Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Style Guide

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HPNA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Style Guide

Contents

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Introduction

Advancing Expert Care *through* Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) strives to create and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment for all staff and members. The ways in which we communicate with and speak to each other, and beyond, sets the standard for the inclusiveness we aspire to. We are committed to our vision: to ensure every person living with serious illness receives equitable, comprehensive, and innovative hospice and palliative nursing care.

Staff and members of HPNA from across the country have created this Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Style Guide, modeled after the University of Iowa Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Style Guide.

This style guide is a fluid document intended to provide HPNA staff and leadership with guidance to enhance understanding of preferred language to promote inclusion and belonging in HPNA. It attempts to answer common questions and provide thoughtful guidance on topics that may arise when creating or editing content for HPNA. This style guide will also serve as a guiding document to members of the HPNA DEIB Task Force when developing strategic plans to address the charter put forth by the HPNA Board of Directors. This style guide does not directly apply to clinical practice or to hospice and palliative care research. The HPNA DEIB Task Force plans to address the need for a DEIB style guide or similar document for clinical practice and research in the future.

In 2020, HPNA conducted a voluntary survey of members that assessed gender, race, ethnicity, and age. HPNA compared their data to 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey data. Data from these surveys are referenced throughout this document.

This guide was created with the understanding that many of the topics and sections will evolve, as will the guide itself.

> [L]anguage is a structure that reflects the characteristics of those who use it; therefore, it is a living organism, subject to social, political, geographical, and generational contexts…. One of the stigmas related to the proposal for inclusivity is the impression of degraded language…. '[S]ome types of language commonly used in the past may now be considered offensive or exclusionary and may perpetuate stereotypes.' Neutral language proposes to avoid 'systematically using linguistic conventions that associate specific roles or professions with one gender in particular. – Institute for the Future of Education

Photographs and video used in our communications and print and electronic media should reflect our organization's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, social mobility, and leadership.

Those using this guide are encouraged to ask questions, offer suggestions, and notify HPNA of unintentional omissions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your direct supervisor with questions, concerns, and/or suggestions.

The DEIB Style Guide offers guidance on:

- Women, men, and individuals with a nonbinary gender identity or who don't identify as a specific gender
- People of various religions, races and ethnicities, including Black, African American, Hispanic and Latinx/o/a, Asian and Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, Hawaiian Native, Native, and Indigenous
- Immigration and immigration status
- People with disabilities
- Individuals who are LGBTQIA2S+ and transgender
- People who are low-income and unhoused
- Age
- People with substance use disorders
- Health insurance status

Please note that HPNA recognizes these categories are limiting and that we may be unintentionally omitting an individual or group. As we continue to learn and grow as an organization, this guide will also evolve. HPNA is committed to providing an environment that reflects appropriate representation of the multicultural society in which we live, learn, and work. HPNA welcomes feedback on this style guide.

Position Statement from the American Nurses Association

"The American Nurses Association (ANA) recognizes progress in most national efforts to eliminate discrimination associated with race, gender, and socioeconomic status through improving access to and attainment of health care, and quality of health care. However, concerted efforts must continue for discrimination to be eliminated in all of its forms. ANA recognizes impartiality begins at the level of the individual nurse and should occur within every health care organization. All nurses must recognize the potential impact of unconscious bias and practices contributing to discrimination, and actively seek opportunities to promote inclusion of all people in the provision of quality health care while eradicating disparities. ANA supports policy initiatives directed toward abolishing all forms of discrimination."

Source: ANA Position Statement

Gender

In the 2020 HPNA membership survey, 4.1% of HPNA members identified as male compared to 9% in the national data. Limitations of the gender categories were observed in the HPNA membership survey. Three genders were included (male, female, and transgender), plus an option for no response.

Gender is not synonymous with *sex*. According to the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook, *gender* refers to a person's social identity, whereas *sex* refers to biological characteristics. Because not everyone falls into the category of male/man or female/woman, refer to a *person* or *people*, if appropriate, or use the term *nonbinary* if the individual requests to be referred to as such.

Transgender is an **adjective** (modifying *man* or *woman*—as in *transgender man* or *transgender woman*) in Western cultures that refers to someone whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity. AP allows the use of *trans* on second reference and in headlines. Do not use transgender as a **noun** or use the term *transgendered*.

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Many non-Western cultures, especially Indigenous cultures, include genders that fall outside the male/female binary or genders that aren't automatically correlated to assigned sex at birth. Examples include Native Hawaiian people who are *mahu*, Zapotec people who are *muxe*, and Diné (Navajo) people who are *nádleehí*. *Two spirit* is an Indigenous-created word for traditionally recognized identities. It means different things in each nation and to each person who holds that identity, and it is an identity that is culturally specific, meaning that it belongs to Indigenous communities and cannot be used by non-Indigenous individuals. Refrain from assuming these people identify as trans and/or nonbinary, as those terms may not encompass or accurately describe these identities. Instead, ask the person how they would like to be described.

