The Y’s mission is reflected by the core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. These values inspire us to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and be authentic in all aspects of diversity including ability, age, cultural background, economic status, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, ideology, language, national origin, political view, race or sexual orientation. Together, we celebrate strong, inclusive communities FOR ALL.

For 167 years, our core values and “spirit, mind and body” focus, have grounded us to weather social change, expand membership, enhance our services and thrive as a community organization that bridges divides and cultivates human relationships.

We are advancing diversity, equity and inclusion through an intentional strategic plan, BELONG WITH THE YMCA, to emphasize to our members, employees, donors, stakeholders and communities that the YMCA stands committed to creating strong, inclusive communities that reject discrimination in all forms. This plan turns ideas into action and underscores our dedication to equity. Through these strategies, the YMCA will become a more inclusive, diverse, multicultural organization embracing anti-racist principles that actively identify and break down systems that perpetuate inequities.

GOAL: To create an environment in which staff, members and other stakeholders experience an organization rich with multicultural inclusivity, the promotion of equity across all walks of life and a genuine sense of belonging for people of all demographics and identities with intentional focus on underrepresented and historically marginalized communities.

PURPOSE: To assure that the YMCA is promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring that our promise to be “Open to All” remains at the forefront of our approach to staff, members, community partners and our communities, and increasing collective awareness of the YMCA as an agent of social change.

This framework is designed to create a space for transparency and open dialogue where our community and staff can engage, collaborate and hold each other accountable to the Y’s work of providing health equity, equity of opportunity and equity in education and leadership to all residents within our region. The YMCA recognizes that this is ongoing, comprehensive work and is committed to making the changes needed to be foundational and sustainable. We are dedicated to being an organization where the entire community can thrive.
LEADERSHIP: The President and CEO of the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND in collaboration with the Y’s department of Social Responsibility has assembled a team of staff and volunteers to establish and evaluate metrics to measure the success of the DEI Strategic Plan.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Cabinet is comprised of staff representatives from across the organization. This cabinet will:

- Champion and model a cause-centered culture that is grounded in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
- Participate in and initiate thought leadership that will generate solution-focused, asset-based approaches toward the strategic implementation of DEI goals in the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
- Exhibit a commitment to develop organizational policies, procedures and practices that are rooted in justice and equitable for all our employees and members and creates an environment where all can grow and thrive free of discrimination in any form.
- Recommend achievable plans of action that enable effective integration of DEI strategies across key operational and programmatic areas to have meaningful impact across the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

Mission, Equity and Inclusion Committee is comprised of volunteers (Board Members) and staff at the Association level and embedded within each Branch Board of Managers:

- Recommends achievable plans of action that enable effective integration of DEI strategies across key operational and programmatic areas to have meaningful impact within their specific community.
- Supports YMCA community engagement that leverages the power that exists within historically marginalized populations toward the achievement of equitable outcomes for all.
- Fosters community cohesion.
- Holds all employees of the Y accountable to the achievement of the DEI Strategic Plan.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is comprised of CEO, COO, and CFO at the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND and are charged to boldly listen, lead, and drive the implementation of the DEI Strategic Plan for the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.

Anti-racism subcommittee within the DEI Cabinet commissioned by the CEO, comprised of staff and volunteers are tasked with analyzing policies, procedures and practices that need critical examination across multiple dimensions of diversity, to include:

- Identifying and discerning areas of racism and discrimination in any of our policies, guidelines or practices.
- Developing recommendations and subsequent action steps that address any areas of discrimination, devaluing and/or disenfranchisement within the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
Our employees are the Y’s most important resource. We are dedicated to becoming the most welcoming, inclusive, equitable organization possible, where employees feel a genuine sense of belonging. Y staff will reflect and represent the diverse and multicultural communities where we all live, work and play, and our authentic relationships with one another will create a culture of compassion and empathy where everyone can thrive. Employee Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives focus on retention, recruitment, advancement and culture.

