

HOW TO GENDERFLUID

a working manual

for the fluid, the curious, and the people who love us

INTRO — HOW TO USE THIS

This is not a rulebook.

Genderfluid means your gender moves — day to day, hour to hour, sometimes mid-sentence. There's no fixed destination here, which is exactly the point. This zine won't tell you what to feel. It'll give you tools for the logistics: language, wardrobe, money, paperwork, people. The feeling part is yours.

Use it like a reference, not a script. Skip around. Dog-ear what's useful, ignore what isn't. Nothing here is a diagnosis or a doctrine — just things that have worked, collected in one place.

A note on the legal stuff. Identity-document and public-accommodation law in the US has been changing fast since January 2025, and much of it is in active litigation. **Every legal and medical claim in this zine was checked against a live source on July 30, 2026.** Where a source is dated, the date is printed with the claim, so you can see exactly how old the information is. A printed zine can't chase court rulings — where things are unstable, this zine says so and points you at organizations that maintain live trackers: the Movement Advancement Project (lgbtmap.org), Lambda Legal, and the ACLU.

SECTION 1 — FOUNDATIONS

What genderfluid actually means

The short version: your internal sense of gender isn't fixed at one point. It shifts — between masculine and feminine, in and out of both, sometimes into territory that doesn't map onto either.

What it is NOT:

- Not indecision. You're not "figuring it out" in the sense of working toward a final answer. The movement itself is the stable part.
- Not a phase, though it's fine if it turns out to be one — identity is allowed to change, and that doesn't retroactively invalidate anything.
- Not a performance for other people. The shifts happen whether or not anyone's watching.
- Not the same as being nonbinary, though the two overlap heavily. Non-binary describes existing outside the binary; genderfluid describes *movement*. You can be a genderfluid nonbinary person, a genderfluid person who moves between binary poles, or something else entirely. Genderfluid people are generally counted under the broader nonbinary and trans umbrellas in research and law, whether or not any individual uses those words for themselves.
- Not the same as bigender (having two genders, simultaneously or alternately) or genderflux (fluctuating in *intensity* of gender rather than position) — though people use all these labels with personal variation, and the boundaries between them are soft.

What varies person to person:

- **Speed** — some people shift over months, some over hours.
- **Range** — some move across the whole spectrum, some within a narrower band.
- **Predictability** — some notice patterns (cyclical, seasonal, situational, stress-linked); some find no pattern at all. Both are documented and normal.
- **Presentation lag** — for some people presentation follows internal sense in real time; for others it lags by days, or doesn't track presentation at all. Internal fluidity with a constant outward presentation is still genderfluidity.

How common is this? In 2021 the Williams Institute estimated that 1.2 million LGBTQ adults aged 18-60 in the US identify as nonbinary. Read

that as a floor, not a headcount: the underlying surveys only sampled people who already identified as LGBTQ, and stopped at 60. Younger cohorts report gender diversity at substantially higher rates across every survey that asks. You are not statistically alone, whatever it feels like locally.

There's no wrong version of this. The rest of this zine assumes your fluidity looks like *your* fluidity, not a template.

SECTION 2 — LANGUAGE TOOLKIT

Pronouns

Pronouns don't have to match your gender exactly — they just have to be workable.

Options people use:

- **Fixed single set** (she/her, he/him, they/them) — even if your internal sense moves, some people keep one set for simplicity. Valid.
- **Rotating set** — different pronouns on different days, communicated as needed. Highest precision, highest maintenance.
- **Multiple sets, any/all** (she/they, he/they, any pronouns) — lets people alternate without you managing a schedule. A common middle path for fluid people specifically, because it builds the movement into the standing instruction.
- **Neopronouns** (xe/xem, ze/hir, fae/faer, and others) — meaningful to many people, but less commonly known, so budget extra energy for explaining them. Written pronoun fields (email signatures, bios) do a lot of the teaching for you.
- **Name only, no pronouns** — some people opt out entirely and ask people to just use their name.

Practical note: the “right” pronoun setup is the one that costs you the least energy to maintain, not the one that's most precise. Precision you have to defend all day isn't actually serving you.

Signaling systems some fluid people use so they don't have to announce anything verbally:

- Pronoun pins or bracelets swapped by day
- A pinned message or bio line that's understood to be current
- A color or accessory code with close friends (“if I'm wearing the cuff, it's he/him today”)
- Simply letting mixed pronouns ride and correcting only when it matters

None of these are obligations. They're options for reducing the announcement tax.

Introducing and updating

Introducing yourself, low-stakes version:

“I'm [name], I use pronouns.”

That's it. No explanation required unless you want to give one.

If someone asks follow-up questions and you're up for it:

“My gender isn't fixed — it moves around. Pronouns might change with it, and I'll let you know when they do.”

Updating someone who already knows you:

- Text before seeing them in person if that's easier: *“Hey — using [pronoun] this week, just so you know.”*
- No need to justify the change. “Using X now” is a complete sentence.
- If they slip after being told, a quick correction without a lecture keeps friction low: *“[correct pronoun], but no worries.”*

If you don't feel like updating everyone every time: totally reasonable. Some people designate a small circle who gets real-time updates and let everyone else default to whatever was last communicated, or to a permanent they/them. You don't owe live tracking to every person in your life.

For the people around you — hand them this paragraph: if someone tells you their pronouns changed, the whole job is: use the new ones, correct yourself briefly if you slip, don't make your adjustment their emotional labor. A five-second “sorry — *she* went to the store” beats a five-minute apology every time.

