



LANGUAGE GUIDANCE

VERSION
2.0

"ALL BIG CHANGES OF THE
WORLD COME FROM WORDS."

- Marjane Satrapi



A NOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Language is both a powerful tool of connection and a strong source of division. This guide contains small language shifts that have a big impact in building a culture of compassion rather than one rooted in stigma, shame, and stereotypes. Language is ever-evolving. That which is accepted today may become unfavorable tomorrow and that is okay because we also have the power to evolve.

“ DO THE BEST YOU CAN UNTIL YOU KNOW BETTER. “
THEN WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER,
DO BETTER.
- Maya Angelou

Recognizing the evolving nature of language, this guide is intended to be a living document.

If you have feedback for improvement, please email endthesyndemic.tn@tn.gov.

LEARN MORE ABOUT END THE SYNDEMIC TENNESSEE



SCAN ME

End the Syndemic Tennessee is an initiative to address the interconnected epidemics of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, substance use disorder, and viral hepatitis as well as the social drivers of health that fuel this syndemic.

To learn more and get involved scan the QR code or visit
www.EndTheSyndemicTN.org



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

of End the Syndemic Tennessee

HEALTH JUSTICE

Equality is the even division of resources without regard to individualized needs.

Equity is the division of resources that is responsive to differences in needs among various individuals and communities.

Justice is long-term equity that addresses short-term differences in need while also working towards long-term sustainable equal access to health and wellness resources.

“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change.”

Ijeoma Oluo

HEALTH AUTONOMY

Health autonomy is the principle that people have the right to make informed decisions about their own body, health, and wellbeing including the choice to engage or not engage in services. In order for a person to be empowered to make an informed decision about their health, they must first be provided accurate and comprehensive information on a particular health topic/diagnosis including information on various medical and behavioral options to address a concern, potential benefits and potentials risks/side effects .

“Health is not a state we owe the world. We are no less valuable, worthy or loveable because we are not healthy. Lastly, there is no standard of health that is achievable for all bodies.”

Sonya Renee Taylor

CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural humility differs from cultural competence in that it recognizes the ongoing work of creating an environment where all cultures are respected equally. Cultures, like language, change throughout time. Cultural humility is the commitment to sustained learning, self-reflecting, and growing. It is continually seeking to know better so you can do better. Cultural competence is a destination, and cultural humility is the lifelong pursuit.

“We are average people figuring out how to do thorny work, and our achievements stem from being committed to our values and purpose .”

Esteban Lance Kelly & Jenna Peters- Golden

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

of language that builds a culture of compassion while shattering stigma, shame, and stereotypes

PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

Person-first language means centering the person before a particular health condition or experience. This sets the tone that you see someone as a complex and complete person before any singular component of their life. When referencing an individual or group of people use the following:

Person with _____ *People with* _____

Person who _____ *People who* _____

Person who has experienced _____

People who have experienced _____



THE PLATINUM RULE

The Platinum Rule takes the Golden Rule one step further to say, "treat others as **they** wish to be treated." It is important to note language preferences vary among individuals, even those with a shared identity or experience. Always respect the language an individual uses to describe themselves. Some people may prefer "identify-first" language. For example, if a person prefers to be called a disabled person vs. a person with a disability, respect that decision and reflect that language with them. If you are unsure what language someone prefers it is always okay to ask.



VALUE-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Value-laden language is the use of words that are crafted by opinion rather than fact or evidence. This type of language often reveals our own biases, societal biases, and stir sentiments of judgement rather than connection. These words/phrases also often carry moral weight about **our** desired outcome rather than supporting health autonomy. In contrast value-neutral language is factually based and helps to build trust with clients ultimately empowering people with information to make behavior changes, if they desire to.



HOW THE GUIDE IS STRUCTURED

The language guide is divided into topical areas, which are indicated in the leftmost column. This is followed by three columns: “Try This,” “Instead of This,” and finally “Learn Why”.

TRY THIS: This column houses currently preferred terms to use

INSTEAD OF THIS: This column houses terms that are generally considered to perpetuate stigma

LEARN WHY: This column provides additional context and considerations

The “Additional Considerations” sections add a little more nuance to the topic area.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

How to put this guide to practice when creating resources/materials

IDENTIFY

Identify what audience you want to reach and what health message you want to communicate



REVIEW

Review the applicable sections of the language guide to make it fresh in your mind as you create your materials



LOCATE

Once you are done creating your materials, locate all the unpreferred terms manually or by using a “find-all” function



REPLACE

Replace all the unpreferred terms you find with preferred terms

Yay! You did it!





