

# HIV Communication: Using Preferred Language to Reduce Stigma



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Stigmatizing	Preferred
HIV infected person	Person living with HIV, PLHIV. Do not use "infected" when referring to a person. Use <i>People First Language</i> , which emphasizes the person, not their diagnosis
HIV or AIDS patient, AIDS or HIV carrier	
Positives or HIVers	
Died of AIDS, to die of AIDS	Died of AIDS-related illness, AIDS-related complications, or end stage HIV
AIDS virus	HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis not a virus it cannot be transmitted)
Full-blown AIDS	There is no medical definition for this phrase, simply use the term AIDS, or Stage 3 HIV.
HIV virus	This is redundant; use HIV.
Zero new infections	Zero new HIV acquisitions/transmissions
HIV infections	HIV transmissions, diagnosed with HIV, PLHIV
HIV infected	living with/diagnosed with HIV or contracted/acquired HIV
Number of infections	Number diagnosed with HI or /number of HIV acquisitions
Became infected	Contracted, acquired, diagnosed with
HIV-exposed infant	Infant exposed to HIV
Serodiscordant couple	Serodifferent, magnetic, or mixed status couple
Mother to child transmission	Vertical transmission/perinatal transmission
Victim, Innocent Victim, Sufferer, contaminated, infected	Person living with HIV, survivor, warrior (Do not use "infected" when referring to a person)
AIDS orphans	Children orphaned by loss of parents/guardians who died of AIDS related complications
AIDS test	HIV test (AIDS is a diagnosis, there is not an AIDS test)
To catch AIDS, To contract AIDS, Transmit AIDS, To catch HIV	An AIDS diagnosis, developed AIDS, to contract HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis, which cannot be passed from one person to the next)
Compliant	Adherent
Prostitute or prostitution	Sex worker, sale of sexual services, transactional sex
Promiscuous	This is a value judgment and should be avoided instead use "having multiple partners"
Unprotected sex	Condomless sex with PrEP, Condomless sex without PrEP, sex not protected by condoms, sex not protected by antiretroviral prevention methods
Death Sentence, Fatal condition or life-threatening condition	HIV is a chronic health condition, a manageable health condition (as long as people are in care and treatment)
"Tainted" blood; "dirty" needles	Blood containing HIV; shared needles
Clean, as in "I am clean are you?"	Referring to yourself or others as being "clean" suggests that those living with HIV are dirty. Avoid this term
"a drug that prevents HIV infection"	a drug that prevents the <del>transmission</del> <sup>Acquisition or contraction</sup> of HIV
End HIV, End AIDS	End HIV transmission, Be specific: are we ending HIV or AIDS?

Thanks to those who have assisted in the creation and dissemination of this information.  
We continue to educate in order to reduce stigma and improve the quality of life for those living with HIV.  
In honor of those who have gone before us and those who continue to advocate for human rights.

consumer -  
catch HIV -

use client, person living with HIV / PLWHA  
use "contract HIV"





## People First Language

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People-first language is a type of linguistic prescription in English. It aims to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities and is sometimes referred to as a type of disability etiquette. People-first language can also be applied to any group that is defined by a condition rather than as a people: for example, "those that are homeless" rather than "the homeless".

Rather than using labels to define individuals with a health issue, it is more appropriate to use terminology, which describes individuals as being diagnosed with an illness or disorder. People first language puts the person before the diagnosis and describes what the person has not what the person is.

The basic idea is to use a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second, for example, "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled people" or "disabled", in order to emphasize that "they are people first". Because it is a common practice in English to place an adjective before a noun, the adjective might be replaced with a relative clause, e.g., from "an asthmatic person" to "a person who has asthma". Furthermore, the use of *to be* is deprecated in favor of using *to have*.

By using such a sentence structure, the speaker articulates the idea of a disability as a secondary attribute, not a characteristic of a person's identity.

**The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.**  
*Mark Twain*

## The Denver Principles

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**The Denver Principles** are the defining manifesto of People with AIDS' (PWAs) fight for self-empowerment against a seemingly inflexible healthcare industry. The PWA movement is largely credited with helping the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) overhaul how medicines are tested and approved as well as ensuring that women are a part of the testing procedures. The patient bill of rights also empowered people living with other diseases to network and organize as well.