Work chat and HR systems

Payroll and tax filings usually need your legal name, and that's a separate field from the one people see. Display names, chat handles, and pronoun fields can almost always be changed on

their own, by you, without filing anything. Slack and Teams display names update in seconds. Your email signature is the single highest-traffic place your pronouns can live, and nobody has to approve it.

Dating and social apps

Plenty of platforms still run binary filters underneath, so your profile may only surface to people who selected a binary category. Some people pick the category that reaches who they want to reach and put the actual situation in the bio.

Know the tradeoff before you do it: if the app is being used to arrange meeting a stranger, a mismatch between the filter and the bio can land badly on arrival, and that's a safety question, not an etiquette one. Deciding what a stranger knows before you're in a room with them is your call to make deliberately rather than by default.

SECTION 3 — READING YOUR WEATHER

Daily check-ins

Think of this less like “figuring out your identity” and more like checking a forecast — data gathering, not judgment.

Morning questions:

- What pronouns feel closest to right *today* — not forever, just today?
- Does my body feel like something I want to emphasize, downplay, or ignore right now?
- Is there a name or nickname that feels closer today than usual?
- What would I want to wear if literally nothing else mattered — cost, weather, who’s around?
- Gut check on yesterday’s read: still accurate, or has it moved overnight?

Tracking patterns over time

A simple log — paper, notes app, spreadsheet — noting date, rough gender sense, and anything notable (stress level, sleep, hormonal cycle if you have one, season, social context) can surface patterns invisible day to day. Some people find weekly or monthly rhythms; some find stress compresses their range; some find social environments pull their sense of self in ways solitude doesn’t. And some people find no pattern whatsoever, which is itself useful information: it tells you to build systems that don’t depend on prediction.

A minimal tracking format that actually gets used:

date / one-word or one-number gender read / pronoun that fit / anything unusual

Thirty seconds a day. Review monthly, not daily — patterns show up in aggregate.

Where to keep it. This log is a dated record of your gender over time, which makes it the most sensitive document you own. Keep it somewhere only you can reach: a paper notebook, or an encrypted notes app on a device you control. Not a work laptop, not a shared family tablet, not a corporate cloud drive, not anything your employer can image. If you're not out at work, a synced note is a disclosure waiting for an IT audit.

When you can't tell

Sometimes there's no clear signal. That's normal, not a malfunction.

Options for the "genuinely don't know" days:

- Default to whatever's lowest-effort and let the day be neutral.
- Pick something and see how it feels once you're in it — sometimes the read only comes from the doing.
- Name the uncertainty to people close to you: *"Not sure where I'm at today, bear with me."*

On pressure: the expectation that you should always have a clear, articulable answer is an outside-in pressure, not an inside-out one. "I don't know" is a legitimate answer to *how's your gender today*.

SECTION 4 — WARDROBE, BODY, AND CARE

Building a flexible closet without buying two of everything

- **Layering pieces** that shift a look fast: structured jackets, soft cardigans, scarves, vests, compression tops.
- **Neutral-cut basics** that read differently depending on styling: oversized button-downs, straight-leg trousers, plain tees, boots that go both ways.
- **A quick-change kit** — a small bag with the three or four items that move your presentation fastest, kept ready for days when the read shifts mid-day.
- **Accessories carry disproportionate weight.** Jewelry, watches, belts, and glasses shift perceived gender more per gram than almost any garment — cheap to vary, fast to swap.
- **Fit does more than category.** The same shirt sized up or down reads differently. When budget is tight, tailoring a few pieces buys more range than buying more pieces.
- **If texture is a limiting factor**, and for a lot of people it is, treat that as a hard constraint and design around it rather than through it. A seam or a fabric you can't tolerate will cost you the whole day regardless of how the outfit reads. Work out which two or three fabrics you can wear indefinitely and build the flexible pieces out of those; it's a smaller wardrobe that actually gets worn. The same goes for weight and compression — see the binding section below.
- **If you use a mobility aid**, it's part of the silhouette whether or not you planned it that way, and it's a legitimate place to put presentation: cane handles, chair frames, strap and cushion fabric, grip tape. Quick-change kits get more important, not less, when changing takes longer.

Makeup, hair, voice — dials, not switches

Treating makeup, facial hair, hairstyling, and vocal register as dials you turn rather than settings you commit to tends to match

fluidity better than all-or-nothing choices. Haircuts that style multiple ways (length on top, flexible part), makeup skills at two or three intensity levels, and playing with pitch and resonance in low-stakes settings all extend your usable range without daily re-invention.

Binding safety (if you bind)

Binding — flattening chest tissue with a compression garment — is safe *enough* when done correctly, but the data says respect it.

The largest study is Peitzmeier et al., 2017, in *Culture, Health & Sexuality*: 1,800 people assigned female at birth who had binding experience, surveyed online. **97.2% reported at least one of 28 negative physical outcomes.** The common ones were back pain (54%), overheating (54%), chest pain (49%), and shortness of breath (47%). The serious ones were rarer but real: scarring (8%), rib fractures (3%). Risk scaled with how many days a week people bound.

Two things that survey doesn't say, and that get misquoted. It was a self-selected online sample, not a population estimate — 97% is the share of *these respondents*, not a prediction about you. And commercial binders were still associated with 20 of the 28 outcomes. Purpose-made is much safer than improvised; it isn't harmless.

The consensus safety rules across community-health sources (Point of Pride, Fenway Health, OHSU):

- **Use a purpose-made binder. Never ACE bandages, duct tape, or plastic wrap** — they tighten as you breathe and cause real injuries.
- **Keep it under 8 hours a day.** Eight is a ceiling, not a goal. If you're new, start with one or two hours and work up while checking how your body responds.
- **Never sleep in it. Don't exercise in it** — a sports bra moves with you; a binder doesn't.
- **Take rest days** — at least one binder-free day a week.

