

Gender Sensitivity COMMUNICATION TIPS

Here is sample language for when you have to talk to your clients about gender:

- I am going to ask you for some personal information about your identities. I want to learn more about who you are, and I want to make sure that I am respecting you whenever we meet.
- I am asking these questions without anyone else in the room to give you a private and confidential space to share any information about your identities and experiences that you want to share with me.
- The information you share with me is confidential, unless I think your safety or the safety of someone else is at risk.
- Sometimes clients have thoughts or questions about this process. Do you have any questions about what I've discussed so far?
- Some of these concepts or terms are new. Please ask me questions about the words I'm using, what I'm asking, or why I'm asking. Language is constantly changing, so please share whichever words work best for you, even if they're not listed as an answer to my questions.
- You may also feel uncomfortable sharing this information, especially if you have never shared this information about yourself before. You do not have to answer any question you are not comfortable answering, and you do not have to share any information you wish to keep to yourself.

(Adapted from Barba et al. (2021). Identifying the Intersection of Trauma and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Part I and II: The Screener.)

Some additional sample language for when you first meet a client:

1. What name should I use for you

- If someone identifies a name that differs from their intake documentation or the name that is used on their ID, consider asking the following questions:
- Is there anyone you would like me not to use this name around? What name should I use around them?
- Would you like me to talk to other staff at this organization to let them know they should use this name?
- Are you comfortable with me writing this name in your records, where other people might see it?

2. What are your pronouns?

- I'm going to list some commonly used pronouns. You can choose from these options or tell me the pronouns you feel best describe you. You can choose more than one.
- If someone does not understand what a pronoun is, you can ask, "Do you like being called he, she, they, or something else?" If someone still does not understand what a pronoun is, it can be helpful to provide an example: "If I were to leave the room you would say, 'She left the room.' She and her are my

pronouns. If you were to leave the room, how would you want people to refer to you?" He/Him, She/Her, They/Them, Ze/Zir/Hir, I'm not sure.

- If someone identifies pronouns that differ from their intake documentation, consider asking the following questions. Is there anyone you do not want me to use these pronouns around? What pronouns should I use around them? Would you like me to talk to other staff at this organization to let them know they should use these pronouns? Are you comfortable with me writing these pronouns in your records, where other people might see them?

This question is only necessary if the information is required by your organization.

3. What is your gender? What gender or genders do you identify with the most?

- If they do not understand the question, consider saying: I'm going to list some common gender identities. You can choose from these options or tell me the terms that best describe your gender. You can choose more than one. Reading through the options can often help clarify. Male, Female, Two Spirited, Agender, Gender Fluid, Gender Queer, Gender Expansive, Non-Binary, Trans Female, Trans Male, Questioning/Exploring, I'm not sure, prefer not to respond.

