

# Background and Information about the Training



## OBJECTIVES

**At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:**

- Understand what they will be trained on throughout the five-day training
- Understand the background and goals of the project.



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prior to the session, make copies of the handouts on gender pronouns. Write on a flip chart sheet a schedule with topics to be presented, along with the date and the facilitators. Prepare two flip chart sheets with the headings: Group Agreements and Question Garden.
2. Welcome participants. Review goals on PowerPoint slides and distribute handouts on Gender Pronouns. Give people a few minutes to review. Provide information about bathrooms and meals, and explain that people should feel free to move about as they need.
3. Ask participants to introduce themselves, including their name, gender pronouns and where they live/work.
4. Explain that we will be using popular education principles throughout the training. Popular education is both a philosophy and methodology that has been used to train CHWs all over the world and is recognized as a best practice for training CHWs. We will share more about the principles and methods of popular education later.
5. Introduce the question garden. Explain that if there is a question that we don't know the answer to, we can write it on the question garden, do some research, and then share the information with the group.
6. Brainstorm with participants about group agreements/ground rules on a flip chart sheet. Ask, "What agreements do we want to set as a group to ensure we all learn from this training and feel comfortable and respected?" Suggested topics:
  - Make space, take space (explain further as needed).
  - Once the facilitator says, "I will call on x and then on y and then we are moving on," please allow the facilitator to move on.
  - Please put cell phones on vibrate and put them away. Refrain from using phones unless it is an emergency.

(continued)



## Related C3 Roles

All

## Related C3 Skills

All



## Method(s) of Instruction

Brief presentation, brainstorming

*Facilitators note: This is an example of how to introduce the training program. You may want to adapt to fit the needs of your program.*



## Estimated time

20 minutes



## Key Concepts

N/A



## Materials

- Computer internet access and projector
- Flip chart
- Markers

## *Handouts*

- Introducing Gender Pronouns
- Navigating Gender Pronouns #1
- Navigating Gender Pronouns #2

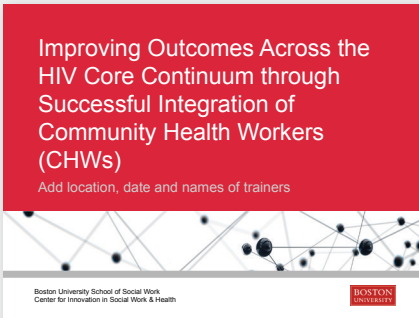
# Background and Information about the Training



## **INSTRUCTIONS** *(continued)*

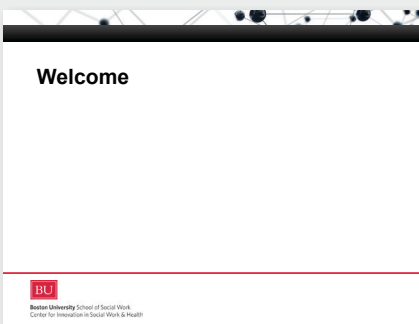
- Because we will be addressing highly charged topics (like injustice and oppression), you may feel some strong emotions. Popular education makes space for emotions. If you need to process with a facilitator during a break, we will be available.
  - If you take offense at something someone says, speak to the person individually during a break. Please try to do so in a way that does not cause further offense.
  - Listen to understand, not to respond.
7. Wrap up. Ask, “Does anyone have questions before we proceed?”

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## SLIDE 1

*Facilitator's note: Add location, date and name of trainers.*



## SLIDE 2

Welcome participants to the training.

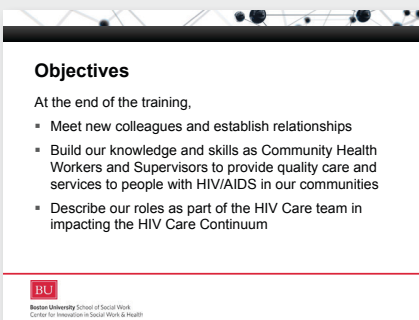
Facilitators should introduce themselves, including their gender pronouns and their connection to this work.

We want to create space that is welcoming for all. One way that judgement and bias come up is that we are taught to call people by gender pronouns like "he" or "she" based on the way they look. This assumption isn't helpful for anyone, and in particular impacts our transgender community members. We believe it's part of basic respect to call people by the name and pronoun they ask for, so we'll ask everyone to share their name and the gender pronoun you use when introducing yourself. This might be "she," "he," "they," or another gender pronoun. Please pay attention to what people ask to be called, even if it's new for you.

If you'd rather not to share that part of your identity, feel free to leave that out. But if this is your first time being asked to share your pronouns, we invite you to participate.

Ask participants to introduce themselves, including their name, gender pronouns and where they live/work. Explain that we will have an Icebreaker activity to get to know each other better in a few minutes.

Select an Icebreaker for participants to get to know each other.