Language Guide Table

quick reference of easy language fixes with big impact

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

GENERAL GUIDANCE

transmit *or*
acquired

infect
became infected

The word "infection" carries stigma and often invokes blame. Acquisition and transmission are simple and accurate substitutions.

people living with _____
person living with _____

_____ infected people
_____ positive(s)
_____ carrier(s)
people infected with _____
_____ case(s)

Person-first language centers the person first rather than the health condition. This simple shift says, "I see you first, before your health condition".

people with _____
person with _____

For health conditions that have a cure, such as hepatitis C, it is also acceptable to say, "people/person with _____."

people without _____
person without _____

_____ uninfected people
_____ negatives
_____ unaffected

The word "infected" carries stigma. The meaning of the word "negative" is unclear. "Unaffected" is inaccurate as we are all directly or indirectly impacted by transmissible health conditions.

new _____ diagnoses
people newly diagnosed
with _____
person newly diagnosed
with _____

new _____ case(s)

"Cases" takes away the humanity of the people impacted by a particular health condition and implies their care/diagnosis is work.

HIV LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

TRY THIS	INSTEAD OF THIS	LEARN WHY
HIV	HIV/AIDS	The term HIV is inclusive of HIV and AIDS. AIDS should only be used when describing the specific medical condition as it often reminds people of the suffering and death of the AIDS crisis.
HIV HIV transmission HIV acquisition new HIV diagnoses prevents HIV prevents transmission of HIV prevents acquisition of HIV	HIV infection HIV virus HIV infections prevents HIV infection	When referring to the virus itself, one can say "HIV" as adding "virus" is redundant. "Infection" carries stigma and characterizes people living with HIV as a threat and should always be avoided in all forms of the term. Transmission and acquisition are non-stigmatizing ways to communicate HIV is communicable without invoking sentiments of blame and fear.
person/people living with HIV (PLWH)	HIV infected person HIV/AIDS patient Positives	Using person-first language emphasizes the humanity of a person over their HIV status. "
Stage 3 HIV <i>or</i> AIDS	full-blown AIDS	"Full-blown AIDS" is not a medical diagnosis. Use Stage 3 HIV or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).
died from complications related to HIV died of an AIDS-related illness	died of AIDS died of HIV	The preferred phrases clarify HIV is not uniformly fatal and opportunistic infections are the acute cause of death.
HIV response zero new HIV transmissions	HIV elimination HIV eradication	HIV response efforts must include long-term survivors of HIV and acknowledge that HIV will not be eliminated until there is a cure.

HIV LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

engaged in HIV treatment
or
in HIV treatment

not currently in HIV
treatment **or**
currently out-of-care

controlled HIV
compliant HIV patient

uncontrolled HIV
noncompliant HIV
patient

Phrases such as “controlled” and “compliant” are paternalistic and do not align with the guiding principle of health autonomy. When referring to clients that are not currently in HIV care its important to include the word “currently” to emphasize that people can and often do return to HIV care with support.

prevents HIV
prevents transmission of HIV
prevents acquisition of HIV

prevents HIV infection

The HIV community has been clear for decades about the harm of the word “infection” and this term should be avoided.

People who are
undetectable **do not**
transmit HIV.

There is **no chance** that a
person with an
undetectable viral load will
pass HIV to a partner

U=U prevents HIV

People who are
undetectable are extremely
unlikely to transmit HIV

There is less chance that a
person with an
undetectable viral load will
pass HIV to a partner.

U=U helps to prevents HIV

Undetectable equals untransmittable or U=U means people living with HIV who are engaged in treatment and reach and sustain viral suppression can not pass HIV to their sexual partners. Research shows that U=U is 100% effective in preventing the sexual transmission of HIV. While more research is needed to quantify how effective U=U is for preventing HIV transmission associated with injection drug use the emerging evidence shows U=U is also effective in reducing the likelihood of passing HIV through injection use. Using clear language about U=U reduces HIV stigma and encourages people living with HIV to get in and stay in HIV treatment.

mixed status couple
mixed HIV status
serodifferent

serodiscordant

"serodiscordant" is not easily understood and implies a couple is not well suited for each other. "Mixed HIV status" is more neutral.

