Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide:
Language and Inclusion

Workshop Description: This workshop is designed to help facilitate a discussion around the use of language, both spoken and written. Does the language we use unintentionally exclude or impact a youth in a negative way? Does the language we use privilege certain groups over others? In this workshop staff will build a greater awareness and understanding of how our choice of language does not always have the impact we intend.

Preparation Time: The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Youth Inclusion Training website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 45 to 50 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

Materials:

- Paper for staff to write on.
- Pens.
- Large paper to write down the scenario for the *Language Scenario* activity.
- Printed copies of the *Inclusive Language* worksheet.

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Rules, Systems, and Language. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide and any others related to this topic (e,g,., Following the Rules and Responding to Challenging Behavior). In addition, gather all necessary materials and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide. It may be helpful to print a copy of the answer key and brainstorm possible sentence revisions for facilitating the worksheet discussion. When collecting and preparing materials, write down the following scenario on an overhead slide, whiteboard, or large sheet of paper for use in the *Language Scenario* activity:

> Two youth are walking into the youth program joking around. One takes off his jacket and reveals that he is wearing a very bright t-shirt with an unusual design. Another youth remarks, "Oh my god, that shirt is so gay!" Several of the youth hanging around laugh. One of the staff members overhears the comment, tells the youth who made the remark to "Cut it out." In response the youth replies, "I just meant that it's a weird shirt." The staff member walks away shaking her head.

Knowledge: Understanding Inclusive Language

Historically and in common practice within the United States, there are some areas where individuals and groups have experienced discrimination because of their culture, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic status, personal appearance, or where they live.

What is discriminatory language?

Discriminatory language includes words and phrases that

- Reinforce stereotypes
- Reinforce derogatory labels

- Exclude certain groups of people through assumptions (e.g., assuming the male or white population is the norm)
- Patronize or trivialize certain people, groups, or their experiences
- Cause discomfort or offense

The language used by individuals within a youth program significantly contributes to whether youth feel welcome and safe in a program.[11, 22, 23] Inclusive language is language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped, or discriminatory views of particular people or groups.

Why is inclusive language important?

Inclusive language includes words and phrases that

- Promote dialogue and a comfortable environment for all youth
- Make youth feel important
- Foster or encourage learning
- Avoid false assumptions about people
- Promote respectful relationships and interactions

Adopting program-wide language that fosters a welcoming and safe environment involves critical consideration of language currently in use and how that language may be heard by different youth or groups of youth.[8] This requires youth program staff to be aware of what they say and how they say it as well as the way language is used in print and electronic materials.

Objectives:

- Understand the impact language can have on youth.
- Provide context for how language can impact an inclusive environment for youth.
- Dissuade discriminatory or gendered remarks that may make youth feel unwelcome.

Introduction (5-7 minutes):

- Describe inclusive language by talking about how a person's choice of language can sometimes make people uncomfortable, discriminate against certain individuals, or alternately, create a comfortable environment and promote respectful relationships and interactions.
  - What to say, "We are going to discuss how to use inclusive language not only in youth programs but in our everyday lives by identifying examples of discriminatory and gendered language and modifying them to be more inclusive."

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- What to say: "We are going to start off by getting a sense of what you already know about how to use inclusive language."
- Ask the staff what they know about how language affects how youth feel about being in the program. Write down their responses on a large sheet of paper.
- Ask staff if they have ever wondered about how language impacts youth and if they have any questions they'd like answered about how language can support an inclusive youth program. Again, record their responses.
- Ask the staff what they think they will learn during the workshop or what else they would like to learn about language and inclusion. Record responses.

Activities:

Activity: *Inclusive Language Worksheet* **(15 minutes)**
- Describe the *Inclusive Language Worksheet* activity:
    - What to say, "The following worksheet is a compilation of examples of and alternatives to gendered and discriminatory language. It is important to be aware of the language you use around youth."
    - Hand out a copy of the *Inclusive Language* worksheet and a pen to each staff member.
    - Have the staff fill out the worksheet independently. Once all staff have completed the worksheet, come back together as a large group to discuss the answers.
    - Ask for volunteers to share their revised sentences and explanations for why a sentence or example is not inclusive. If staff struggle to provide a correct answer, refer to the solutions in the answer key.

Activity: *Building Awareness Around Language and Inclusive Communication* **(15-20 minutes)**
- Describe the *Building Awareness Around Language and Inclusive Communication* activity:
    - What to say, "Next, we are going to focus on what it means to be aware of inclusive communication by thinking back to a time when you were insulted or hurt by another person."
- Lead the *Building Awareness around Language and Inclusive Communication* activity:
    - Begin the activity by asking participants to do some reflective writing in response to the following prompt: "Describe a time when you were insulted or hurt by another person and they brushed it off by saying something like 'I didn't mean it like that.'"
    - Ask a few volunteers to share their examples.
    - Facilitate a discussion by asking how the staff reacted when others dismissed their feelings by saying they "didn't mean it."
    - Ask staff "What mattered to you most in the moment? How the other person may have intended the comment or how it affected you? What would you have liked the other person to think about before speaking?"