Cisgender (pronounced "sis-gender") is an adjective that refers to someone whose assigned sex at birth matches their gender identity.

Note: When interviewing someone or otherwise referring to someone, ask the individual **how they want to be described** (e.g., male, female, man, woman, transgender, gender fluid, nonbinary). Ask the individual for their pronouns of reference to be used when referring to them (e.g., he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs). Some transgender people do not use pronouns at all and only go by their names. Ask, too, if there are any terms they prefer *not* be used in reference to them and in what cases.

Do not disclose a person's status. It is the individual's choice to disclose their own identities. Only include that they are a transgender individual if they give explicit permission.

- Gender, race, and ethnicity: When interviewing someone or referring to them in content, ask the individual how they prefer to be referred to (e.g., Chicana/o/x, Latina/o/x). See the section on race and ethnicity for more information.

Gender-inclusive pronouns

In March 2017, the AP voted to accept the singular *they*, as well as *them/their*, as a gender-neutral pronoun when *he/she* or *her/him* is not accurate. Use the singular *they* when referring to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context and/or when referring to a specific, known person who uses *they* as their pronoun of reference.

You may wonder about when to use *he* or *she* (or both, or if you should alternate *he* and *she*). Use this guidance:

- **The AP Stylebook advises against presuming "maleness in constructing a sentence."** If you can reword a sentence to avoid gender, that's ideal. If that's not possible, you may opt to use *they* or *their* to indicate that the gender of the individual referenced is either not known or the reference applies to any gender.

As stated above, when interviewing or otherwise referring to someone, ask the individual how they prefer to be identified (e.g., male, female, man, woman, transgender male, transgender female, gender fluid, nonbinary). Ask the individual for their pronouns of reference (e.g., he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs). Ask, too, if there are any terms they prefer *not* be used in reference to them and in what instances.

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An exception to avoiding using only *men/women* or *male/female* (a binary reference) is when using *men/women* or *male/female* is necessary for accuracy, as in a study that included men and women.

- Use of multiple pronoun sets: Some people use multiple sets of pronouns, such as both she/her and they/them, or xe/xim and he/him. Some people also are comfortable with any pronouns used. In this situation, ask which pronouns to use in which circumstances, and if the individual has a preferred frequency of use for each set of pronouns.
- Non-gender suffix: Consider using the suffix *-person* (e.g., *spokesperson* instead of *spokesman*) in your writing to avoid presuming maleness. Use *chair* in place of *chairman*, *chairwoman*, or *chairperson*. Ask the person whose title you are referencing what they prefer as well, if possible. Be aware, too, of words that use *-ess* and denote femaleness, such as *stewardess* or *hostess*. When possible, choose a gender-neutral alternate, such as *flight attendant* or *firefighter*.
- Describing oppression of a certain group: When discussing instances of oppression that certain groups (often women) may face, consider how trans and nonbinary people fit into this.
- Instead of saying *pregnant women*, say *pregnant people*.
- Instead of *women's health rights*, say *reproductive rights*.
- Instead of *feminine hygiene products*, say *menstrual products*.

Gender: terms to avoid

- *Normal* or *norm* (to refer to people who are not transgender, gender fluid, or nonbinary)
- *Sex change* (preferred terms: *sex reassignment*, *gender transition*)
- *Sexual preference*
- *Tranny* (a harmful slur that should always be avoided)
- *Transsexual* (preferred term: *transgender* or *trans*, and should only be used adjectivally)
- *Transvestite* (preferred term: *cross-dresser*)

Use of nondiscriminatory language

- Discriminatory examples
    - "She throws/runs/fights like a girl."
    - "In a manly way . . ."
    - "Oh, that's women's work."
    - "Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful."
    - "Men just do not understand."

Words to avoid and words to use

Instead of . . .	Say . . .
"Guests are cordially invited to attend with their wives."	"Guests are cordially invited to attend with their partners."
Mankind	Humankind, human race, humanity
Man-made	Human-made, artificial, human-caused

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Gender identity

Gender identity can be defined as one's innermost concept of self, or how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Refer to each person by the name and pronoun(s) *by which the person wants to be referred.* If you don't know, ask in a tactful and respectful way.

For example, you can ask, "What pronouns do you use?" You also can introduce yourself with the pronouns you use, which may prompt someone to share the pronouns they use. Assessing gender identity by appearance is never appropriate. Do not disclose an individual's gender identity without their permission.