SEXUAL HEALTH LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

condomless sex *or*
sex without the use of
prevention tools or
protective barriers

unprotected sex
unsafe sex
risky sex

The preferred phrases are specific and are value-neutral. Condoms are one of many effective prevention tools to reduce the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. PrEP, U=U, behavioral changes, and use of condoms/barriers are all ways a client may be practicing safer sex.

sex with the use of
condoms, barriers, or
prevention tools

protected sex
safe sex

has multiple sex partners *or*
non-monogamous *or*
person with partner(s) of an
unknown HIV/STI status

promiscuous
person with anonymous
partners

"Promiscuous" is value-laden term and should be avoided. Terms such as "has multiple sex partners," "is non-monogamous," or "has partner(s) of unknown HIV/STI status" is more specific to sexual health and are value-neutral.

internal condom

female condom

Internal condoms can be used vaginally and anally by people of all genders.

condom
external condom

male condom

External condoms can be used on toys or on genitals by people of all genders.

sexually transmitted
infection (STI)

sexually transmitted
disease (STD)

Not all sexually transmitted infections develop into disease. Although the word "infection" is not preferred when talking about HIV, it is acceptable and preferred when speaking about other sexually transmitted infections.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

When talking about sex and sexuality, do so from a sex-positive lens. This means using language that conveys a positive attitude towards all forms of consensual sex, and respects people's diverse practices. Avoid assuming someone's practices based on their gender, sexual orientation, or relationship status. Avoid using words or a tone of voice that convey a value judgement. Instead, use accurate and affirming language when talking about sexual practices and prevention methods to support a client's sexual health needs.

SUBSTANCE USE LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

substance use disorder (SUD)
 drug misuse
 drug addiction

 *with caution see
 "learn why"*

opioid use disorder (OUD)

alcohol use disorder (AUD)

drug habit
 habit
 drug abuse

opioid abuse

alcoholism
 alcohol abuse

Substance use disorder/ opioid use disorder/ alcohol use disorder are specific diagnosable health conditions and should be used when clinically appropriate. "Addiction" is not diagnostic term, but is often used to describe hazardous drug use. While the term "addiction" is not necessarily a stigmatizing term, it often perpetuates the use of "addict," which is stigmatizing toward people who use drugs. "Misuse" is a term that can be useful when describing the use of prescription drugs outside the parameters of the prescription or chaotic/problematic drug use. "Abuse" has been shown to increase negative judgements and punitive action and should be avoided.

person who uses drugs
 person who injects drugs
 person with a substance use disorder

person with alcohol use disorder

addict/drug addict
 drug user/drug abuser
 injection drug user (IDU)
 intravenous drug user
 junkie

alcoholic
 drunk

Person-first language emphasizes humanity by centering the whole person before their substance use. ***Important note:*** not all people who use drugs have a substance use disorder and therefore the preferred terms are not synonymous with each other and one should select the most applicable term for the situation/audience.

new syringe(s)
 unused syringe(s)
 sterile syringe(s)

used syringe(s)

clean syringe(s)

dirty syringe(s)
 contaminated syringe(s)

"Clean" and "dirty" are not specific and value-laden terms. They should be replaced with value-neutral terms such as "new/unused/sterile" and "used." Some communities may prefer "needle(s)" over "syringe(s)." In this case, mirror the term that a given community uses and understands.

SUBSTANCE USE LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

currently using drugs

dirty
using

Labeling persons who use drugs as "clean" or "dirty" issues a value judgement. Drug use can be hazardous and have serious health and social consequences. However, drug use does not make a person dirty. "Clean" and "dirty" are also nonspecific terms as they are applied to a range of behaviors and situations that often carry great social stigma such as drug use, drug paraphernalia, sexual health, and poverty. It is best to be specific and use value-neutral terms to describe the particular behavior/situation at hand.

not currently using drugs
not actively using drugs
abstinent from drug use
in remission/recovery

clean

person in recovery
person in long-term recovery
person with a history of drug use **or** previously used drugs

former addict/alcoholic
recovered addict/alcoholic
reformed addict/alcoholic

treatment/treatment center

rehab

withdrawal management **or**
medically assisted detox

detox

"Rehab" and "detox/detox center" carry cultural misconceptions and perpetuates drug use stigma. Emphasizing treatment in language and the role that medication can play in recovery that allows people to know that there are options to address drug use.

recurrence of use

relapse
relapsed
using again

experienced a recurrence of
use

resumed use of _____

The term "relapse" carries cultural weight and stigma that makes recovery seems unobtainable if someone experiences a recurrence of use. The reality is that drug use and recovery are often nonlinear processes. Research shows that viewing yourself as powerless once a recurrence happens leads to a more severe and prolonged return to use. Removing "relapse" from our vocabulary can take away some of the shame people feel when they experience a slip or recurrence of use, which is quite common in the journey to recovery. Recurrence is just a new opportunity for a positive change.

