

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this internal document is to inform and support the consistent use of inclusive language across the association and thus ensure all colleagues speak with a unified voice. This is a living document that will be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in culture and society, and this document will be updated as language and standards evolve.

AHA style guide refers to Associated Press (AP) style for a majority of the terms listed below. For terms not specifically included in the AP Style guide, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Boston Public Health Commission, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Washington School of Public Health informed those definitions.

Broad Principles

- When talking about individual people, you should strive to identify them in the way that they prefer to be identified.
- When referencing a specific data set, it is preferable to use the terminology used in that data set (e.g., the U.S. Census Bureau uses the terms African American, Hispanic, and American Indian).
- Use person-centered language, which respects the dignity, worth, unique qualities and strengths of every individual. When referring to a person’s condition, don’t use adjectives that imply the status is permanent or of their choosing. Use phrases such as “people experiencing homelessness,” rather than “homeless people” or “people with mental illness should qualify for Medicaid” rather than “mentally ill people should qualify for Medicaid.”
- Avoid phrases or metaphors that are ableist or have roots in derogatory language. Instead, use more neutral and inclusive ways to communicate your point (e.g., “to pretend not to notice” rather than “to turn a blind eye” or “lack perception/tactless” rather than “tone-deaf” or “this may lead to a less than favorable outcome for the field” rather than “hospitals will get a black eye”).
- When referring to religious groups/individuals/leaders, use their proper names. Do not use religious slurs or refer to faith groups in a critical or disrespectful way.

THIS TERM MIGHT NOT BE THE MOST INCLUSIVE	CONSIDER USING THIS AS AN ALTERNATIVE
<p>Avoid using Black, Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC): Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) or People of color (POC) unless necessary in a quote; if used in a quote, explain it. Many people object to those terms on varying grounds.</p> <p>Use people of color only when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than white: <i>We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script.</i></p>	<p>Be specific whenever possible. <i>For example: The poll found that Black and Latino Americans are bearing the brunt of the pandemic’s financial impact, not people of color are bearing the brunt of the pandemic’s financial impact.</i></p>

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<p>Do not use minority as a noun in the singular or plural: <i>Jane is a minority. Jane and Jose are minorities.</i></p>	<p>Be specific whenever possible by referring to, for instance, <i>Black Americans, Chinese Americans or members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.</i></p> <p>Consider using '<i>historically underrepresented.</i>'</p>
<p>Do not use the term non-white, which sets white people as the standard against which others are measured.</p>	
<p>Of or relating to racial and ethnic people/culture: Avoid terms such as warpath, powwow, teepee, on or off the reservation, ghetto, inner-city, etc., which are disparaging and offensive.</p>	
<p>Do not use the terms alien, an illegal, illegal alien or undocumented alien (except when quoting people or government documents that use these terms).</p>	<p>immigrant; undocumented immigrant</p>
<p>Disadvantaged, vulnerable, underserved or marginalized communities/populations.</p> <p>These terms can imply or project a deficit onto the community/population, characterizing them by what they lack, rather than acknowledging their strengths and the role structural forces play in the situation.</p>	<p>Communities dealing with sustained hardship, structurally marginalized populations, and historically marginalized communities.</p>

Terminology

ableism is prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability that contribute to a system of oppression; usually by able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness, disabilities or less developed skills.

cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services with the intention of producing better outcomes.

cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities.

diversity describes the myriad ways in which people differ, including the psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, economic class, education, age, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, mental and physical ability, and learning styles. Diversity is all-inclusive and supportive of the proposition that everyone and every group should be valued. It is about understanding these differences and moving beyond tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of our differences.

equity of care is the provision of quality care within a community's care delivery system that meets the needs of patients regardless of geographic location, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity and other patient characteristics.

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equality is the condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted the same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

equity ensures that individuals are provided the resources and support they need to have access to the same opportunities as the general population. While equity represents impartiality, the distribution is made in such a way to even opportunities for all the people, i.e. leveling the playing field. Conversely, equality indicates uniformity, where everything is evenly distributed among people.

ethnicity is a social construct which divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. Ethnicity is different than race.

health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity achieve optimal health. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

implicit biases are attitudes and stereotypes that people unknowingly hold, also known as unconscious or hidden biases. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications.

health inequities are differences in health outcomes that are avoidable, unfair and unjust, and make some population groups more likely to have poorer health outcomes than others.

health inequities are differences in health outcomes that are avoidable, unfair and unjust, and make some population groups more vulnerable to poorer outcomes than others.