It is well documented in health care, including hospice and palliative care, that gender minorities—in particular, transgender individuals—experience significant discrimination in healthcare settings and that some face barriers to receiving appropriate care due to their gender identity.

Gender identity may be assessed by asking whether an individual identifies as male, female, female-to-male (FTM)/transgender male, male-to-female (MTF)/transgender female, gender queer, or neither exclusively male nor female. An open-ended question should also be asked to include those who do not identify with the listed categories (e.g., "if you prefer another term, please specify").

Resources

- AP Stylebook
- Diversity Style Guide
- Gender Spectrum
- Students and Gender Identity: A Toolkit for Schools (K-12 emphasis; from University of Southern California Rossier)
- American Psychological Association Style
- American Medical Association
- International Planned Parenthood Federation Gender Assessment Tool
- Department of Labor Policies on Gender Identity: Rights and Responsibilities

Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

In the 2020 HPNA membership survey, 9.1% of HPNA members identified as persons of color compared to 19.2% in the 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey. Limitations of the race and ethnicity categories were observed in the HPNA membership survey. Four race and ethnicity categories were included (Asian, Black, White, other), along with an option not to disclose. In all, 3.7% of HPNA members indicated they were of Hispanic or Latino origin compared to 5.3% in the 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey. Forty-two percent of HPNA members chose not to disclose if they were of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Race and ethnicity are not the same. Race is a social construct that has historically been used to classify human beings according to physical or biological characteristics. Ethnicity is something a person acquires or ascribes to, and refers to a shared culture, such as language, practices, and beliefs.

Do not make assumptions that a person's religion is based on their race or ethnicity. For example, not all Arabs are Muslim, and many ethnicities include numerous religious practices.

Further, consider carefully when deciding to identify a person by race. Often it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to someone's race or ethnicity can be interpreted as bigotry. Use AP Stylebook guidance for examples of when race is pertinent.

In this style guide, we attempt to provide basic guidance on style for:

- African American and Black (the B in *Black* is capitalized, per AP style; *African American* is not hyphenated, per AP style)
- Hispanic, Latinx/o/a, and related terms (Hispanic is an ethnicity, not a race; Hispanic and Latino individuals can be of any race)
- Asian American, Pacific Islander, and related terms (no hyphen)
- American Indian and related terms (no hyphen)
- White (the w in *white* is not capitalized, per AP style)

Editor's note: Given the complexity and evolving nature of this topic, we will continually update this section, so it is as current, inclusive, and useful as possible. Please send questions and suggestions for additions and changes to your direct supervisor.

General writing guidelines

- Focus on the person—their achievement, leadership, scholarship, research, etc.—not their race and ethnicity.
- Ensure that headlines, images, captions, and graphics are fair and responsible in their depiction of people of color and coverage of issues.
- Use racial and ethnic identification when it is pertinent to a story and use it fairly, identifying white individuals if people of other races or ethnicities are identified.
- Avoid stereotypes.
- If you are including a person's race in the content you're creating, be sure it is necessary to mention, and ask the person how they prefer to be identified.
- Many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) individuals are told that their names are too complicated or too difficult to pronounce. Use the name that the individual asks you to use, and do not ask to use a nickname instead. Also, be sure to include any accents or diacritics in the person's name rather than removing them to better align with English characters.
  - Example: Use *señora* instead of *senora*, and *Nguyễn* instead of *Nguyen*.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Quick guidance

Below is a list of preferred terms, though it is permissible to deviate from this list based on the person's preferred racial and ethnic identification.

- African American, Black
  - *African American* and *Black* are not synonymous. A person may identify as Afro-Latino

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or Afro-Caribbean, for instance, or Haitian American or Jamaican American. A person also may identify specifically as African rather than African American, such as Ghanaian or Congolese.

- o HPNA capitalizes the B in *Black* when referring to people who are part of a shared identity or culture, per AP style.
- o *African American* is not hyphenated. Never use the word *colored* or *Negro* as a descriptor. Likewise, *Afro American* is an archaic descriptor and should not be used.
- o In the body of a piece, use *Black people*, not *Blacks*, to refer to a group. Do not use *Black* as a singular noun, such as *a Black*.

- ● Asian, Asian American
  - o When writing about someone or a group of this background, it usually makes more sense to refer to a specific background—e.g., Japanese, Korean, Thai, Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino. Use that term rather than a collective noun.
  - o *Asian and Pacific Islander American* (*APIA*): This is the preferred term to use, versus *Asian American and Pacific Islander* (*AAPI*), or *Asian Americans and Pacific Americans*. The latter is considered correct, but for consistency's sake, HPNA recommends the preferred use.
  - o *South Asian*: This collective term refers to people from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. *Desi American* is a term commonly used by people from India, but not by all South Asians.

