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Words matter: What are we doing about it?

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Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication

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To build a healthier America for all, we must confront the systems and policies that have resulted in the generational injustice that has given rise to health inequities. We at CDC want to lead in this effort—both in the work we do on behalf of the nation's health and the work we do internally as an organization.

Achieving health equity requires focused and ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices; overcome economic, social, and other obstacles to health and healthcare; and eliminate preventable health disparities.

CDC's *Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication* emphasize the importance of addressing all people inclusively and respectfully. These principles are intended to help public health professionals, particularly health communicators, within and outside of CDC ensure their communication products and strategies adapt to the specific cultural, linguistic, environmental, and historical situation of each population or audience of focus.

Reflections from the Development Process

1. Diversity and inclusion are essential.
2. We all have something to learn.
3. We don't get to decide what is stigmatizing to someone else.
4. We need to shift as language and norms shift.
5. Preferred terms are not always definitive.
6. Recognize where your colleagues are.





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INCHES
Gatlinburg
Pigeon Forge
Glades
Ranger Station
Grotto Falls
Rainbow Falls
Mt. LeConte 6593 ft.
Newfound Gap 5048 ft.
Highest Pt. in Tenn. Clingmans Dome 6643 ft.
Blanket Mtn. 4609 ft.
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK
Oconaluftee
Smokemoor
Oconaluftee Visitor Center

Using a Health Equity Lens

An intentional effort to understand and respond to diverse experiences and perspectives

Questions to ask as you look at your work through a health equity lens

1. How are social and health inequities at play?
2. How should planning/implementation of the activity be responsive to the inequities?
3. Will/does the activity perpetuate existing inequities?



1. How are social and health inequities at play?

Example considerations:

- Cultural, linguistic, economical, environmental, and historical contexts
- Inequity in policies, programs, and services
- Racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression
- Overlapping social identities (i.e., intersectionality)
- Your own assumptions and biases



2. How should planning/implementation of the activity be responsive to the inequities?

Example considerations:

- Need for community engagement & shared decision making
- Community needs and assets
- Diversity within and across communities
- Accessibility, acceptability, and appropriateness of the activity
- Literacy level of the population of focus
- Use of health equity framing/narrative



3. Will/does the activity perpetuate existing inequities?

Example considerations:

- Reach of the activity – who is included/excluded
- Impact of the activity – who benefits/is harmed
- Ability of audience to understand and follow recommendations
- Availability and quality of language translation
- What is left out or left unsaid – what context is missing



Guiding Principles & Preferred Terms

Best practices to address all people inclusively, accurately, and respectfully

Guiding Principles & Preferred Terms

- Mind your adjectives.
- Use person-first language.
- Avoid unintentional blaming.
- Avoid terms with violent connotation.

Instead of this...

high-risk groups

Try this...

groups with higher risk of [outcome]



Guiding Principles & Preferred Terms

- Mind your adjectives.
- Use person-first language.
- Avoid unintentional blaming.
- Avoid terms with violent connotation.

Instead of this...

the homeless

Try this...

people experiencing homelessness



Guiding Principles & Preferred Terms

- Mind your adjectives.
- Use person-first language.
- Avoid unintentional blaming.
- Avoid terms with violent connotation.

Instead of this...

workers who do not use PPE

Try this...

workers under-resourced with PPE



Guiding Principles & Preferred Terms

- Mind your adjectives.
- Use person-first language.
- Avoid unintentional blaming.
- Avoid terms with violent connotation.

Instead of this...

target populations for intervention

Try this...

populations of focus



What are we doing about it?

- Disseminate the *Guiding Principles*.
 - Conduct train the trainer sessions, presentations, and other outreach.
- Keep listening to understand cultural norms and preferred terms.
 - Engage and learn from communities and organizations that represent them.
- Continue the conversation.
 - Engage colleagues to discuss content and implementation.
- Incorporate the principles into all aspects of our work.
 - Create and review scientific, policy, and communication materials with an equity lens.
- Regularly review the *Guiding Principles*.
 - Revisit the website; CDC will continually review the content and revise as needed.



Thank you!

For more information contact CDC

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The ideas and conclusions in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.