- **Size honestly.** Sizing down doesn't bind better; it injures better. If between sizes, go up.
- **Stop immediately** for sharp pain, numbness, dizziness, or trouble taking a full breath.
- Stretch and breathe deeply after removing it; keep skin clean and dry underneath.

Fluid-specific note: because you may bind some days and not others, your body never fully habituates — which is actually protective. Intermittent binding with real rest is the safest pattern there is.

If cost is a barrier, see Section 5.

Tucking safety (if you tuck)

Tucking — positioning genitals for a flatter profile — is generally safe with a proper garment and sane duration, but has real documented risks when overdone: skin irritation and chafing, urinary tract infections, urine-flow problems, and testicular inflammation or, rarely, torsion. Sustained heat may also affect fertility — if future biological parenthood matters to you, factor that in and talk to a provider.

The rules:

- **Use a gaff or purpose-made tucking underwear**, not tape on skin, and never anything that can't be removed quickly.
- **Don't sleep tucked.** Take breaks when you can; untuck to urinate rather than holding it — holding it is how the UTI risk shows up.
- **Cotton and breathable fabrics**, good hygiene, fully dry before dressing.
- **Pain means stop.** Tucking should never hurt. Numbness, tingling, or a cutting-in feeling means adjust or remove now.
- A well-fitted gaff *without* a full tuck gives many people enough smoothing — the full technique isn't obligatory for the silhouette.

General principle for both: none of this needs to be performed daily or “earned.” These are tools for the days your presentation calls for them, not standards to maintain. And if fatigue, pain, or a flare means today is a no-compression day, that is a medical decision, not a failure of gender.

Hormones and other medical options

Medical transition isn’t one road with two ends. Some things fluid people actually do:

- **Low-dose or microdosed hormones.** Lower doses of estrogen or testosterone, producing slower and more partial changes. Many people choose this specifically because they want *some* movement and not a full course.
- **Picking and choosing.** Voice therapy without hormones. Hair removal without surgery. Top surgery without hormones. There’s no required sequence, and no provider worth having will tell you there is.
- **Nothing.** Also a complete answer.

The friction is administrative. Insurance coverage and clinical coding still run through binary diagnostic categories, so a provider who has done this before is worth more than a provider who is merely willing — they know which code gets the claim paid. GLMA’s directory lists affirming clinicians nationwide; in Chicagoland, Howard Brown Health.

Anything involving hormones needs a clinician and bloodwork. That’s a monitoring requirement, not a gatekeeping one.

SECTION 5 — WHAT THIS COSTS

Nobody writes this section, and it's the one that decides whether the rest of the zine happens.

Rough ranges, mid-2026. A binder runs \$30–\$50. A gaff, \$20–\$40. Tailoring a pair of trousers, \$20–\$40 — usually the best dollar-per-range in the whole zine. A legal name change in Illinois means a filing fee in the low hundreds plus publication and certified copies, and then you pay again, in fees and in hours, at every agency downstream: Social Security, Secretary of State, bank, employer, school, insurer, landlord. Budget for the tail, not just the filing.

Where the money is.

- **Point of Pride** runs free binder and gaff programs and gender-affirming financial aid. Apply; the programs exist to be used.
- **Fee waivers exist for court filings** if you're below an income threshold. Illinois has an Application for Waiver of Court Fees. Ask; clerks don't volunteer it.
- **Legal aid does name changes.** In Illinois, Illinois Legal Aid Online has the forms and self-help guides, and some clinics will do the filing with you.
- **Sliding-scale health care.** Howard Brown Health and other federally qualified health centers scale by income, including for hormones and labs.
- **Mutual aid and clothing swaps** move more usable wardrobe than any store. Chicago has several; the trade is time and showing up.

The cheapest moves, ranked. Change your email signature and display names — free. Swap accessories — nearly free. Tailor two things you already own. Buy one good binder rather than three bad ones. Everything past that costs real money, and it's fine to sequence it over years.

SECTION 6 — DOCUMENTS & SYSTEMS

The most perishable section in the zine. Checked July 30, 2026. Before acting on any of it, check lgbtmap.org, Lambda Legal, or the ACLU.

The big picture first

Since January 2025, a federal executive order (EO 14168) has directed federal agencies to recognize only sex assigned at birth on federal documents. This changed passports and Social Security records. **It did not change state documents** — driver's licenses, state IDs, and birth certificates are governed by state law, and states vary enormously. So your documents may end up mismatched through no fault of your own: a state ID that reflects you and a federal passport that doesn't. That mismatch is now common, it is not illegal, and millions of people are navigating it. Section 7 is about the moment someone notices.

Passports (federal)

- New, renewed, and replacement US passports are currently issued showing **sex assigned at birth only**. The X marker, available 2022–2025, is no longer issued.
- **Existing passports remain valid until expiration** — including accurate M/F markers and X markers. As of this printing there are no verified reports of the government invalidating or confiscating valid passports. If yours is accurate, you can keep traveling on it.
- **Caution before touching an accurate passport:** requesting *any* change — including a name change — can trigger reissuance with the birth-sex marker. Talk to a lawyer before modifying a passport that currently reflects you.

- The policy is being challenged in *Orr v. Trump*. A federal district court enjoined it on June 17, 2025; the Supreme Court stayed that injunction on **November 6, 2025**, letting the government enforce the policy while litigation continues. Both sides were briefing summary judgment as of spring 2026. This can change again, which is exactly why this zine points you to live trackers instead of pretending print can keep up.
- Social Security has also stopped processing sex-marker updates, which can create cross-checking friction on other applications.