- ● American Indian, Alaska Native, Hawaiian Native, Native American, native people, indigenous people
  - o You may see the following terms:
    - ▪ *First People(s)*
    - ▪ *First Nations*
    - ▪ *Tribal Peoples*
    - ▪ *Tribal Communities*
  - o The person may prefer that you refer to them by their tribally specific nation.
  - o American Indians and Alaska Natives/Hawaiian Natives have a distinct political and cultural identification constructed in and through treaties and executive orders. American Indians' and Alaska Native/Hawaiian Natives' cultural identification is place-based, diverse, and informed by the practices of their culture (e.g., language, singing, dancing, ceremonies).

- ● Hispanic, Latino/a, Latinx, Latin@, Chicano/a
  - o *Latinx/o/a* is increasingly used and is the standard descriptor, unless the individual or people prefer another term.
  - o While it is common to see *Hispanic* and *Latinx/o/a* used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. *Hispanic* generally refers to people with origins in Spanish-speaking countries. *Latinx/o/a* generally refers to people with origins in Latin America and the Caribbean.
  - o In some cases, Hispanic people also identify as Latinx/o/a and vice versa. Generally, people from Brazil or Haiti do not identify as Hispanic, but may identify as Latinx/o/a.
  - o Avoid the term *Latin* unless it is a reference to Latin America.
  - o *Latina(s)* is appropriate for individuals who identify as a woman or women, unless they prefer *Latinx*. Follow the preference of the person or people in all cases.
  - o *Chicano/a* is a term that refers to Americans of Mexican ancestry. The Chicano Movement includes a focus on being of Mexican ancestry and having Indigenous roots.
  - o The legitimacy of this identity is contested, as many people who identify as Chicano/a

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claim to have Indigenous roots but cannot name their family's tribe/nation and are not connected to or affiliated with the tribe/nation. It's also important to note that *Chicano/a* isn't merely a term—it's a sociopolitical identity, so it shouldn't be placed on people without them claiming it first. Practice extreme caution when using *Chicano/a*. A better term to refer to Americans of Mexican ancestry is simply *Mexican American*.

- o Be sure to ask the individual or group how they prefer to be identified. The individual may prefer, for example, a gender-inclusive and neutral term like *Latinx* or *Latin@*, or a broader term, like *Afro-Latino* (the person may identify as both African or African American or Black and Latino/a).
- o Also be aware of gender when using *Latino* and *Chicano* in your writing.
- o *Latinidad*, *Latin@*, and *Latinx* are emerging terms that may be favored by younger generations.
- o Note that federal policy defines Hispanic as an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanic and Latino individuals can be of any race.

- Biracial, multiracial, and mixed
  - o The terms *biracial* and *multiracial* are acceptable, when clearly relevant, to describe people with more than one racial heritage, per AP style. Avoid *mixed-race*, which can carry negative connotations, unless the individual prefers the term. Be sure to ask the individual or group how they prefer to be identified.
  - o Be as specific as possible when describing a person's heritages.
  - o Note that *multiracial* can encompass people of any combination of races.

Race and ethnicity: terms to avoid

No racial or ethnic slur should ever be included in content you create for any reason. You may consider an exception if your content is about this slur (as in a research study examining use of the word) or, possibly, if it is essential to your piece and is used in quotes. In this case, ensure that its use is absolutely necessary, that your source has approved attribution of the slur(s) to them, and that your supervisors and department have granted approval.

- If explicit approval has been given to use a slur under this exception, add a content warning at the beginning of the piece, and do not use the term in the title or headline; people from these communities should have the agency to decide whether they want to engage in harmful language before being forced to do so.

Do not use the term *colored person/people*. Use a broader term, like *people of color*, which refers to any person who is not white, especially in the U.S. *BIPOC* is an emerging acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Some feel the term is more appropriate than *people of color* because it acknowledges the varying levels of injustice experienced by different groups. In these instances, be sure to ask the individual or group how they prefer to be identified. However, if you are talking about a specific racial or ethnic group, name that specific group rather than generalizing to all people of color. This is especially important when discussing Black people.