Activity: *Language Scenario* **(15 minutes)**
- Describe the *Language Scenario* activity:
    - What to say, "Now consider what we just discussed in the previous activity. You are now going to apply those concepts to the following scenario."
- Lead the *Language Scenario* activity:
    - Reveal and read the following scenario to the staff:

    Two youth are walking into the youth program joking around. One takes off his jacket and reveals that he is wearing a very bright t-shirt with an unusual design. Another youth remarks, "Oh, my god, that shirt is so gay!" Several of the youth hanging around laugh. One of the staff members overhears the comment, tells the youth who made the remark to "Cut it out." In response the youth replies, "I just meant that it's a weird shirt." The staff member walks away shaking her head.

    - After reading the scenario, facilitate a discussion asking the following questions:
        - Although "gay" is sometimes intended to mean "silly" or "stupid," is that the way it is heard or experienced by everyone?

- How do you think it would feel to consistently hear "gay" used to describe something undesirable or stupid when that label also describes who you are or the identity of someone you care about?
- When someone tells you that they are offended by this kind of language, is it okay to just say you "I didn't mean it like that"? How else might you respond? As the staff members, what could you say to the youth to address the language being used in the program?

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff's responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as "What part of the activity made you realize that?"

Resources:

Worksheet: *Inclusive Language*
Instructional Aid: *Inclusive Language Answer Key*

Sources:

Footnotes in this document can be found as references within the Youth Inclusion Implementation Guide at http://reach.umn.edu/inclusion/pdf/Youth_Inclusion_Implementation_Manual.pdf

The *Inclusive Language* worksheet was adapted from material from the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. Retrieved from: https://www.uwec.edu/kb/article/policies-gender-inclusive-language/ and ACT for Youth. (n.d.). Engaging youth: Planning activities. Retrieved August 18, 2018, from http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/pyd/pyd_4-3_engaging-planning.pdf

Youth Inclusion Worksheet:
Inclusive Language

Directions: Fill in the blanks in the table to explain why each example is sexist or gendered and propose some alternatives to each example.

	Examples of Sexist/Gendered Usage	Explanation	Alternatives
The generic 'he'	Every student must have a pencil, and **he** should always bring it to class.		
Man as a verb	I have four students to **man** the internship table.		
Man used to mean humankind	Is **man** inherently capitalistic?		
Gendered words, titles, and work positions	Chairman Fireman Policeman Postman		
Stereotyping	The cheerleader busied **herself** with **her** practice. The student was disappointed when **he** learned **he** couldn't drive **his** motorcycle to school. Or using gender/sex qualifiers for certain occupations to counter these assumptions, such as *lady coach* or *male nurse.*		
Suffixes	waiter/waitress actor/actress		

Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Inclusive Language

Directions: Correct the following sentences.

1. He's an Asian-American who has an accurate understanding of American business matters.

2. Any man would want to see the real proof.

3. Athletes are welcome to bring their girlfriends to the dinner.

4. For an old man, he's pretty quick to guess the answer.

5. When an individual is first learning to drive, she needs to pay close attention to the traffic signs.

6. Even a girl would know which decision to make.

7. Crippled basketball players can play the game in their wheel chairs.

8. The coach should call a timeout when he wants to break the momentum of the other team.

9. A child who reads every night will increase his vocabulary.

10. A man should never become too busy to enjoy his children.

11. Anyone who works overtime will enjoy spending his paycheck.

12. For a German, she's pretty accepting of other cultures.

13. He's very polite for an Asian man.

14. When a person marries, he usually takes on a significant amount of responsibility.

Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid: Inclusive Language Answer Key

	Examples of Sexist/Gendered Usage	Explanation	Alternatives
The generic 'he'	Every student must have a pencil, and **he** should always bring it to class.	Defines *student* as exclusively male.	Every student must have a pencil, and **they** should always bring it to class. Every student must have a pencil, and **he or she** should always bring it to class.
Man as a verb	I have four students to **man** the internship table.	Implies once again that persons referred to are exclusively male.	I have four students to **staff** the internship table.
Man used to mean humankind	Is **man** inherently capitalistic?	The human race is interpreted then as male-centric, placing non-males on the outside of the species.	Is **humankind** inherently capitalistic? Other alternatives: **human race, human beings**
Gendered words, titles, and work positions	Chairman Fireman Policeman Postman	Assumes male dominance in these fields.	**Chair** or **Chairperson** **Firefighter** **Police officer** **Postal worker**
Stereotyping	The cheerleader busied **herself** with **her** practice. The student was disappointed when **he** learned **he** couldn't drive **his** motorcycle to school. Or using gender/sex qualifiers for certain occupations to counter these assumptions,	This assumes that a particular sex/gender is fit for only particular roles.	Refrain from using gender markers, and refer to a female coach simply as a **coach** or a male nurse simply as a **nurse**. To avoid stereotyping occupations, either vary pronoun usage or use the singular **they**.

Youth Inclusion Instructional Aid:
Inclusive Language Answer Key

	such as *lady coach* or *male nurse.*		
Suffixes	waiter/waitress actor/actress	Applies gender irrelevantly.	**Server** **Actor**