If you hold an X passport, read this before booking international travel. Since **October 14, 2025**, Customs and Border Protection requires airlines to transmit only M or F in advance passenger data. An X returns an error, so carriers substitute a binary value on their own — Air France and KLM both default to M. Your passport is still legally valid for travel and re-entry, but your airline record will not match it. Call the carrier before you fly, ask what they'll transmit, and carry your booking confirmation along with the passport.

State IDs and driver's licenses

- **Roughly two dozen states plus DC** offer an X marker on driver's licenses, most by simple self-attestation. The count moves; MAP's driver's license map is the authoritative version and is dated on its face. As of late July 2026, MAP put 51% of trans adults in states allowing M, F, or X. **Illinois is one of them** — X markers are available on IL licenses and state IDs by self-designation, no medical documentation, via a Gender Designation Change form at a Secretary of State facility.
- **Illinois quirk worth knowing:** your Illinois driver's license and Illinois state ID come from the same office and **must carry the same marker**. You can't split them. They do *not* have to match documents from any other agency.
- **The X marker can complicate entry to some foreign countries**, which don't all recognize it. Check the destination before you rely on it abroad.

- Other states range from “doctor’s letter required” to “surgery required” to no changes permitted at all. That last group has grown fast — **at least eight states** as of mid-2026, up from five at the start of the year, and the list keeps moving. Don’t trust a printed list, including this one; check MAP.
- **Kansas** went furthest: SB244, enacted over the governor’s veto on February 18, 2026, requires the state to *rescind* driver’s licenses and birth certificates that had already been corrected.
- Because state law controls here, **your state ID is currently the most durable accurate document most people can get**. For domestic air travel, a state-issued REAL ID works — you don’t need your passport inside the US.

Workplace

- **The floor:** under *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020), firing or refusing to hire someone for being transgender or gender-nonconforming violates Title VII, nationwide, for employers with 15 or more employees. That ruling still stands and covers genderfluid people.
- **The contested zone:** bathrooms, dress codes, pronoun policies. On **February 26, 2026**, the EEOC ruled 2-1 in *Selina S. v. Driscoll* that Title VII permits federal agencies to exclude trans employees from facilities matching their gender identity, overturning its own 2015 *Lusardi* decision.
- **Read the scope carefully, because it’s narrower than the headlines.** That decision binds federal agencies only. It does not bind private employers, and it does not bind federal courts — *Bostock* expressly declined to decide the bathroom question, so it’s still open. What actually changed is enforcement: the EEOC is now unlikely to pursue these charges for you. A private Title VII suit remains legally viable; you’d just be carrying it yourself.

- **Which is why state law is the faster road.** About two dozen states, Illinois included via the Illinois Human Rights Act, prohibit gender-identity discrimination in employment regardless of federal posture. The Illinois Department of Human Rights is a more receptive venue than the EEOC right now.
- **Moves that require no legal anything:** HR can usually update display name and pronouns in internal systems without a legal name change. Email signature and chat display name are the fastest wins. If your workplace has an LGBTQ+ employee group, it holds institutional memory about what has actually worked there.
- **If something goes wrong:** you can still file an EEOC charge (180 days, or 300 in states with their own agency) even if federal enforcement is unenthusiastic — filing preserves your right to sue privately. File with the state agency too.

Healthcare

- Bring a printed card with name and pronouns if verbal correction every visit is draining.
- Ask new providers whether they have LGBTQ-affirming intake forms before the first visit; how the front desk answers tells you a lot.
- Expect insurance friction with legal-name mismatches; carrying certified name-change documents, if you have them, smooths employment verification, prescriptions, and billing disputes.
- GLMA's provider directory and local LGBTQ+ health centers — in Chicagoland, Howard Brown Health — are the fastest route to clinicians who won't need Gender 101 from you.

School

- Registrars can often carry a preferred name separate from legal name for rosters, ID cards, and email.

- Title IX's application to gender identity is currently narrowed at the federal level and actively litigated, but many states and individual districts maintain their own protections and name/pronoun policies. **School-level policy is often more decisive than federal policy right now** — read your district's, not the news.

SECTION 7 — WHEN SOMEONE IS HOLDING YOUR DOCUMENTS

Section 6 is about getting documents. This is about the thirty seconds after someone looks at two of them and then looks up at you.

It happens at pharmacy counters, hotel desks, notaries, I-9 verification, bank branches, urgent care intake, and traffic stops. Mismatched documents are legal and increasingly common. Knowing that calmly in advance is most of the work.

The default posture. Bored. Not defensive, not explanatory, not apologetic. The mismatch is an administrative fact about federal and state policy, not a fact about you, and your body language should say so. People take their cue from whether you seem to think something is wrong.

Lines that end it fastest:

“Federal and state markers don’t match right now. That’s normal — it’s the policy change.”

“The name on file is [legal name]. I go by [name].”

“Both of those are mine and both are current.”

Then stop talking. The most common mistake is filling the silence, which reads as nervousness and invites more questions.

Escalation, in order. If the person in front of you balks, ask for a supervisor before you argue — supervisors have seen it and front-line staff often haven’t. If it’s a business refusing service, note the time, location, and name, and leave; you can file later with the Illinois Department of Human Rights or your state’s equivalent. Litigating at the counter costs more than it recovers.

Traffic stops are a different category. Keep documents somewhere you can reach without reaching under a seat. Answer what’s asked. Don’t volunteer the explanation. Get the badge number and write down what happened afterward, not during.

