



END THE SYNDEMIC TENNESSEE

Language Matters: Shifting Words & Shrinking Stigma

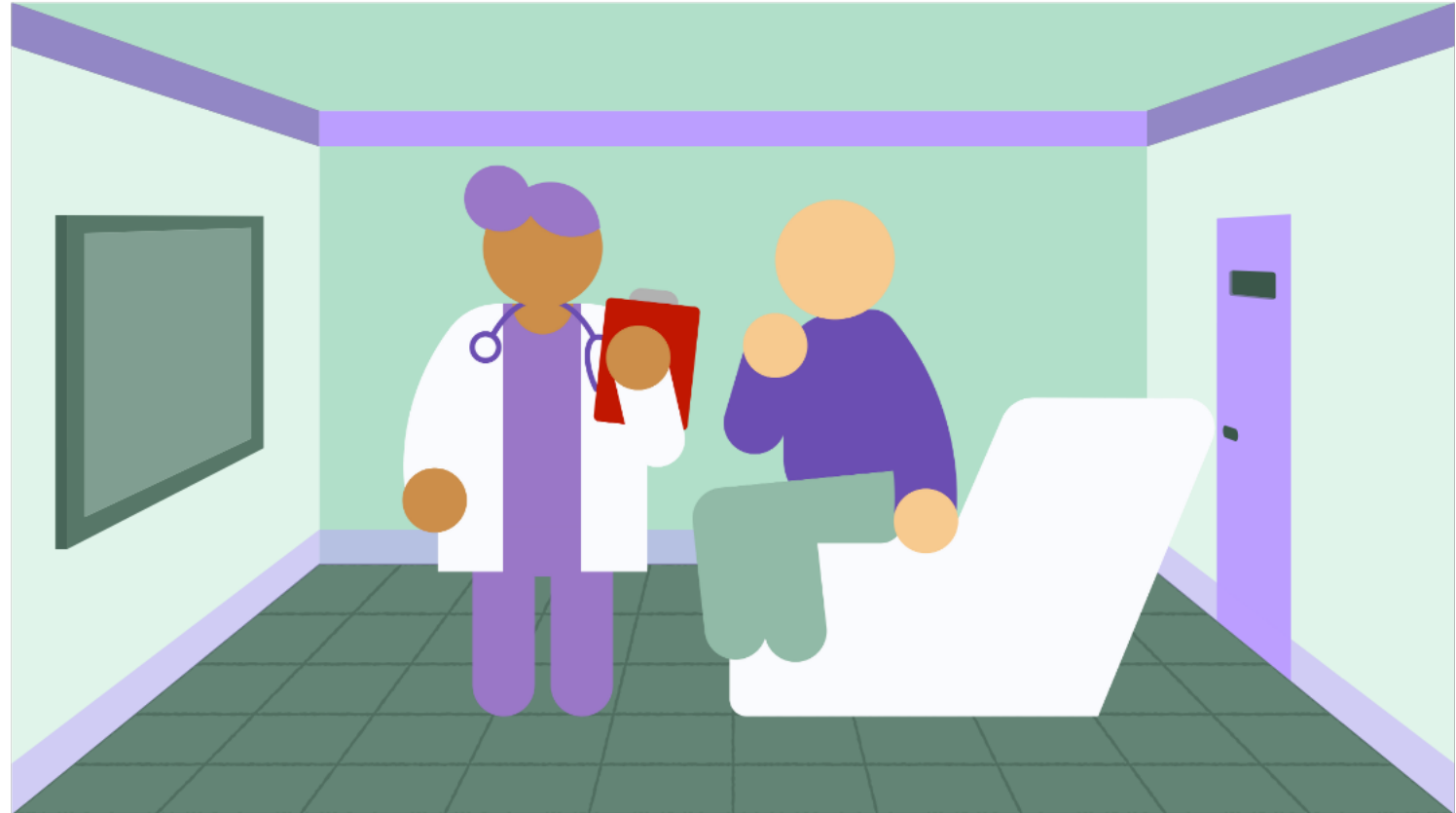
TN Health Disparities Advisory Group
Tennessee Department of Health
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www.menti.com Code: 3323 2295

Think of a recent interaction you've had with a healthcare provider...

What were some words or phrases you heard that felt uncomfortable?



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Imagine you're a person living with HIV and looking for a new health care provider...