TRY THIS**INSTEAD OF THIS****LEARN WHY****SUBSTANCE USE LANGUAGE**

medically assisted treatment (MAT)  *with caution see "learn why"*

More specific alternatives:

Medication for a substance use disorder

medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) **or** opioid agonist therapy

Medication for alcohol use disorder

drug substitution
drug replacement

opioid replacement
methadone maintenance

"MAT" is an umbrella term for medications used to treat substance use disorders. There is some contention around the word "assisted" as this term is not used for the treatment of other disorders such as depression. Proponents of "assisted" want to emphasize that medications are often delivered in combination with other resources such as psychotherapy. This is also true for depression and other mental health diagnoses. While taking a holistic approach is best, it is important to understand that these medications are effective on their own and are not drug "replacement/substitution".

substance detected

dirty
positive

substance not detected

clean
negative

When referencing toxicology screening it is most neutral to say whether a substance was "detected" or "not detected". "Positive/dirty" and "negative/clean" carry a moral weight about the desired outcome and are value laden terms. Where possible and appropriate "substance" can be replaced with the name of the detected substance or substance(s).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to keep in mind that not all people that use drugs have a substance use disorder. People can misuse or problematically use a substance without meeting the criteria for a substance use disorder. Likewise, "addiction" and "dependence" are not synonymous. Addiction, while not a diagnostic term, is defined as a pattern of compulsive substance use marked by behavior change caused by biochemical changes in the brain. Dependence is characterized by the physical potential for withdrawal symptoms. If these terms are used, they should be applied appropriately. People may refer to their own living/lived experience using the term "addict." It is fine for folks with living/lived experience to use the language that feels best in characterizing their own experience; however, when referring to other people or more generally to the topic, it is best to avoid the term "addict" and use person-first language to describe drug/alcohol use.

PREGNANCY AND PERINATAL LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

people of childbearing potential

people with reproductive potential

pregnant persons

women of childbearing potential

men with reproductive potential

pregnant women

People of all genders may have childbearing potential and experience pregnancy, and people of all genders may have reproductive potential. Using gender neutral language allows the focus to be on the condition/situation rather than gender.

perinatal transmission
postnatal transmission
congenital _____

vertical transmission

infant with _____

mother-to-child transmission

maternal-child transmission

_____ infected infant

Because people of all genders can become pregnant, it is preferred to avoid gendered language such as “mother-to-child.” Additionally this phrasing places unnecessary blame on the birthing person. Perinatal transmission refers to transmission that occurs during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and/or breastfeeding. “Postnatal transmission” is more specific to transmission that occurs via breastfeeding, and “congenital transmissions” is specific towards transmission that occurs during pregnancy.

newborn exposed to _____

born in withdrawal
born dependent on _____

more specific alternatives:
infant with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)

Infant with neonatal opioid withdrawal (NOW)

_____ -exposed infant

born addicted
drug addicted newborn
addicted infant/newborn

Infants are not capable of compulsive substance use that defines addiction and therefore the word “addicted” should always be avoided and replaced with language such as “exposed.” Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) is caused by prenatal exposure to a variety of substances whereas neonatal opioid withdrawal is specific to exposure to opiates during pregnancy. Use whatever term is most applicable.

