

Inclusive & Responsive Language Guide

Using thoughtful language fosters inclusivity, respect, and dignity in communication. This guide provides responsive language alternatives that are person-first and inclusive, with a special focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Rule of Thumb:

If you're unsure about how to address someone, the best policy is to just ask. For example, ask about their pronouns, or whether they prefer 'survivor' vs. 'victim'. Respectful communication begins with listening and acknowledging individual preferences.

GENERAL INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Person with a disability	instead of disabled person
Neurodivergent	instead of mentally ill
Person who uses a wheelchair	instead of wheelchair-bound
Low-income individuals	instead of poor people
Person experiencing homelessness	instead of homeless person
Accessible parking	instead of handicapped parking
Person with substance use disorder	instead of addict
Survivor	instead of victim
Person with visual impairment	instead of blind person
Older adult	instead of elderly
Person with albinism	instead of albino

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN SRHR

Person seeking abortion care	instead of abortion patient
People who menstruate	instead of women who menstruate
Pregnant person	instead of expectant mother
Person with a uterus	instead of woman
Survivor of sexual violence	instead of rape victim
Person living with HIV	instead of HIV-positive person
Sexually transmitted infection (STI)	instead of sexually transmitted disease (STD)
People engaged in sex work	instead of prostitutes
Reproductive justice	instead of women's reproductive rights
Comprehensive sexuality education	instead of abstinence-only education