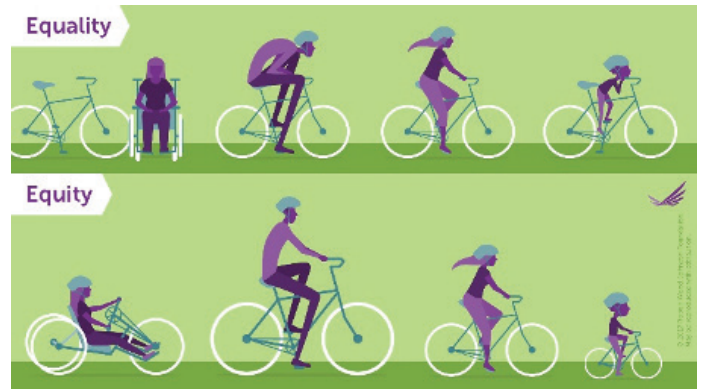
inclusion/inclusiveness is a dynamic state of operating in which diversity is leveraged to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization or community. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.

microaggressions are intentional, indirect, subtle, insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to historically underrepresented groups (e.g. "As a female, someone shouted, 'hey nurse' as I walked down the street with a male medical student. We were both wearing a white coat and scrubs.").

race is a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. There are no distinctive genetic characteristics that truly distinguish between groups of people. The social construct of race presumes human worth and social status to establish and maintain privilege and power. Race is independent of ethnicity.

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify people by race. Often, it is irrelevant, and drawing unnecessary attention to someone's race or ethnicity can be interpreted as bigotry. There are, however, occasions when race is pertinent:

In stories that involve significant, groundbreaking or historic events, such as being elected U.S. president, being named to the U.S. Supreme Court or other notable occurrences. *Barack Obama was the first Black U.S. president. Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.*



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racism* is a doctrine asserting racial differences in character, intelligence, etc., and the superiority of one race over another, or racial discrimination or feelings of hatred or bigotry toward people of another race.

- The terms **institutional racism, structural racism, and systemic racism**, refer to social, political and institutional systems and cultures that contribute to racial inequality in areas such as employment, health care, housing, the criminal justice system and education. Avoid shortening this use to simply “racism,” to avoid confusion with the other definition.

structural racism is the the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal — that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a complex system by which racism is developed, maintained and protected.

institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

systemic racism refers to social structures that are embedded in public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms that reinforce and perpetuate racial group inequity.

societal factors are the multifaceted conditions, circumstances and causes that can influence the health of patients, including:

- **social determinants** of health (SDOH) are the underlying social and economic conditions in the community that influence people’s ability to be healthy.
- **social needs** are individuals’ non-medical, social or economic circumstances that hinder their ability to stay healthy and/or recover from illness.
- **systemic causes** are the fundamental causes of the social inequities that lead to poor health. These include, for example, racism, sexism, generational poverty or redlining.

Racial and Ethnic Terms

Alaska Native is an umbrella term for the Indigenous peoples of Alaska, a diverse group consisting of over 200 federally recognized tribes, and speaking 20 indigenous languages. This is a general term; Alaska Native people may prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s). The term “Eskimo” is considered derogatory by some Alaska Native people, and should be avoided.

American Indians, Native Americans*: Both are acceptable terms in general references for those in the U.S. when referring to two or more people of different tribal affiliations. For individuals or when referring to people of only one tribe, use the name of the tribe; if that information is not immediately available, try to obtain it. *He is a Navajo commissioner. She is a member of the Nisqually Indian Tribe. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.*

- Some tribes and tribal nations use member; others use citizen. If in doubt, use citizen.

Asian American: Of or related to Americans of Asian origin. The U.S. Census Bureau defines “Asian” as “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Asia or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who identify as ‘Asian,’ ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Filipino,’ ‘Korean,’ ‘Japanese,’ ‘Vietnamese,’ or ‘Pacific Islander.’”

- When possible, refer to a person’s country of origin and follow the person’s preference. For example: *Filipino American*.

asylum*: *Asylum-seekers* are people who have left their country of origin and applied for asylum status, typically fleeing persecution and violence in their homeland. *Asylum-seeker* is not interchangeable with *refugee*.

Black* (adj.): Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, historically Black colleges and universities.

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- African American is acceptable for those in the U.S. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as Caribbean American.

Black(s), white(s)*: Do not use either term as a singular noun. For plurals, phrasing such as *Black people, white people, Black teachers, white students* is often preferable when clearly relevant.

Caucasian*: Avoid as a synonym for white, unless in a quotation.

communities of color is a term used primarily in the United States to describe groups of people who do not identify as white.

First Nations* is the preferred term for native tribes in Canada. Many First Nations people prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s).