## SLIDE 3

Review the objectives.

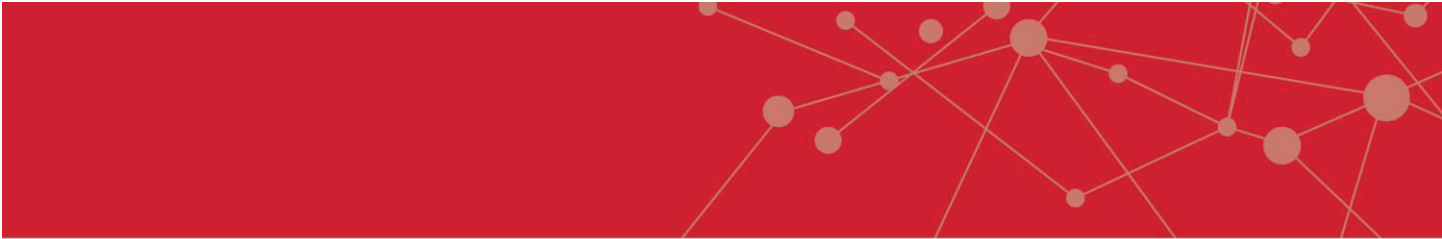
# Introducing Gender Pronouns

## Introducing Gender Pronouns in Group Meetings

- People rarely get defensive or frustrated if you explain up front what a pronoun is and why you're asking. If someone does get upset, you can say "we try not to make assumptions about which pronouns people use based on how they are seen" or "this is something we do at our organization to make sure we're being respectful of everyone."
- If someone makes a joke or pushes back about why this is important, here's a few things you can do:
  - Engage in conversation. Ask them if they've heard about the organization's work to be trans-affirming; if they haven't heard about it, offer to them a bit and listen to what they have to say.
  - Respond to their comment by saying "we do this in all meetings because some of our clients, volunteers, and staff are trans, and we want it to be a place of respect for everyone."
  - If they are in a place of defensiveness, you can simply say "it's just something we ask everyone to share here so that we can all be respected"
- It's normal for people to feel challenged by learning pronouns that are new to them or using pronouns that are different than the way they perceive someone. At the same time, using respectful pronouns is a critical way of showing basic respect. So if you notice someone getting someone else's pronoun wrong, make sure you refer to that person with the right pronoun as an example "yes, she did make a great point" or simply say "oh, I think that person goes by (he/she/they/etc.)" and move on. If someone is using someone else's pronouns incorrectly, check in with the person being mispronounced, and ask them how they'd like you to handle it (correct it in the larger group, take the other person aside afterwards, ignore it, etc).
- It's okay for some people not to share their pronouns or to not want their pronouns corrected if someone messes up. There are many reasons why they may feel uncomfortable – they may be questioning their own pronouns, or as a trans person they may be tired of being the only one to have a pronoun different than what's expected. For trans people, it can be emotionally exhausting to constantly correct others who get their pronouns wrong. Whatever the reason may be, don't worry about forcing anyone to share. Do be aware that it's important for cisgender people (people who identify with the gender they are expected to) to take the practice of using pronouns seriously.

## How to continue these practices

- In staff meetings, practice using the full introduction so you can get comfortable with it – this may feel unnecessary if you all know each other already but it will go a long way in building your comfort with how to introduce pronouns in other groups.
- Once your staff and/ or client group regularly uses pronouns in introductions, make sure you do a brief explanation and reminder each time someone new joins the group or meeting.
- Get creative! Your group can use nametags, name tents, fun introductions (name, pronoun, and



- unexpected talent) and other ways to make the practice fit unto what you're already doing.
- Remember that every one of your meetings, groups, and other shared space is a chance to make your organization a more welcoming place for transgender people. When mistakes happen or people have questions, these are opportunities to help cisgender (or non-transgender) people understand the importance of trans affirming spaces.

Resource developed by tash shatz with adaptations from materials by Basic Rights Oregon, Nash Jones, and Neola Young.

# Navigating Gender Pronouns #1

## What are the different kinds of gender pronouns?

<i>Gendered Pronouns</i>	She/Her/Hers/Herself
	He/Him/His/Himself
<i>Gender Neutral Pronouns</i>	They/Them/Their/Theirs/Themself
	Ze/Hir/Hirs/Hirself (pronounced “zee” and “here”)
	Plus many others!!

## Why do pronouns matter?

- Pronouns are a big part of many languages, and a common way that many of us refer to one another in conversation. **Using someone’s pronouns correctly is an important part of showing basic respect, just like using someone’s correct name.** For example, it would be disrespectful to call your friend Tom by “Thomas” or to refer to your client Brittany as “Brad.”
- It’s normal to feel challenged by adjusting when someone changes pronouns, learning pronouns that are new to you, or using pronouns that are different than the way you perceive someone. While it may require you to stretch outside of your comfort zone, using respectful pronouns is a critical way that you can begin to reexamine assumptions about gender that particularly harm trans communities.

