Keywords: Inclusive Language for the Tech Workplace

CMS — CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

We all know that keywords are critical to safety and security. This is just as true of professional relationships as it is for information systems.

Inclusive language goes a long way to creating a work environment that is welcoming to everyone. A workplace where everybody feels like they belong will lead to healthier interactions, equitable access to resources and opportunities, and more motivated employees.

Some of the language we use by default might communicate messages we don't intend. For instance, using male pronouns (he, him, his) could suggest that tech workers are normally men, even if that is not your intention.
Because our word choices are often the result of ingrained habit, it takes effort to communicate with a more welcoming vocabulary.

This list of keywords defines the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion; identifies some groups that are marginalized; and explains some of the differences that we should be attentive to.

1 ACCESSIBILITY

The practice of designing and developing web sites and web content that provide a great experience for all web users. (Sometimes abbreviated as a11y, representing "accessibility" as "a" followed by 11 more letters, followed by "y".)

2 DIVERSITY

Individual differences (ability, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) that can be engaged in the service of learning.

3 EQUITY

Justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.

4 NONBINARY

Any gender identity that does not fit the male and female binary.

5 LATINX

A gender neutral term often used in lieu of the gendered "Latino" or "Latina" when referring to individuals with cultural ties to Latin America and individuals of Latin American descent.

6 LGBTQIA

Acronym encompassing the diverse groups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, intersex and asexual populations and allies/alliances/associations.

7 NEURODIVERSITY

The idea that neurological differences like autism and ADHD are the result of normal, natural variation in the human genome.

8 INCLUSION

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.

9 PRONOUNS

Maybe you've seen a Twitter bio with a line that says "My pronouns are…" A preferred gender pronoun is a consciously chosen set of pronouns that allow a person to accurately represent their gender identity. A trans person may begin using a gender-neutral pronoun prior to transitioning, or a non-binary person may choose to use a neutral pronoun (i.e. they, their, them).

Inclusive Language Substitutions

MORE INCLUSIVE 👍	LESS INCLUSIVE 👎
Folks, people, you all, y'all, teammates	Guys (or women) when referring to people overall
Women	Girls (when referring to adults)
Workforce, personnel, workers, team	Manpower, man hours
Chairperson, chair, moderator, discussion leader	Chairman, foreman
Spouses/partners	Wives, husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends
Parenting	Mothering, fathering
Typical	Normal
Marginalized groups or underrepresented groups	Minorities