**PUBLIC HEALTH
AND HEALTH
CARE RELATED
LANGUAGE**

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

client
program participant

patient

"Client" is considered more empowering than "patient" and more broadly applicable to the provision of non-medical services.

priority population

target population

Communities should not be targeted. Instead, they should be prioritized.

hardly reached
unsuccessfully engaged
medically underserved

hard-to-reach
difficult to engage

The preferred language shifts the onus on the health care system for failing to meet needs rather than individuals

disproportionately affected
or impacted by _____

groups that have been
placed at higher risk of

marginalized groups
vulnerable groups
high-risk groups
high-burden groups

People/communities do not have inherent risk, but rather are disproportionately impacted by health conditions due to structural and social barriers. Using language that highlights the role systems play in inequitable health outcomes reduces stigma among impacted communities

person behaviorally
vulnerable to _____

person who engages
in _____

at-risk person
high-risk person
person with risky behaviors

People do not have inherent risk. And not all people that engage in the same behaviors experience the same chance of acquiring a health condition due to inequitable disease distribution and resource allocation.

likelihood
chance

risk

The preferred terms are less stigmatizing and easier to understand.

adherent

not adherent

compliant

non-compliant

"Compliant" has a more paternalistic undertone and implies a client has a more passive role while "adherent" acknowledges a person's active engagement in care.

**PRIORITY
POPULATION
LANGUAGE**

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

sex worker
sex work
sex for trade
transactional sex

prostitute
prostitution
commercial sex work

"Prostitute" and "prostitution" carry cultural stigma and do not reflect a sense of ownership and agency that many sex workers resonate with.

sex trafficking
human trafficking
sex trafficking of minors

sexual slavery
forced prostitution
child prostitution

Language related to forced/coerced transactional sex should emphasize the role of the exploiters, not the person exploited.

survivor of sexual assault
or
person who has
experienced sexual assault

rape victim

"Survivor" is a more empowering than "victim" and is generally favored. However, preferences vary among those with this experience, so refer to the Platinum Rule.

intimate partner violence

domestic violence

Violence between intimate partners can occur inside or outside a home. So, emphasizing the relation rather the the place is preferred.

person who has experienced
violence/abuse **or**
survivor of violence/abuse

abuse victim

"Survivor" is more empowering than "victim" and generally preferred, but always reflect back the language a person uses to describe their experience.

person who is incarcerated
person in jail/prison

formerly incarcerated
person

felon
criminal
offender
convict
inmate
prisoner
ex-convict

Center the individual rather than a specific instance in their life. "Person or individual with carceral system involvement" may also be used. The phrase "criminal justice" is debated by many as the system is not just for all. "System impacted" can be use to indicate the ripple effect mass incarceration has on entire families/communities.

**PRIORITY
POPULATION
LANGUAGE**

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

person living with _____
person diagnosed with _____

mentally ill person
crazy person
insane person

Person-first language centers the individual rather than their mental health diagnoses/need and dispels the belief that mental health diagnoses are untreatable.

people who are undocumented
undocumented immigrants

illegals
illegal immigrant
alien

"Illegal" and "alien" are stigmatizing and nonspecific terms that should always be avoided. Instead use "undocumented."

people experiencing homelessness *or*
person who is unhoused
person who unstably housed

homeless people
the homeless
bums
street people

Using person-first language emphasizes the whole person before their current housing situation. "Person experiencing housing insecurity" is also appropriate.

people with lower incomes
people/households with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL)

the poor
poor people
poverty-stricken

Using person-first language centers the person before their economic situation. Where possible, it might be useful to define the percentage above/below the FPL.

older adults
people over age _____

the elderly
the aged
seniors/senior citizens

The term "adults" affirms the agency of the aging person. It is always best to use a specific age/age range whenever possible.

people who live in rural areas/communities
rural communities

rural people
frontier people

Person-first language centers on the individual rather than the area where they reside.

person of color
people of color

non-white
minorities
racial minorities

Avoid using person/people of color when referencing a specific racial/ethnic group. Instead use the appropriate term for that group. Person(s) of color are not a minority.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY LANGUAGE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

sex assigned at birth
assigned male at birth
assigned female at birth

birth sex
biological sex
natal/natural sex
sex at birth

Terms as "birth sex," "natal sex," and "biological sex" should be avoided as it perpetuates the idea of sex is a natural category rather than a socially constructed category.

transgender man
trans man

female-to-male (FTM)
used to be a woman
born a woman

transgender woman
trans women

male-to-female (MTF)
used to be a man
born a man

nonbinary person

Using words like "used to be _____" or "born a _____" does not affirm the person's gender identity. "FTM" and "MTF" are outdated terms, imply a person was formerly another gender, and imply all trans people want or have access to medical interventions.

transgender
trans

transgendered
transsexual

transgender people

transgenders
transsexuals

transgender person

a transgender

Transgender is an adjective to describe a person whose current gender does not align with the gender assigned to them at birth. It is not a verb, so adding "-ed" is improper grammar and stigmatizing. Likewise, adding "a" before or "-s" after the word transgender suggests it is a noun and is incorrect grammar and stigmatizing.