Resources

- "Race: The Floating Signifier," Stuart Hall, 1997
- "So You Want to Talk About Race," Ijeoma Oluo, 2019
- Asian American Journalists Association's Guide to Covering Asian Pacific America

- [Conscious Style Guide: Ethnicity, Race, and Nationality](#)
- [Diversity Style Guide](#)
- [Timothy Fong, Professor of Ethnic Studies, and Director and Principal Investigator for Full Circle Project, Sacramento State](#)
- [Theresa Gregor, Assistant Professor of American Indian Studies, California State University (CSU) Long Beach](#)
- [National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association's Reporting and Indigenous Terminology](#)
- [Maythee Rojas, Professor of Chicano and Latino Studies, CSU Long Beach](#)
- [AP Stylebook](#)
- [General Services Administration: 18F Content Guide–Inclusive Language](#)

Immigration

General guidelines

- Focus on the person—their achievement, leadership, scholarship, research, etc.—not their immigration status.
- Use *illegal* only to describe an action, not a person.
- Familiarize yourself with the range of categories describing a person's citizenship and immigration status: *nationality*, *country of origin*, *citizen*, *permanent resident*, *undocumented*.
- Do not specify a person's immigration status unless it is relevant to the story AND approved by the source.
- Use terms that are legally accurate and avoid racially and politically charged labels.
- Not all undocumented people have DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) status. Be sure to differentiate between these two experiences.

Preferred terms

- *Undocumented immigrant/worker*: refers to people who do not have the federal documentation to show they are legally entitled to work in, visit, or live in the United States
- *Mixed-status couple/family*: refers to couples or families with members who have different immigration statuses (*mixed-status* also can be used in the healthcare industry to describe a relationship in which one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative)
- *Refugee*: refers to people who have been forced to leave their country of origin to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Refugee is a status granted by the receiving country and does not apply to all people who have been forced to leave. It is important to note the difference between people who are displaced and refugees.
- *Asylum seeker*: refers to people who are seeking international protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined
- *DREAM Act* or *Dreamer*: The DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act is congressional legislation that would allow young immigrants in the country illegally who were brought here as children to remain in the country if they meet certain criteria. The legislation has not been approved by Congress, despite various versions being introduced over the years. The DREAM Act is similar to, but not the same as, the DACA program. Many refer to immigrants who would benefit from either program as

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Dreamers. As often as possible, use other terms such as *immigrant* or *youth*, or the person's name instead of *Dreamer*. If using the term *Dreamer* to describe a person, be sure that is the way they prefer to be described and that you have their explicit permission.

Immigration: terms to avoid

- *Illegal immigrant*, *alien*, *illegals* (preferred term: *undocumented immigrant*)
- *Illegal worker* (preferred term: *undocumented worker*)
- *Expat*, *expatriate*

Resources

- [Drop the I-Word](#)
- [Diversity Style Guide Immigration Glossary](#)
- [NPR: Guidance on Immigration](#)
- [The Atlantic: "Expat" and the Fraught Language of Migration](#)
- [AP Stylebook](#)

People with Disabilities

When writing about anyone with a disability—whether physical, intellectual, or psychological/emotional—always strive to adopt **"person-first" language**. This means using words that put the person at the center of a description rather than a label, their status, or what the individual cannot do.

However, many disabled communities prefer "identity-first" language. You should ask the person what their preference is, both in terms of how they are described as having a disability in general and their specific disability. For example, someone may prefer *person with a disability* but also use *autistic person*, in which case they use both person-first and identity-first language, depending on context.

For example, you would refer to a *member who has epilepsy* but not a *member who's an epileptic*. As with any other area of sensitivity like this, please ask the individual how they prefer to be referred to— for example, some people consider their disability an intrinsic aspect of their identity, such as *blind person* or *deaf person*. If you are interviewing someone with a disability, whether visible or not, make sure they are aware of how much detail and information you will be sharing about their disability, and ask them to review the content before it is published.

If the disability is not a relevant part of the content and there isn't a need to include it, don't.

Don't refer to someone who does not have a disability as *able-bodied*. You can simply say they do not have a disability (or, if necessary, use *non-disabled*) when it's absolutely necessary to distinguish that someone doesn't have a disability. Avoid using the term *normal*.

Avoid sensationalizing a disability by using phrases like, but not limited to, *afflicted with*, *suffers from*, *wheelchair bound*, or *victim of*.

People with disabilities are typically not suffering from a disease or illness; therefore, they should not be

referred to as *patients*, unless in a healthcare setting. Many people with chronic illnesses identify as disabled, and the same guidance should be followed.

Use *accessible* when describing a space, location, or event that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as in *accessible entrance*, *accessible classroom*, *accessible webinar*, etc.

To show inclusiveness and sensitivity, you may want to refer to them as *persons who are receiving services*, which may include physical or mental help, or *persons with disabilities*.