Which words/phrases would make you feel more or less comfortable with this new provider



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Imagine you just celebrated your 3rd year of not using drugs after many previous years struggling with substance use...

Which words/phrases would feel most accurate to your journey?

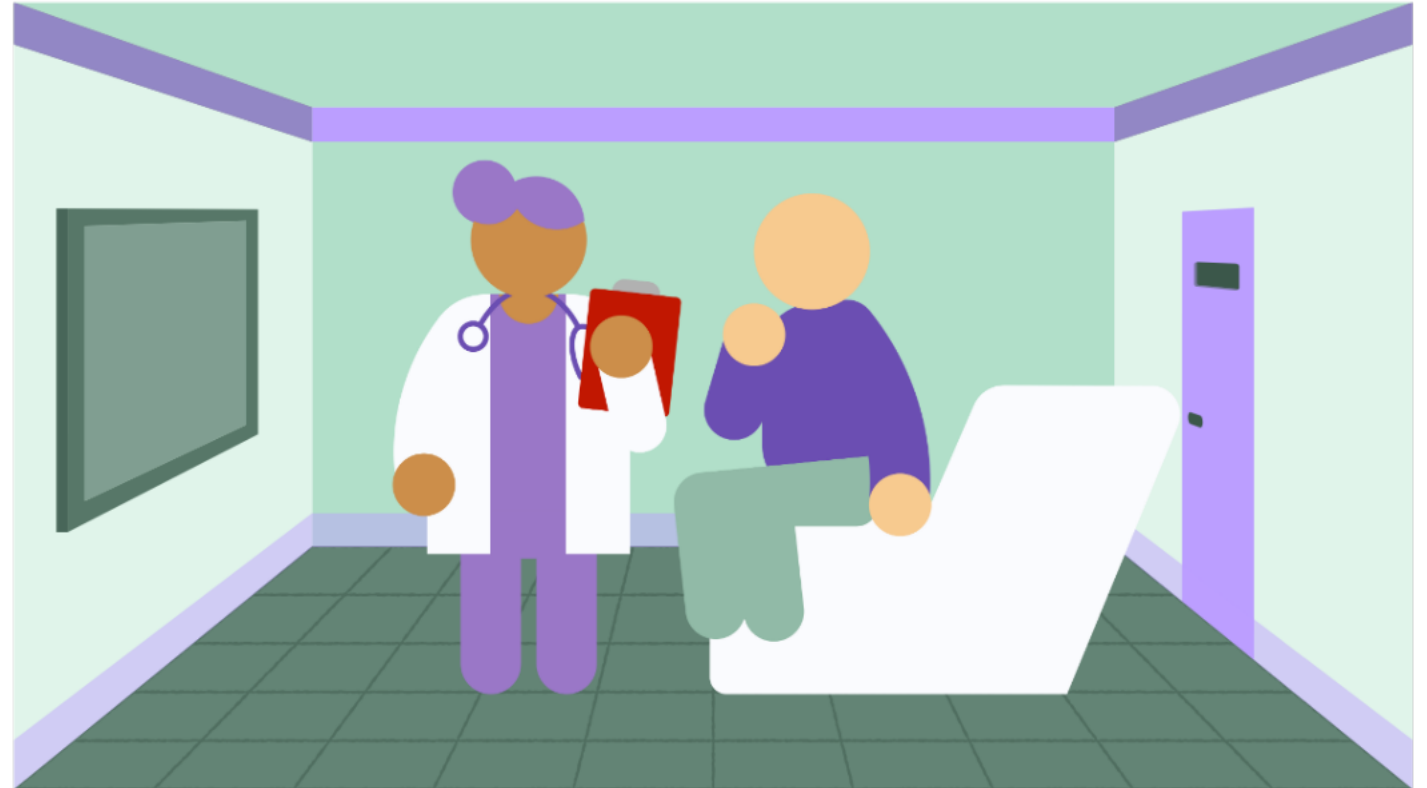


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Think of a recent
interaction you had
with a healthcare
provider...

**rewrite
history**

What phrases you
heard that felt
uncomfortable?