And this is where the zine has to be honest about who's reading it. "Stay calm and leave" is advice with wildly different costs depending on who's giving the ID to whom. For Black, Brown, and Indigenous fluid people, a document question is already layered onto a much longer history of being asked to account for yourself, and the de-escalation window is narrower through no fault of the person in it. If that's you, the calculus above is a starting point and your own read of the room outranks it. Everything in Section 9 about leaving early applies here doubly.

SECTION 8 — COMING OUT, REPEATEDLY

Unlike a single coming-out moment, genderfluidity often means re-explaining or re-calibrating with the same people over time. Scripts:

First disclosure, brief:

“I wanted you to know my gender isn’t fixed — it shifts. I’ll keep you posted on pronouns and name as it does.”

For someone who’ll have follow-ups:

“It’s not a phase and it’s not indecision — the movement is just how it works for me. Happy to answer questions, or we can move on, whichever’s easier.”

For family who need time:

“You don’t have to fully get it today. I just need you to use [current pronoun/name] going forward.”

Re-disclosure to someone who knows the concept but not the current state:

“Update: [pronoun/name] for now.”

For a date or new partner:

“Something you should know about me: my gender moves. Some days that’ll be visible, some days it won’t. Ask me anything, but know the answer might be different next month.”

The repeated-explanation tax is real. Ways people reduce it: a short FAQ note they can text people, deputizing one trusted person per social circle to field basic questions, or a standing “assume they/them unless told otherwise” policy that eliminates most update events.

You don’t have to come out to everyone. Selective disclosure — different information to different people based on safety and

closeness — is a normal, sustainable strategy, not a failure of authenticity. In the current climate it is also, plainly, a safety practice. Out at home and not at work, out online and not to extended family: these are coherent positions.

SECTION 9 — PUBLIC SPACE & SAFETY

The current landscape, honestly

As of July 2026, **more than twenty states** restrict bathroom access by sex assigned at birth. Most of those laws cover government buildings and public schools, and scope varies widely; some states have none and affirmatively protect access. Illinois has no bathroom restriction law, and state law protects gender identity in public accommodations.

The scope is no longer only government buildings. Idaho’s HB 752, signed March 30, 2026 and effective July 1, 2026, is the first law to criminalize restroom use in *private businesses open to the public* — gas stations, restaurants, hospitals, libraries, malls, entertainment venues. First offense is a misdemeanor carrying up to a year; a second offense within five years is a felony carrying up to five. On **June 16, 2026**, a federal judge partially blocked it (*Jane Doe v. Labrador*, brought by the ACLU and Lambda Legal): while the case proceeds, trans people in Idaho may use single-user restrooms, and may use multi-user restrooms when no single-user restroom is available on the same floor. That injunction is provisional and the case is live.

Kansas cuts the other way on the same problem: SB244 **bans multi-occupancy gender-neutral restrooms in government buildings**, so the “just find the all-gender option” strategy doesn’t work there.

The practical upshot: **your risk profile changes when you cross state lines**, and the single most useful habit is checking the destination’s current law before you travel. MAP’s equality maps cover this.

Bathrooms

- Scout gender-neutral or single-occupancy options in advance for unfamiliar venues — Refuge Restrooms crowdsources these.

- Going with a friend reduces confrontation risk in less predictable spaces.
- Match to presentation when safety demands it. Using the facility that draws least attention on a given day is a survival calculus, not a betrayal of identity.
- If confronted: leave rather than litigate. A confrontation you exit is a story; one you escalate can become an incident report — and in a handful of states now, a criminal charge.

Locker rooms and changing spaces

- Off-peak timing reduces exposure.
- Some gyms provide private changing rooms on request, no explanation required. Chains vary by location — one manager’s policy isn’t the brand’s.

General public safety

- Trust your read of a space; leaving early is cheap.
- Share live location with a trusted contact for unfamiliar areas or events.
- A rehearsed short, boring answer for invasive strangers de-escalates faster than an explanation: *“Just a person, thanks.”*
- Keep your documents reachable and your story consistent when driving in restriction states. A mismatch between presentation and ID is legal; see Section 7.

Airports

- **TSA PreCheck is the single most useful mitigation here**, because it generally lets you skip the body scanner entirely. If you’re also getting Global Entry, apply with the name that’s on your passport.
- At the scanner, an officer makes a binary selection before you step in, and anatomy that doesn’t match that selection — including a binder or gaff — can set off an anomaly alarm and trigger a pat-down. This is routine and not an accusation, which doesn’t make it pleasant.
- **You can request private screening with a companion present.** Ask before it starts, not during.

- Since February 2025, transgender TSA officers are barred from performing pat-downs, so asking for an officer of a particular gender may not get you what you're picturing.
- Book tickets under the exact name and details on the photo ID you intend to present. If you hold an X passport, see the CBP note in Section 6.

SECTION 10 — WHEN PEOPLE DON'T GET IT

WHAT THEY SAY

WHAT YOU SAY

"So are you a boy or a girl?" "Neither is permanent for me — my gender moves around."

"Isn't this just being indecisive?" "Nothing is pending — the movement itself is the stable state."

"How do I know what to call you?" "Check in with me, or use my default [pronoun/name]."

"You seemed like a [gender] yesterday." "Yesterday's presentation doesn't lock in today's read."

"This is a lot to keep up with." "I know it takes effort, and I appreciate you trying."

Three that don't fit in a table:

"Isn't this new? People didn't used to be like this." Gender variance is documented across centuries and cultures — what's new is the English vocabulary and the visibility, not the people. For your own reading rather than the argument: hijra communities in South Asia, Two-Spirit identities in many Indigenous North American nations, and plenty of historical figures who moved between gendered lives.

"The science says there are two sexes." Sex and gender are different measurements, and even sex is bimodal rather than binary — intersex people exist at meaningful rates. But you don't have to win a biology seminar to deserve a correct pronoun, and it's fine to decline the debate.