Be sure the individual's disclosure of this information was intentional, and that they grant permission for it to be used in content**.**

Words to avoid and words to use

Instead of . . .	Say . . .
Handicapped or the disabled	People/person with a disability/disabilities
Mute or dumb	Nonverbal
Dwarf or midget	Person of short stature
Emotionally disturbed	Person with a mental health disability
Suffers from, a victim of	Person with
Learning disabled	Person with a learning disability
Normal	Person without a disability
Birth defect	Congenital disability
Retarded	Person who has an intellectual disability
Handicapped parking	Accessible parking
Epileptic	Person with epilepsy
Quadriplegic, paraplegic	Person with quadriplegia/paraplegia
Mongoloid or Down's	Person with Down syndrome
Developmentally delayed	Person with a developmental delay
Confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Hearing impaired	Person who is deaf or hard of hearing
Vision impaired	Person who is blind

More terms to avoid and preferred language

- *Able-bodied* or *normal* when referring to a person who does not have a disability
- *Afflicted with*
- *Confined to a wheelchair*: describes a person only in relationship to a piece of equipment designed to liberate rather than confine
- *Deaf and dumb/deaf-mute* (preferred: *Deaf individual*; capitalizing *Deaf* indicates the person identifies with the Deaf/signing community)

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- *Defect*, *birth defect*, *defective*
- *Disabled* (preferred: *people with disabilities* or *disabled people*)
- *Epileptic fit*: The term *seizure* is preferred when referring to the brief manifestation of symptoms common among those with epilepsy.
- *Mentally retarded*: Always try to specify the type of disability being referenced. Otherwise, the terms *mental disability, intellectual disability*, and *developmental disability* are acceptable.
- *Paraplegic*: Use person-first language, such as a *person with* paraplegia.
- *Psychotic:* Avoid using *psychotic* to describe a person; instead refer to a person as having a psychotic condition or psychosis.
- *Quadriplegic*: Use person-first language, such as a *person with quadriplegia*.
- *Schizophrenic*: Use person-first language, stating that someone is *a person with schizophrenia* or *a person diagnosed with schizophrenia* rather than *a schizophrenic* or *a schizophrenic person*.
- *Speaks sign language/reads Braille* (preferred: *American Sign Language fluent*, or *Braille reader* or *Braille user*); also note that American Sign Language is one type of sign language, but that there are others. Examples include Black American Sign Language (BASL) and Japanese Sign Language (JSL).
- *Stricken with*, *suffers from*, *victim of*
- *Wheelchair-bound* (preferred: *person who uses a wheelchair* or *wheelchair user*)

Resources

- [Americans with Disabilities National Network: Guidelines for Writing About People with Disabilities](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [National Center on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ)](#)
- [NCDJ Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center Style Guide: Reporting on Mental Health](#)
- [National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [Disability Studies Quarterly](#)

LGBTQIA2S+

LGBTQIA2S+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual (agender, ally), and two spirit.

- **Agender:** Agender people define their gender in a variety of ways. Some agender people define their gender as being neither a man nor a woman, while others understand themselves as not having any gender at all.
- **Ally:** An ally is a person who uses their privilege to advocate on behalf of someone else who does not hold the same privilege.
- **Asexual:** sometimes shortened to *ace* and defined as a person who experiences no, limited, or conditional sexual attraction; an asexual person may experience other types of attraction. Asexuality is a sexual orientation and is different from celibacy, in that celibacy

is the choice to refrain from engaging in sexual behaviors and does not comment on one's sexual attractions. An asexual individual may choose to engage in sexual behaviors for various reasons even while not experiencing sexual attraction. Asexuality is an identity and sexual orientation; it is not a medical condition. Sexual attraction is not necessary for a person to thrive.

- **Bisexual:** someone who is sexually attracted to more than more than one gender but not necessarily all possible genders
- **Cisgender:** someone who is not transgender; cisgender people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. The term is often shortened to *cis*, which comes from the Latin prefix meaning "on the same side of."
- **Gay:** someone who is generally (but not necessarily exclusively) attracted to someone of the same gender; *gay* most commonly refers to a man who is attracted to men. A gay person can be transgender or cisgender.
- **Intersex:** *Intersex* refers to a wide range of sexes outside of male and female. Intersex folks are born with a variety of sex characteristics (including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and/or genitals) that are outside the standard definitions of male and female. Intersex folks can have a range of gender identities, and some identify as nonbinary while others identify as women or men.
- **Lesbian:** *Lesbian* refers to a woman who is attracted to women. Both transgender and cisgender women can be lesbians.
- **Queer:** Queer is an identity that essentially means not straight, and it is often used as an umbrella term for the whole non-heterosexual community. It is also a political statement because queerness intentionally has no single definition beyond "not straight." When someone says they are queer, there is no way to know exactly what that means, which is often intentional.
- **Questioning:** a term used to describe those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof
- **Straight:** Straight (or heterosexual) folks are either men who are attracted to women, or women who are attracted to men. Both cisgender and transgender folks can be straight.
- **Transgender:** Transgender is not a sexual orientation (transgender folks can be gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, or any other orientation). *Transgender* refers to having a gender identity that is not in alignment with the assigned sex at birth. Trans folks can be trans men (men who were assigned female at birth, previously referred to as *FTM*, though this terminology is no longer commonly used); trans women (women who were assigned male at birth, formerly referred to as *MTF*); or a wide range of nonbinary (meaning not man or woman) genders.
- **Two spirit:** *Two spirit* is an Indigenous-created word for traditionally recognized identities. It means different things in each nation and to each person who holds that identity. It is an identity that is culturally specific, meaning that it belongs to indigenous communities and cannot be used by non-Indigenous individuals.

