

EU4Health BOOST Project – EuroNPUD Lexicon for Resources

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What to Say	What Not to Say	Context	Source
People/person who use/s drugs	Drug user; drug abuser; druggo; druggies; drug fiend; acronyms (PWUD, etc.), addict	Person-first language recognises our collective humanity. Removes moral judgment e.g. ‘abuser’ or constructing people using drugs as a ‘problem’. Take care to state the complete phrase or term. Acronyms can dehumanise and objectify, reducing people to a set of capital letters and should be avoided in verbal communication.	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Person living with hepatitis B/C Person who has hepatitis B/C	Carrier, infected, diseased, contaminated. Victim/sufferer	These terms are considered offensive and encourage stigma. While viral hepatitis can have a significant impact on a person, these terms are disempowering and implies they have no control over their lives	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018
Person living with HIV, person with HIV. The acronym PLHIV can be used if necessary.	HIV-infected person, HIV or AIDS patient, AIDS or HIV carrier, Positives, HIVers	Never use ‘infected’ when referring to a person	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2024
People/person who inject drugs	Injector; junkie; smack-head; injecting drug user; meth-head; acronyms (PWID, IDU, etc.)	‘Injector’ defines a person solely on the basis of a practice they engage in. Slang and shortcuts can, implicitly or explicitly, be judgemental and pejorative, and acronyms should be avoided.	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
People/person who smoke drugs People using drugs through inhalation People who smoke	Pothead; chuffer; Meth-head; crackhead	Communities can reclaim identity by taking back or ‘reclaiming’ terms, but this does not mean others should adopt these terms without constraint.	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020

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crack			
People/person who use/s drugs occasionally or opportunistically	Recreational drug user	<p>People use drugs for many reasons and can experience drug use as ‘recreational’ even if their drug use is regular, frequent, or ‘dependent’.</p> <p>“Recreational” is an abstract and imprecise term.</p> <p>This can be used to describe people who use drugs in party or nightlife settings setting</p>	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
People/person with drug dependence	Addict; drug addict; drug abuser; problem[atic] drug user; misuser; substance abuser*; person who is addicted, junkie	<p>‘Addict’ language is based on morality and negative connections. It describes people as compromised and as if they are a collection of symptoms. Pathologising, disempowering, and creates barriers for people.</p> <p>*People/person with a substance use disorder – see explanation on “substance use disorder” below.</p>	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Drug dependence	Addiction; drug addiction; substance abuse; substance use Disorder† Chaotic drug use Problematic drug use	<p>Addiction-as-disease model is highly contested, based on an arbitrary set of symptoms that label people as sick, dangerous, disempowered, and unable to exercise agency, choice, and self-determination.</p> <p>Drug dependency relates to the physical/psychological connection to a chemical/compound within framework of tolerance, adaption and withdrawal.</p> <p>Does not carry the historical and political connotations of ‘addiction’. †</p> <p>“Substance Use Disorder”: sometimes the use of definitions can be complex e.g. DSM V replaced “addiction” in the previous version (DSM IV) with “substance use disorder” – this was viewed as a step forward.</p>	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Currently using drugs	Relapse; non-abstinent; fallen off the wagon;	Removes negative connotations associated with taking up using after	Words Matter,

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	using again; had a setback; lost cause	a period of not using. Use appropriate modifiers including occasional or opportunistic drug use (see above).	INPUD, 2020
People/person who has used drugs	Clean; sober; drug-free; ex user; in recovery; maintaining recovery; ex-alcoholic	Previous expertise in using drugs. Phrase that acknowledges the time component can be fluid - states facts without additional emotion, value judgment, or negative connections.	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Positive/negative drug screen; Presence/absence of drug metabolite in screening process (clinical)	Clean/dirty urine/blood	Keeps to neutral and medically accurate terminology; removes any connotation or meaning with emotive/judgmental words	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Communities (of people who use drugs); Networks (of people who use drugs); Peer-led networks	Drug using population[s]; affected communities; vulnerable populations	Positive recognition of sense of connection, empathy, and trust among people who use drugs. Reduces the surveillance or 'victim' aspect, and is defined in purely epidemiological/public health or social welfare terms	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Opioid Treatment Program; Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT); Opioid Agonist Maintenance Treatment (OAMT)	Opioid Substitution Treatment; Opioid Replacement Therapy	Effective treatment for opioid dependence that is not simply 'replacing' or 'substituting' one drug for another. There are various terms for prescribing a pharmaceutical equivalent for people who use opiates.	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020 Moving Beyond Person First Language, Sdf, 2020
Client/s; participants (clinical)	Patient	Term client[s] generally preferred for people using drugs who are receiving services. Patient can evoke a sense of 'power over' or imbalance within medical framework and/or the 'disease model'. Participant implies consent	Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Contract, acquire Exposed to hepatitis B/C Diagnosed with hepatitis B/C	Catch it, became infected with Reinfected	These terms suggest something that is contagious and should be avoided or feared When speaking to someone who has cured hepatitis C and acquires it again, using the term reinfected may be	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018