gender affirmation
gender confirmation
transition
transitioning

transgendering
sex reassignment surgery
sex change
pre-operative
post-operative

Not all transgender people want or have access to medical interventions to affirm their gender. People's gender affirmation process can include social components in addition to medical intervention.

gender-affirming
hormone therapy (GAHT)

hormone replacement
therapy (HRT)

While "hormone replacement therapy" or "HRT" is the more common term, "gender affirming hormone therapy" or "GAHT" is more inclusive of the experience of non-binary people.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY TERMS

All the definitions come from the Fenway Institute's, "[LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Health Care Teams](#)"

TERM	DEFINITION	CONSIDERATIONS
sex assigned at birth	The sex (male or female) assigned to an infant, most often based on the infant's anatomical and other biological characteristics.	Terms such as "birth sex," "natal sex," and "biological sex" should be avoided as they perpetuates the idea that sex is a natural category rather than a constructed category.
cisgender	A person whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth.	The gender binary is the idea that there are only two genders (girl/woman and boy/man). This fallacy has led to the untrue assumption that all people assigned male at birth are men, and all people assigned female at birth are women. In reality, there are an infinite number of genders. Gender is self-determined, and is not tied to anatomy or expression. It is important to remember that "cisgender" and "transgender" are adjectives not nouns.
transgender	A person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations.	
sexual orientation sexuality	How a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction to others.	Avoid saying "sexual preference" or "lifestyle" as that gives the impression that sexuality is a choice rather than a natural expression.
gender pronouns	Words people should use when they are referring to you without using your name. <i>e.g. she/her/hers he/him/his they/them/theirs</i>	Avoid saying "preferred pronouns." All people have pronouns and "preferred" gives the impression using the correct pronouns optional. It is not. The best way to know someone's pronouns is to offer your own when introducing yourself and then ask for theirs. This should be done with all people, not just people you think may be transgender. Avoid assuming someone's pronouns based on their gender expression. If you make a mistake with pronouns, quickly apologize, correct yourself, and move forward.

RACE AND ETHNICITY TERMS

All the definitions reflect what is used by the Census Bureau in accordance with the [Office of Management and Budget standards](#).

GROUP	DEFINITION	CONSIDERATIONS
White Non-Hispanic White	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North America.	"Non-Hispanic White" is used to clarify that this group of people does not include white Hispanic people. Avoid framing "white" as a default or raceless identity.
Black Non-Hispanic Black African American	A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.	"Black" should always be capitalized when referring to group or individual and should never be made plural. "African American" excludes folks of the African diaspora that don't reside in or identify as American.
American Indian Alaskan Native	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America and maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.	The best approach is to always use the specific tribal identity when possible. Some folks may also use the term "Native American" or "indigenous" to describe their personal identity. When referring to a diverse group of indigenous people use "American Indian" or "Alaskan Native".
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.	Some folks may identify as aboriginal Hawaiian to draw the distinction that they are descendants of the Polynesian people that were the first to migrate to and live in Hawaii.
Asian	Having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.	Where appropriate, some folks may use East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian to further differentiate region of origin.
Latino/Latina Latinx/Latine Hispanic	A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.	Hispanic refers to individuals whose origins are from Spanish speaking nations. Latino, Latina, and Latinx/Latine refers more specifically persons with origins from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South and Central America.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This language guide was developed through many conversations and in consultation with existing resources, mainly the *NIAD HIV Language Guide*. That guide, as well as many other useful resources, are linked below for further education.

- The [NIAD HIV Language Guide](#)
- The Fenway Institute's [LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Health Care Teams](#)
- GLAAD's [An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking About LGBT People and Equality](#)
- Underground Scholars' [Language Guide for Communicating About Those Involved In The Carceral System](#)
- The Well Project [HIV #LanguageMatters: Addressing Stigma by Using Preferred Language](#)
- The National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment's [The Words We Use Matter- Reducing Stigma Through Language](#)
- Shatterproof [Addiction Language Guide](#)
- Academy of Perinatal Harm Reduction [Pregnancy and Substance Use: A Harm Reduction Toolkit](#)
- Choice Health Network [GAHT/HRT FAQ Zine](#)