HPNA recognizes that this list and acronym (LGBTQIA2S+) are not complete, as indicated by the + sign. The choices about which identities get a letter are challenging and changing. Identities not identified in the acronym are still entirely valid. A comprehensive list is provided by The Trans Language Primer, a live (regularly updated) list of identities and terms.

LGBTQIA2S+ (all capital letters with no spaces or periods) is HPNA's preferred use as opposed to

LGBT, *GLBT*, or other acronyms. On first reference, explain what *LGBTQIA2S+* stands for, and use the acronym on subsequent mentions.

When interviewing someone or otherwise referring to a source or individual in your writing, ask them how they prefer to be referred to in relation to their gender and/or sexual identity (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, intersex). This may include identifications that are not common or specific. Ask, too, if there are any terms they prefer not be used in reference to them and in what cases.

Reasons to ask—and reasons to refrain from asking

When is it appropriate to ask an individual to disclose their sexual orientation for content? Is it ever?

Reasons to ask:

- **If it adds context to the content you're creating.** Are you speaking with the person specifically because they are a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community? If so, ask to confirm and ask how they identify.
- **If it is central to the content you're creating.** Would it seem out of place if you did not mention it?
- **If it is not central to the content, what is your motivation for asking?** Are you trying to add diversity to your story or highlight how various populations might be affected differently?

Reasons to avoid asking or telling:

- If it would cause harm to the subject
- If it's merely to sensationalize the content
- If you would include the information if the individual were heterosexual (or not)—if yes, include it for an LGBTQIA2S+ person. If not, think about why you want to include it, and remember that it must be relevant.

Note on the use of *queer*

The word *queer* historically has been considered a slur, so its use should be avoided and limited to quotes, names of organizations, and instances when an individual indicates they would prefer it used in reference to themselves.

That said, *queer* has been reclaimed by many LGBTQIA2S+ people to describe themselves, especially those from younger generations; however, it is not a universally accepted term even within the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

Queer also can be used in academic circles related to domain (e.g., queer studies) and a range of post-structuralist theories that deal with the construction or reconstruction of sexuality and/or gender identity known as queer theory. Other variants, such as *quare theory*, consider the intersection of identities, such as race.

In your writing, avoid comparisons that reflect a heteronormative bias—in other words,

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heterosexual/cisgender as normal or the norm. *Cisgender* (pronounced "sis-gender") refers to people whose gender identity and expression match the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Reminders for writing about LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and communities

- If you are creating content about research or new data, do not refer to findings as relevant to the gay or LGBTQIA2S+ community if the information only relates to, say, gay men.
- Do not conflate sex and gender; they are not the same thing.
- When talking about marriage, make sure you are using the person's preferred term(s), whether *partner*, *spouse*, *wife*, *husband*, or something else.
- Pay close attention to how the person you are talking to narrates their own story and follow their lead and cues when you create content. If the person uses terms you do not know, ask them to explain each so you are sure to use it correctly. You can also offer to do your own research so that they do not have the additional burden of providing education; just be sure they approve of the final content. If there is particular sensitivity on the part of a source and/or topic, build in time for a source(s) to review their quotes for accuracy.

Pronoun use for transgender sources

It is best practice to ask everyone for their pronouns of reference. Be aware that a person's pronouns may not correspond with the gender that may be associated with one's name or appearance. **Do not *deadname*—that is, using someone's former birth name if they have changed it to align with their identity**. Also, do not assume transgender status or include it if it is not germane to the story.

Note that *sex*, *gender*, and *sexual orientation* are not synonymous. Please refer to the Gender section of this style guide as well.

LGBTQIA2S+: terms to avoid

- *Closeted* (preferred: *not out*)
- *Gay community* (preferred: *LGBTQIA+ community*)
- *Homosexual* (preferred: *gay* or *lesbian*)
- *Openly gay* (preferred: *out*)
- *Lesbian women*
- *Lifestyle*
- *MTF* or *FTM* (use *male-to-female transition* and *female-to-male transition* unless an individual identifies themselves this way)
- *Queer* (see discussion above)
- *Sexual preference* (preferred: *sexual orientation*)
- *Tranny*
- *Transsexual*
- *Transvestite* (preferred: *cross-dresser*; cross-dressing does not necessarily indicate someone is gay or transgender)

For more terms, consult the [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#).