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		incorrectly perceived by the person that their initial treatment was a failure and a waste	
Transmit/ transmission	Spread Give	Transmission is the correct term when referring to the virus passing from one person to another	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018
Chooses to/ chooses not to; Adherent/non adherent	Compliant/non compliant	These terms characterise the individual as cooperative or uncooperative., and regard the person as a passive and submissive recipient of care.	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018 Words Matter, INPUD, 2020
Positive/negative blood screen Blood containing hepatitis B/C	Dirty/clean blood Tainted blood	Referring to someone who tests negative as clean suggests that people who test positive are dirty.	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018
Sterile/contaminated Used/unused New/old	Clean/dirty needle Dirties	The comparison between clean and dirty separates into two groups: good and bad	Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018
Died of AIDS-related illness, AIDS-related complications, end stage HIV	Died of AIDS, to die of AIDS	Saying 'Died of AIDS' is simplistic and does not describe people's conditions properly.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
HIV	AIDS virus	People are often confused between the two: HIV is a virus which, in time, can lead to development of AIDS, which is a syndrome if the person is not receiving adequate medication. Developing AIDS is avoidable as long as a person follows the correct medical therapy.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
AIDS, Stage 3 HIV	Full blown AIDS	There is no medical definition for this phrase.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project,

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			2018
HIV	HIV virus	This is redundant as virus is implicated in the V of HIV	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
Zero new transmissions	Zero new infections	'Infection' can imply a stigmatising meaning. 'Transmission' is more neutral.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
HIV; HIV acquisition; diagnosed with HIV; living with HIV or diagnosed with HIV	HIV infection; HIV infected	'Infection/infected' can imply a stigmatising meaning. 'Acquisition', 'Diagnosed with' 'Living with' are more neutral phrasings.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
Number diagnosed with HIV; number of HIV acquisitions	Number of infections	'Infection' can imply a stigmatising meaning. 'Diagnoses/Acquisitions are more neutral phrasings.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
Infant exposed to HIV, infant born to a person living with HIV	HIV-exposed infant	Person-first language recognises the humanity and removes moral judgement.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
Vertical HIV transmission or perinatal HIV transmission	Mother-to-child HIV transmission	'Vertical HIV transmission or perinatal HIV transmission' are the correct medical definitions and avoid assigning blame to mothers. Furthermore, they better reflect different transmission routes: during pregnancy, during birth, or through breastfeeding. Lastly, they account for different caregiving contexts: not all parents who give birth identify as 'mothers' and not all infants are breastfed by the parent who birthed them.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
HIV test	AIDS test	AIDS is a diagnosis, there is no AIDS test	Why Language Matters,

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			The Well Project, 2018
Sex worker; sale of sexual services; transactional sex	Prostitute or prostitution	Sex worker; sale of sexual services; transactional sex are non stigmatising, neutral terms which instead support the recognition that sex work is work. This phrasing was coined by the sex workers' movement itself.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
Having multiple sex partners	Promiscuous	'Promiscuous' has a stigmatising meaning. 'Having multiple sexual partners' is a descriptive and neutral phrasing.	Why Language Matters, The Well Project, 2018
<p>People of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)</p> <p>People from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA) community</p>		<p>SOGIESC makes more sense in technical, policy/research/health/legal language.</p> <p>LGBTQIA+ is more useful when talking to communities, or in an awareness campaign.</p>	Need reference ar
People/person with lived and living experience			Need reference
		<p>Black, indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC)</p> <p>Black African Middle Eastern (BAME)</p>	Need reference

References:

1. Words Matter, INPUD, 2020,
<https://inpud.net/words-matter-language-statement-reference-guide/>
2. Moving Beyond Person First Language, Scottish Drugs Forum, 2020
<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33136/1/Moving-Beyond-People-First-Language.pdf>
3. Preferred Language About HIV, The Well Project, 2024,
<https://www.thewellproject.org/hiv-information/why-language-matters-facing-hiv-stigma-our-own-words#Preferred%20Language>
4. Language Matters, Hepatitis Victoria, 2018,
https://liverwell.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LanguageMatters-guide-2018_web.pdf



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