families, earn a living, serve their country and live open, honest and safe lives at home, at work and in their community. Through pioneering research, advocacy and education, the HRC Foundation pursues practices and policies that support and protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and their families in education, healthcare, corporate, public and private organizations across the country. Visit [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) for more information.

*Several photos in this guide are the work of photographers Mariette Pathy Allen and John Healey. The Human Rights Campaign Foundation thanks them for providing these powerful images.*

**If you would like to get involved with HRC's work by becoming a member,** we invite you to visit [www.hrc.org/membership](http://www.hrc.org/membership) and add your voice to our more than 1 million members and supporters.

For as little as \$35, you will receive HRC's quarterly magazine, *Equality*; invitations to the latest HRC events; discounts from corporate sponsors as well as updates on how you can get more involved in your community. Questions about HRC membership? Please contact our Member Services Department at 1-800-727-4723 or [membership@hrc.org](mailto:membership@hrc.org).

