

# Let's Talk About PRONOUNS

A Guide for Providers, Educators,  
Caregivers & Communities



## WHAT IS A PRONOUN?



A pronoun is a word that refers to the individual speaking, someone, or something that is the focus of discussion.

## Gender Specific PRONOUNS



These are the ways we refer to each other in the third person. Some Transgender or Non-binary folks may decide to change their pronouns during a social transition.

## Gender Neutral PRONOUNS



There is nothing wrong with gender-specific pronouns. However, gender neutral pronouns do not carry the weight of expectations attributed to gender.

### They/Them

These are the most common gender neutral pronouns.

### Ze (Zee)/Sie (See)/Zie (Zee)/Hir (Hear)

These are less common, but should still be respected. They are sometimes referred to as "neo pronouns."

## First Name Basis NO PRONOUNS, please!

Some people do not use pronouns and instead use their given name as a pronoun instead.

## Why are pronouns important?

Asking and correctly referring to someone with the desired pronoun is the most fundamental way to **demonstrate consideration and respect** for others.

*Referring to someone with the incorrect pronoun can result in feelings of dismissal, dysphoria, disempowerment, and devaluation of identity. Refusal to acknowledge and respect pronouns is oppressive behavior that results in force of normative privilege and discounts the respect all individuals deserve.*

## ASK!

### How do I learn someone's pronoun?

Just ask! "What pronouns should I use to refer to you?" "Which pronouns do you use?" "Can you remind me of your pronouns?" While doing so may feel new and even uncomfortable for you, it is appreciated and helps avoid other uncomfortable situations that result from making assumptions or learning about the mistake later.

### It's okay. mistakes do happen.

If you mistakenly used the wrong pronoun(s), the best response is to acknowledge the mistake with an apology, use the correct pronoun, and move on with the conversation. Try to avoid reiteration of guilt, worry, and apology. By moving forward, you avoid creating unnecessary social discomfort for yourself and others.

**Ask!** Do not ever rely on assumption or your own confidence by simply thinking you know. Openly ask about pronouns.

**Learn.** Take some time to familiarize yourself with gender pronouns. Seek out literature and discussion opportunities for continued personal development and understanding.

**Advocate.** Lead by example and be an ally for others through your own conduct. Be mindful of others, and when a friend, neighbor, or colleague makes a mistake – gently correct them.