When someone won't come around. Not everyone will, and forcing understanding isn't usually productive. How much access

someone gets to you is a separate question from whether they understand you. You can keep a relationship going at reduced disclosure — that's boundary-setting, not defeat.

SECTION 11 — MENTAL HEALTH & SELF-CARE

Dysphoria and euphoria tracking

Noting what *specifically* triggers discomfort or rightness — a garment, a pronoun, a mirror, a voice recording, a photograph — turns a vague bad day into an actionable pattern. Euphoria data is at least as useful as dysphoria data: it tells you what to build more of. Same storage rules as Section 3.

The fluid-specific challenges, named

- **Whiplash days** — waking up misaligned with choices yesterday-you made: clothes laid out, plans committed, a fresh haircut. Mitigation is logistical: flexible defaults, quick-change kits, and self-forgiveness as policy.
- **Legibility fatigue** — the tax of being asked to explain, again. See Section 8's delegation strategies; also, "I don't feel like explaining today" is an allowed sentence.
- **Imposter pressure from both directions** — feeling "not trans enough" for trans spaces and "too much" for cis ones. For the record: genderfluid people belong under the trans umbrella whenever they want to claim it, and don't have to.
- **Minority stress is cumulative** — research consistently shows that discrimination and anticipatory vigilance, not identity itself, drive elevated anxiety and depression rates in trans and nonbinary populations. If you're tired, the tiredness has a cause that isn't you.

Community

Isolation makes all of this heavier. Even loose-tie community — a Discord server, a monthly meetup, one friend who gets it — measurably buffers minority stress. If in-person feels far away, online counts.

The long timeline

Almost everything written for fluid people assumes a reader with a job, a school, or a dating app. Less gets written about the rest of it: fluidity with a caregiver in the room, in assisted living, in a body that's changing for reasons that have nothing to do with gender, on the other side of an illness that reorganizes what presentation you can manage at all.

There isn't a good literature on this yet. What people who are living it report: name your preferences in writing while you're the one writing them, including in advance directives and care plans; identify one family member or friend who will restate them when you're not in the room; and understand that a care setting's default is to read a body and act, so anything you want honored has to be on paper. If you're planning ahead, Lambda Legal has materials on LGBTQ elder care and advance planning.

When to reach out for support

- Persistent low mood, not just situational dysphoria
- Isolation that's increasing rather than dipping
- Thoughts of self-harm — this warrants immediate support, not wait-and-see

Crisis lines (checked July 30, 2026):

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — call or text 988, 24/7, available to everyone. The dedicated LGBTQ+ "Press 3" option was discontinued in July 2025. Congress appropriated \$33.1 million in the FY26 budget and directed HHS to restore it; as of June 2026, SAMHSA said it is working out how to do that while complying with EO 14168, and HHS has said the service should return by the end of 2026. Whether the Trevor Project, which handled roughly half the option's traffic, will be part of it is unresolved.
- **Trans Lifeline — 877-565-8860.** Peer support run by and for trans people; policy of not calling police without your consent. Check translifeline.org for current hours; coverage is not guaranteed 24/7.
- **The Trevor Project** (24 and under) — 866-488-7386, text START to 678-678, or chat at thetrevorproject.org, 24/7. Operating independently of the 988 situation above.

(This is heavy territory — if any of this section is live for you rather than research, those lines are the real resource, and finding a gender-competent therapist is the durable one.)

SECTION 12 — RESOURCES

Crisis — see Section 11.

Legal and current-status trackers (*the antidote to this zine going stale*)

- Movement Advancement Project (lgbtmap.org) — live state-by-state maps: IDs, bathrooms, employment
- Lambda Legal (lambdalegal.org) — passport and ID guidance updated as litigation moves; help desk; LGBTQ elder-care materials
- ACLU (aclu.org) — case trackers including *Orr v. Trump*; state affiliate referrals
- Advocates for Transgender Equality (transequality.org) — Know Your Rights documents
- National Center for Lesbian Rights and Transgender Law Center — legal helplines

Money and practical

- Point of Pride — free binder and gaff programs, financial aid for gender-affirming needs
- Illinois Legal Aid Online — name-change forms, fee-waiver applications, self-help guides
- PFLAG — family and ally support, local chapters

Health

- Howard Brown Health (Chicago) — LGBTQ health care, sliding scale
- GLMA provider directory — affirming clinicians nationwide

Reading

- *Gender: Your Guide* — Lee Airton
- *Life Isn't Binary* — Meg-John Barker & Alex Iantaffi
- *Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender and Identity* — ed. Rajunov & Duane

GLOSSARY + BACK MATTER

Genderfluid — a gender identity characterized by movement between genders rather than a fixed point.

Nonbinary — existing outside the male/female binary; overlaps with genderfluid but isn't identical.

Bigender / genderflux — related identities: holding two genders; fluctuating in gender *intensity* rather than position.

Dysphoria — distress from misalignment between gender identity and body, perception, or treatment.

Euphoria — the inverse: rightness when identity and presentation or treatment align.

Neopronouns — pronoun sets beyond he/she/they (xe/xem, ze/hir, fae/faer).

Passing — being perceived as the gender you're presenting, or as cisgender. Loaded, imperfect, in common use.

Binding — flattening chest tissue with a purpose-made compression garment.

Tucking — repositioning genitals for a flatter profile, typically with a gaff.

Gaff — compression underwear designed for tucking, with or without a full tuck.

Minority stress — the documented cumulative health impact of discrimination and the vigilance it requires.

REAL ID — the federal standard for state-issued IDs accepted for domestic air travel.