Hispanic*: A person from — or whose ancestors were from — a Spanish-speaking land or culture. Use a more specific identification when possible, such as *Cuban, Puerto Rican* or *Mexican American*.

immigrant*: A person who comes into a country to take up permanent residence is an immigrant.

Indigenous people or native people are groups protected in international or national legislation as having a set of specific rights based on their linguistic and historical ties to a particular territory, their cultural and historical distinctiveness from other populations. The legislation is based on the conclusion that certain indigenous people are vulnerable to exploitation, marginalization, oppression, forced assimilation, and genocide by nation states formed from colonizing populations or by politically dominant, different ethnic groups.

- Capitalize indigenous when used to refer to original inhabitants of a place. *Aboriginal leaders welcomed a new era of Indigenous relations in Australia. Bolivia's Indigenous peoples represent some 62% of the population.*

Latino/Latina*: Latino is often the preferred noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America. Latina is the feminine form. Some prefer the recently coined gender-neutral term **Latinx**, which should be confined to quotations, names of organizations or descriptions of individuals who request it and should be accompanied by a short explanation. *Hernandez prefers the gender-neutral term Latinx.*

Default to the data source and how it is being used in source material.

refugee*: *Refugees* are people forced to leave their home or country to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Terms

cisgender* describes people whose gender identity matches the one they were assigned at birth.

gay, lesbian* are terms used to describe people attracted to the same sex, though lesbian is the more common term for women. Preferred over homosexual. Include sexual orientation only when it is pertinent to a story, and do not use references to sexual preference or to a gay or alternative lifestyle. Gays is acceptable as a plural noun when necessary, but do not use the singular gay as a noun. Lesbian is acceptable as a noun in singular or plural form. Sexual orientation is not synonymous with gender.

gender* is not synonymous with sex. Gender refers to a person's social identity (*Jaime identifies as a male.*), while sex refers to biological characteristics (*Terry was assigned female at birth.*). Not all people fall under one of two categories for sex or gender, according to leading medical organizations, so avoid references to both, either or opposite sexes or genders as a way to encompass all people.

gender identity is a person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

gender-neutral language: In general, use terms that can apply to any gender. Such language aims to treat people equally and is inclusive of all gender identities and expressions.

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Balance these aims with common sense, respect for the language, and an understanding that gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language is evolving and in some cases is challenging to achieve.

In general, use terms such as chair or chairperson, councilperson or council member, and spokesperson unless the -man or -woman terms are specified by an organization. The terms U.S. representative, representative, member of Congress are preferred. Congressman and congresswoman are acceptable because of their common use. Do not use congressperson.

gender non-conforming* (adj.): Acceptable in broad references as a term for people who do not conform to gender expectations. *The group is providing scholarships for gender-nonconforming students.*

When talking about individuals, be specific about how a person describes or expresses gender identity and behavior.

Not synonymous with transgender.

intersex* describes people born with genitalia, chromosomes or reproductive organs that don't fit typical definitions for males or females.

LGBTQ+*: Acceptable in all references for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and/or queer. In quotations and the formal names of organizations and events, other forms such as LGBTQIA and other variations are also acceptable with the other letters explained. "I" generally stands for intersex, and "A" can stand for asexual (a person who doesn't experience sexual attraction), ally (some activists decry this use of the abbreviation for a person who is not LGBT but who actively supports LGBT communities) or both.

nonbinary* people are nonbinary if their gender identity falls outside the categories of strictly male or female. They may or may not use non-binary/gender-neutral pronouns. Always ask what pronouns to use for an individual. Not synonymous with transgender.

pronouns*: Do not presume maleness in constructing a sentence by defaulting to he/his/him. Usually it is possible, and always preferable, to reword the sentence to avoid gender: *Reporters try to protect their sources.*

In most cases, a plural pronoun such as they, them or their should agree in number with the antecedent: *The children love the books their uncle gave them. They/them/their* is acceptable in limited cases as a gender-neutral pronoun, when alternative wording is overly awkward or clumsy. However, rewording usually is possible and always is preferable. Clarity is a top priority; gender-neutral use of a singular "they" may be unfamiliar to many readers. If *they/them/their* use is essential, explain in the text that the person's pronouns are gender-neutral. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.

We do not use other gender-neutral pronouns such as xe or ze unless referring to an individual who uses those pronouns.

queer* is an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual or cisgender and is acceptable for people and organizations that use the term to identify themselves.

transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e. the sex listed on their birth certificates).

Transgender people may choose to alter their bodies through the use of hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery. Transgender people may identify with any sexual orientation, and their sexual orientation may or may not change before, during, or after transition.

Use "transgender," not "transgendered."

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