## How do you find out what pronouns someone uses?

- The commonly practiced method can lead to making mistakes. We can’t tell what pronoun someone uses based on how they look/how we are reading their gender expression.
- Ask them!
  - If you are eventually going to use a person’s pronouns in conversation, you should find out which pronouns the person uses!
  - If you’re going to ask some people, ask all people! Don’t isolate only people you read as gender nonconforming.
  - The question can sound like, “I use he/him pronouns, what pronouns do you use?” (Share your own even if you never get referred to with the wrong pronouns!)
  - If someone is confused by the question, they may not know what a pronoun is! Sharing your own can help give them an example, or you could phrase your question more specifically (e.g. “How do you like to be referred to by others? Some people use she or he or they...”)
  - If someone gets upset or defensive, they likely do not understand why you are asking. You might take a moment in advance to explain why you’re asking: “I’m working on not making assumptions about which pronoun people use based on how I see them,” or “This is something we do at our organization/agency to make sure we’re being respectful of everyone.”



## When do you ask about pronouns?

- When you're meeting someone new! Pairing the pronoun question up with the name question can help to know when you might ask.
- If you are a provider, you can add a question about pronouns on your intake form along with other identifying information. If not on your intake form, you can ask during an intake interview. See above for example language.
- You can add pronouns to the list of what folks should share in a meeting when you would usually go around and share names and departments.

## **Isn't asking for pronouns outing\* someone?** (\*To "out" someone is to disclose their identity without their consent)

- Actually, pronouns are not private. Pronouns are social! You and others will use pronouns for someone regardless of whether space is created for them to share the ones they actually use. If you ask everyone, you won't be targeting anyone in particular or isolating them.

# Navigating Gender Pronouns #2

- It is true that some people use different pronouns in different spaces and not respecting this could out them. Find out if a client, colleague, or friend only uses their pronouns in some spaces and uses different pronouns in others. (e.g. a student who uses one pronoun at school and another at home for safety reasons.)

**What if I haven't had the opportunity to find out what pronouns someone uses?** This might also come up because you have incredibly limited interactions with clients/students/colleagues, which do not often warrant a pronoun conversation.

- Use gender neutral language! Here are some examples:
  - "A client/student/customer up front is wondering where to go to turn the paperwork in..."
  - "I don't know what pronouns that person uses" or "I liked what that person said about..."
  - "There's someone here I don't recognize; have you met them? Over there with the glasses..."

**What do I do if I accidentally use the wrong pronouns for someone? How should I react?**

- Acknowledge your mistake. This can sound like simply changing to the correct pronoun mid-sentence. (e.g. "I was telling her...um, him to come by in the afternoon.")
- Move on quickly. Do not sit in the moment stewing over the mistake (e.g. "Oh shoot! I've been so good at getting it right lately! It's tough, I mean I knew him before he was a him!"). Get back to whatever you were talking about as soon as you've changed to the right pronoun.
- Center the needs of the person who was mispronounced, not your own. Your needs are probably to be assured you are still a good person/ally or affirmed in the work you've been doing to respect that person's identity ("I've been trying! I've been getting better!"). Do not look to be taken care of by the mispronounced person (e.g. "Cut me some slack" or otherwise putting them in the position to say, "it's ok"); take care of them in that moment by correcting yourself and moving on. If you need to process what happened, do it later, on your own time, with someone other than that person.

**How do you use gender neutral pronouns in a sentence?**

**They** "They are bringing their friend with them because they don't like being by themselves."  
-"Whose is this?" "It's theirs"

**Ze/Hir** "Ze is bringing hir friend with hir because ze doesn't like being by himself."  
"Whose is this?" -"It's hers"

**Who uses gender neutral pronouns?**

- ~~Only young people.~~ People of any age use gender neutral pronouns! Age and pronouns do not correlate in any particular way.
- ~~Only people of certain genders.~~ Gender neutral pronouns are used by people who hold a variety of different gender identities.





### **Other best practices to remember:**

- **Say “gender pronoun” rather than “preferred pronoun.”** Pronouns are often not simply a preference (such as “I prefer chocolate ice cream to vanilla, but I’ll take whatever”) but a key part of respecting one another.
- **Talk about specific pronouns such as she, he, they, etc. rather than saying “female pronouns” or “male pronouns.”** Though gendered pronouns are culturally associated with gender identities (e.g. men use “he” and women use “she”), this does not apply to everyone. For example, some people who use “she” do not identify as women but may use “she/her” pronouns for safety reasons or in different situations.

**If you’ve never had your pronouns questioned, be mindful of how you share your pronouns.** For example, if you say “I don’t care” or “you can use any pronoun for me,” make sure that you understand the impact of being called pronouns different than what you are used to being called.

# Acknowledgements

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