APIS — Advance Passenger Information System, the data airlines transmit to CBP before an international flight.

SOURCES

Everything factual in this zine can be traced to something you can read yourself. That's the point of printing this list: not to look rigorous, but so you can check whether a claim has gone stale before you act on it.

How to use it. Where a primary source exists — the statute, the court order, the agency's own page — that's what's listed, because that's what a lawyer, a clerk, or an HR department will accept. News coverage is listed only where it's the only public record of something. If a source below contradicts this zine, believe the source; it's newer.

The marks. ♦ is a primary or agency source — the statute, the court order, the agency's own page. That's the tier a clerk, a lawyer, or an HR department will accept. ◇ is a source that was that tier and has since been removed from the publisher's own site, and survives here only as an archived capture. It is the record of what was published. It is not something anyone at a counter will accept as current policy, and the removal is usually the news.

The four that supersede everything else. MAP for state-by-state status, Lambda Legal for identity documents, the ACLU for active litigation, and A4TE for know-your-rights documents. If you only bookmark four things, those.

Federal policy, underlying Sections 6, 7, and 9

♦ *Executive Order 14168, "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government"*. Federal Register. 2025-01-20. — <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02090/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal>

The order everything downstream refers back to. Short. Worth reading in the original rather than through coverage of it.

§1 — Foundations

Wilson BDM, Meyer IH. *Nonbinary LGBTQ Adults in the United States*. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. 2021-06. — <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/nonbinary-lgbtq-adults-us/>

Source of the 1.2 million figure. Read the methods: samples come from the Generations and TransPop studies, both LGBTQ-identified, ages 18-60. That makes it a floor, not a headcount.

§4 — Wardrobe, body, and care

Peitzmeier SM, Gardner IH, Weinand J, Corbet A, Acevedo K. *Health impact of chest binding among transgender adults: a community-engaged, cross-sectional study*. Culture, Health & Sexuality 19(1):64-75. 2017-01. — <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2016.1191675>

Every binding percentage in this zine comes from here. n=1,800, self-selected online sample. PubMed ID 27300085.

Peitzmeier SM et al. *Chest Binding and Care Seeking Among Transmasculine Adults*. Transgender Health. 2017. — <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6298447/>

Follow-on study. Useful on why people don't raise binding symptoms with providers even when they want to.

Binder and gaff safety guidance, and free garment programs. Point of Pride. — <https://www.pointofpride.org>

Provider directory. GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality. — <https://www.glma.org>

LGBTQ health care, sliding scale. Howard Brown Health. — <https://howardbrown.org>

§5 — What this costs

◆ *Name change forms, fee waiver application, self-help guides*. Illinois Legal Aid Online. — <https://www.illinoislegalaid.org>

Fee figures change. This is the live version; the zine's are not.

§6 — Documents and systems

◆ *Sex Markers in Passports*. US Department of State. — <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/passport-help/sex-marker.html>

The government's own current statement of the policy. Short.

Passport and Identity Document Information for the Transgender Community. Lambda Legal. 2026-03-16. — <https://lambdalegal.org/trans-id-guidance-faq/>

Updated as litigation moves. Check the date at the top of the page.

Know Your Rights: Passports. Advocates for Transgender Equality. — <https://transequality.org/documents/know-your-rights-passports>

Also the source for this zine's TSA PreCheck and Global Entry advice.

Q&A: Orr v. Trump. American Civil Liberties Union. — <https://www.aclu.org/trumps-assault-on-transgender-rights/qa-orr-v-trump>

◆ *Orr v. Trump — case page and docket.* American Civil Liberties Union.
— <https://www.aclu.org/cases/orr-v-trump>

Full docket, including the district court injunction of June 17, 2025 and the Supreme Court’s stay of November 6, 2025.

Travel and Passport Rights for Transgender People. Human Rights Campaign. 2026-04. — <https://www.hrc.org/resources/travel-passport-rights-for-transgender-people>

Gender EO: FAQs on Forms and Documents. Immigration Equality. 2026-01. — <https://immigrationequality.org>

The one to use if immigration status is also in play.

X Gender Marker Passport Advising Resource. NAFSA: Association of International Educators. 2025-11. — <https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/browse-by-interest/x-gender-marker-passport-advising-resource>

Source of the October 14, 2025 CBP APIS change and the carrier-default detail. Written for advisers, plain enough to use directly.

Equality Maps: Identity Document Laws and Policies. Movement Advancement Project. — <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/identity-document-laws-and-policies/>

Carries a “data as of” date on its face. Check that date before you check anything else.

LGBTQ Equality Maps Updates (monthly log). Movement Advancement Project. — <https://lgbtmap.medium.com>

Running log of what changed and when. Kansas SB244 (Feb 18, 2026), Indiana’s BMV rule (Feb 12, 2026), Oklahoma HJR1032 (Mar 3, 2026) and Mississippi SB2322 (Apr 8, 2026) are all recorded here.

◆ *Updating sex and gender markers on identification.* Illinois Legal Aid Online. — <https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/legal-information/can-i-change-gender-my-id-and-other-records>

Source of the Illinois license/state-ID matching rule and the note on X markers and foreign entry.

◆ *Gender Designation Change form and current fees.* Illinois Secretary of State. — <https://www.ilsos.gov>

◆ *Bostock v. Clayton County, 590 U.S. 644.* Supreme Court of the United States. 2020-06-15. — https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/17-1618_hfci.pdf

◆ *Selina S. v. Driscoll, EEOC Appeal No. 2025003976.* Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. 2026-02-26. — <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/appellate-decisions>

2-1, Commissioner Kotagal dissenting. The Commission had not posted the full text at /decisions/2025003976.txt as of 2026-08-03 and the Wayback Machine holds no capture of it, so this links the appellate decisions index — search it by appeal number. If you need the decision itself for a filing, request it from the Commission rather than citing the index.