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Resources

- [AP Stylebook](#)
- [About the Q](#)
- [Diversity and Health Equity Education: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning](#)
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide–11th edition](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign's Brief Guide to Getting Transgender Coverage Right](#)
- [Mental Health Facts on Questioning/Queer Populations](#)
- [NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology](#)
- [NLGJA: Tip Sheets on LGBT Coverage—Are You Gay?](#)
- [Speaking with Care: LBTQIA2S+ Inclusive Language](#)

People Who Are Low-Income and Unhoused

It is important not to equate being low-income with struggling for basic needs. They are not synonymous.

The ways in which we talk and create content about people who are low-income should convey compassion, inclusion, and sensitivity. Creating content about poverty and those who do not have the money they need is, of course, a sensitive matter and sometimes a source of shame and stigma for an individual. There are several terms that are often used in the context of discussing people of low-income backgrounds. These include:

Socioeconomic status: tends to refer to a combination of factors related to a social class

Underserved: Underserved people are defined as those who do not receive equitable resources compared to others. Typically, these groups include low-income individuals and people of color.

Underrepresented: Underrepresented people refers to racial and ethnic populations that are represented at disproportionately low levels.

- *Underrepresented* is not the same as *marginalized*. *Marginalized* means that people have been historically left out of conversations or excluded from opportunities—and not by their own choice.
- Do not use *poor*, *impoverished*, *underprivileged*, or *disadvantaged* to describe individuals who are low-income.
- Listen carefully to how a person or another source tells their story and use similar or the same language. Watch for assumptions and biases in your writing about the reasons for their income status, stereotypes, etc.

Resources

- [Jennifer Maguire, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Cal Poly Humboldt](#)
- [National Union of Journalists' Guide to Reporting Poverty (U.K.)](#)
- [AP Stylebook](#)
- [Unhoused](#)

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Age

In the 2020 HPNA membership survey, 17.3% of HPNA members were aged 60 years or older compared to 28.3% in the 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey. In addition, 3.8% of HPNA members were aged 30 years or younger compared to 9.7% in the 2017 National Nursing Workforce Survey.

Avoid referring to someone's age, unless it is relevant to what you are writing about (for example, when referring to benefits that are available to people of certain ages).

- Do not use *women* or *older relatives* as a substitute for *novice* or *beginner*. For example, do not say something is so simple your mother can use it.
- Use *older person, older adult,* or *senior* instead of *elderly*.

Resources

- [General Services Administration: 18F Content Guide–Inclusive Language](#)
- [AP Stylebook](#)
- [AARP: When it Comes to Age, Words Matter](#)

People with Substance Use Disorders

Addiction is a chronic but treatable medical condition. Often unintentionally, many people still talk about addiction in ways that are stigmatizing. This may prevent those with substance use disorders (SUDs) from seeking treatment. When discussing addiction, the preferred terms are *substance use disorder* (*SUD*) and *opioid use disorder* (*OUD*).

Words to avoid and words to use

Instead of . . .	Say . . .
Abuse, drug problem, habit	Substance use disorder, addiction (if clinically accurate) Use (for illicit drugs); misuse (for prescription drugs)
Addict, junkie, drug user or abuser	Person with substance use disorder Patient with substance use disorder (if in clinical setting)
Addicted to [X]	Has an [X] use disorder
Clean or stayed clean	Substance free
Alcoholic	Person with alcohol use disorder
Dirty, failing drug test	Testing positive (on drug test)

For more terms, please visit the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#).

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Resources

- [Words Matter—Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#)
- [Words Matter: Preferred Language for Talking About Addiction](#)
- [Ending Addiction Stigma: Change Your Language](#)
- [Addiction Language Guide](#)

Appendix

This document was modeled after the [University of Iowa Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Style Guide](#). In addition, the following resources were used to develop the HPNA DEIB Style Guide:

- [Institute for the Future of Education](#)
- [General Services Administration: 18F Content Guide–Inclusive Language](#)
- [United Nations: Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language](#)
- [United Nations: Guidelines for Disability-Inclusive Language](#)
- [University of Iowa DEI Style Guide Website](#)

Questions or Suggestions . . .

This guide was created with the understanding that many of the topics and sections will evolve, as will the guide. Those using this guide are encouraged to ask questions, offer suggestions, and note omissions. Please do not hesitate to contact your direct supervisor with your questions, concerns, and/or suggestions.