Words Matter



**Language can be a powerful
tool of connection**

or

a source of division



we have the power to decide



Words Matter

**Language is ever-evolving.
what is accepted today
might be unfavorable
tomorrow. And that is okay.**



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





LANGUAGE GUIDANCE

VERSION
2.0

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

- Marjane Satrapi



Download the Language Guide

The Language Guide will continue to be updated and expanded. Please check the

"Find Resources"

page on our website for the most recent copy

www.endthesyndemictn.org

SCAN ME



ETS Guiding Principles

**HEALTH
JUSTICE**



**HEALTH
AUTONOMY**



**CULTURAL
HUMILITY**



ETS Guiding Principles

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



ETS Guiding Principles

HEALTH AUTONOMY



People have the right to make decisions about their own body, health, and wellbeing

Requires that people receive accurate and comprehensive information

- Various medical and behavioral options
- Potential benefits
- Potential risk/side effects



ETS Guiding Principles

CULTURAL HUMILITY



Cultural Competence: the ultimate, unwavering ability of individuals and systems to respond to people of all cultures with respect, in a manner that affirms the worth and preserves the dignity of individuals, families and communities.

Cultural Humility: the dynamic, ongoing commitment to self-reflection and cultivation of beneficial, non-paternalistic relationships



Guiding Principles of Language Justice

**PERSON-FIRST
LANGUAGE**



**THE PLATINUM
RULE**



**VALUE-NEUTRAL
LANGUAGE**



Person-first language



person with _____
person who _____

Person-first language means centering the person before a particular health condition or living/lived experience.

This sets the tone that you see someone as a complex and complete person before any singular component of their life.



The Platinum Rule



**Treat others as
they wish to be
treated**

It is important to note **language preferences vary** among individuals. Always **respect** the language an individual uses to describe their identity or experience.



Value-Neutral Language



language free of moral weight about the desired outcome and is factually based

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 and stir sentiments of judgement rather than connection.

Value-neutral language is language that is specific and factually based. Value-neutral language builds trust and empowers individuals.





GENERAL GUIDANCE

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

LEARN WHY

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.

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new _____ diagnoses
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Language Guide Topic Areas

- General guidance for all health conditions
- HIV language
- Sexual health language
- Substance use language
- Pregnancy and perinatal language
- Public health and health care related language
- Priority population language
- Gender and sexuality language





GENERAL GUIDANCE

TRY THIS	INSTEAD OF THIS	LEARN WHY
transmit <i>or</i> 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". For health conditions that have a cure, such as hepatitis C, it is also acceptable to say, "people/person with _____."
people with _____ 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.



GENERAL GUIDANCE

TRY THIS

transmit *or*
acquired

people living with _____
person living with _____

people with _____
person with _____

people without _____
person without _____

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

INSTEAD OF THIS

infect
became infected

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

_____ uninfected people
_____ negatives
_____ unaffected

new _____ case(s)

LEARN WHY

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

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

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

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.

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



GENERAL GUIDANCE

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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.



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.

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.



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 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 as "birth sex", "natal sex", and "biological sex" should be avoided as it perpetuates the idea sex is a natural category rather than a constructed category.
gender	The characteristics and roles of women and men according to social norms. While sex is described as female, male, and intersex, gender can be described as feminine, masculine, androgynous, and much more.	Gender is often thought of and taught as binary with men and women constructed as opposites. However, gender is a full spectrum between characteristics associated with femininity and those associated with masculinity. People of any sex can identify and express their gender anywhere on the spectrum. This identity and expression may or may not be stationary/consistent.
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.
pronouns	Words people should use when they are referring to you but not using your name. e.g. <i>she/her/hers</i> <i>he/him/his</i> <i>they/them/theirs</i>	Avoid saying "preferred pronouns". All people have pronouns. "Preferred" gives the impression using the correct pronouns of person is a choice rather than a requirement. The best way know someone's pronouns is to offer your own when introducing yourself and ask for the theirs. Avoid assuming someone's pronouns based on their gender expression.

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](#)



Future Direction of the Language Guide

- Add a page specific to ability language
- Add a page specific to language about mental health and suicide
- Expand LGBTQIA+ terminology section
- Expand the Race and Ethnicity section

*If you have ideas for useful additions, please email
endthesyndemic.tn@tn.gov*



Acknowledgements



thank
you

**Thank you to the 400+ End The Syndemic
Tennessee Planning members that inspired
this guide and contributed to the content.**

**And to the many numerous guides referenced
in this guide for informing this work and the
language justice movement as whole**