◆ *Lusardi v. Department of the Army, EEOC Appeal No. 0120133395*. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. 2015-04-01. — <https://www.eeoc.gov/decisions/0120133395.txt>

The decision Selina S. overturned. Worth reading alongside it. This is the full text direct from the Commission: federal sector decisions are addressable by appeal number at /decisions/.txt, which is worth knowing, because the index will not get you to a specific case.

Title VII Protects Transgender Workers' Access to Restrooms. National Women's Law Center. 2026-03. — <https://nwlc.org/resource/title-vii-protects-transgender-workers-access-to-restrooms/>

The clearest published explanation of why the EEOC decision changes enforcement without changing the law.

◆ *Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5) — complaint filing*. Illinois Department of Human Rights. — <https://dhr.illinois.gov>

◆ *Kansas Senate Bill 244 (2026)*. Kansas Legislature. 2026-02-18. — <https://www.kslegislature.gov>

Enacted over veto. Bathroom restrictions, the multi-occupancy gender-neutral restroom ban, and the license-rescission provision.

§9 — Public space and safety

Equality Maps: Bans on Transgender People Using Public Bathrooms and Facilities. Movement Advancement Project. — <https://mapresearch.org/equality-map/bans-on-transgender-people-using-public-bathrooms-and-facilities-according-to-their-gender-identity/>

Dated on its face. Check before crossing a state line.

◆ *Idaho House Bill 752 (2026)*. Idaho Legislature. 2026-03-30. — <https://legislature.idaho.gov>

Signed March 30, 2026. Effective July 1, 2026.

◆ *Jane Doe et al. v. Labrador et al.*. US District Court for the District of Idaho. 2026-06-16.

Preliminary injunction and provisional class certification granted June 16, 2026.

Idaho Bathroom Law Resource Hub. ACLU of Idaho. — <https://www.aclu-idaho.org/idaho-bathroom-law-resource-hub/>

Maintained specifically to track what the injunction currently permits. If you are in or traveling to Idaho, this page, not this zine.

Judge Blocks Idaho Law Criminalizing Transgender People's Bathroom Access. Lambda Legal. 2026-06-16. — https://lambdalegal.org/newsroom/jackson-edney_id_20260616_judge-blocks-idaho-law-criminalizing-trans-bathroom-access/

Transgender Bathroom Laws by State. FindLaw. 2026-07. — <https://www.findlaw.com/lgbtq-law/transgender-people-and-bathroom-access-laws.html>

Plain-language state table including which laws are currently enjoined. Secondary; use MAP for the authoritative status.

◇ *Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Nonconforming Passengers.* Transportation Security Administration. 2025-01-22. — <https://web.archive.org/web/20250122032010/https://www.tsa.gov/travel/tsa-cares/gender-diversity/transgendernon-binarygender-nonconforming>

TSA's own description of scanner procedure, pat-downs, and PreCheck. The live page now returns 404. It was captured intact on 2025-01-22, was returning 403 by 2025-02-01, and has not come back — twelve days between the last good capture and EO 14168. Linked to the archive because what it describes is still what happens at the checkpoint, and because an agency deleting its own guidance is itself something a traveler should know. Do not expect an officer to accept a Wayback link as policy.

Crowdsourced all-gender restroom locations. Refugee Restrooms. — <https://www.refugerestrooms.org>

§11 — Mental health

◆ *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.* SAMHSA. — <https://988lifeline.org>
Trans Lifeline — 877-565-8860. Trans Lifeline. — <https://translifeline.org>

Check the site for current hours; coverage is not guaranteed 24/7.

The Trevor Project — 866-488-7386. The Trevor Project. — <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

◆ *Congressional letters to HHS on restoring 988 Press 3 services.* US House of Representatives. 2026-05-07. — <https://moulton.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/moulton.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/988-lgbtq-may-letter.pdf>

The February 11, 2026 letter records the \$33.1 million FY2026 appropriation and the congressional directive. SAMHSA's June 9, 2026 response, describing implementation “while ensuring compliance with Executive Order 14168,” was reported publicly rather than published.

LGBTQ elder care and advance planning materials. Lambda Legal. — <https://lambdalegal.org>

A note on what isn't cited

The eight-hour binding ceiling and the rest-day rule. These come from the convergent practice of the community health organizations listed above, not from a trial. They are the best available guidance and they are not research findings, and you should know which is which.

Cut from an earlier draft for lack of a source: a description of how airport body scanners select a gender setting. TSA's published material describes an officer making a binary selection, and TSA also announced a gender-neutral scanner algorithm in 2022 with nationwide deployment stated for 2023. Whether that deployment survived the 2025 policy changes is not something this zine could verify. Section 9 therefore describes what happens to travelers and not why.

COLOPHON

2026-07-30

Every legal, medical, and crisis-resource claim in this edition was checked against a live source on **July 30, 2026**. Sections 6, 7, and 9 will expire fastest — likely within months, possibly within weeks. Check lgbtmap.org before relying on any of it.

If that date is more than six months behind you, read this as history and not as guidance. Documents, public space, and mental health move fastest, and a printed page cannot follow them. Check MAP, Lambda Legal, or the ACLU before acting on anything in those sections. A dated zine is allowed to go out of date; that is what the date is for.

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Corrections, including anonymous ones: leif@leifrogers.com. Sources and build: github.com/leifrogers/how-to-genderfluid.

First edition — verified 2026-07-30.