**OBJECTIVE:** To recruit, hire and retain diverse, multicultural staff, with a focus on BIPOC, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities reflective and representative of the communities in which we work at all levels of the organization.

- By 2025, our employees will be at least 70 percent reflective of community demographics.

This will be assessed in Q1 of each year to continue work outlined below as is or to course correct. See Appendix 1 for a more detailed breakdown of staff representation.

**STRATEGY:** Periodic reviews of hiring policies and procedures to confirm that the YMCA is actively identifying and dismantling systems that perpetuate inequities.

**STRATEGY:** Understand the community demographics around YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND branch locations.

- **Tactic:** Review demographic data from the Richmond Metro Region and provide insights to the branches on where they currently stand.
- **Tactic:** Work with YUSA to maintain updated local community demographic sheets.
- **Tactic:** Give hiring manager current branch metrics.

**STRATEGY:** Culturally intelligent recruitment of staff from historically marginalized populations.

- **Tactic:** Work with Employee Resource Groups on the promotion of open Y employee positions.
  - Incentivize current staff to recruit new hires to create a workforce that is reflective of our communities (currently active in aquatics and youth development).
- **Tactic:** Utilize the job boards at local colleges and universities (like VSU, VCU, U of R, JSCC and VUU).
- **Tactic:** Develop partnerships with local agencies that specialize in recruitment from wide ranges of diverse communities in our region.
- **Tactic:** Quarterly reviews of successful recruitment areas (Indeed.com is highest, followed by employee referrals), hiring, termination demographics.
- **Tactic:** Communicate appropriate data with all staff and stakeholders through all-staff meetings, town halls, HR newsletter and other appropriate communication avenues.
- **Tactic:** Commit to promoting and hiring staff of color in senior leadership positions.

**STRATEGY:** Utilize a multi-layered hiring approach that addresses and rectifies cultural bias in interviews and resume review.

- **Tactic:** Actively seek input from various perspectives with employees outside of the hiring unit.

**STRATEGY:** Develop employee orientation that utilizes DEI/DIG training.

- **Tactic:** Develop New Employee Orientation for part-time staff with specific DEI/DIG training embedded.
- **Tactic:** Develop Full Time Orientation (FTO) for full-time staff with specific DEI/DIG training embedded.
- **Tactic:** Develop 4–5 “short burst” training program for employees to complete prior to start.
- **Tactic:** Develop a follow up training for the first 6 months of employment that is embedded throughout the organization.

**STRATEGY:** Require training in cultural competencies and emotional IQ for all employees.

- **Tactic:** Initial training includes a clear deadline of completion within the first year of employment.
- **Tactic:** 1–3 class annual training program promoting culturally responsive practices, cultural humility and emotional intelligence for all staff.
- **Tactic:** Add DEI topics and discussion points within staff meetings and cabinet meetings; have Executive Directors lead conversations.

**STRATEGY:** Incorporate cultural conversations into quarterly staff meeting.

- **Tactic:** Develop training videos, questions that evoke discussion, honoring cultural diversity in the staff and education around various ethnic and racial groups.
OBJECTIVE: Our employees feel a deep sense of belonging, support, and encouragement in a welcoming, respectful, nurturing, and affirming environment with equitable opportunities for advancement.

- By 2023, employee engagement will increase by 3.86.
- By 2025, employee satisfaction and sense of belonging will increase by 3.96.

Currently, the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND conducts a semi-annual climate and culture survey with all full-time staff. Between the first and second surveys, responses shifted .2 points, indicating a statistically significant decline in employee satisfaction and cultural cohesion. It is important to note, this survey was taken in February 2021 during the pandemic and ongoing civil unrest.

The strategies outlined below are designed to increase employee satisfaction and enhance a sense of belonging within the staff community to be measured by an increase in the overall net promoter score by 2025, with an intermediate goal to increase employee engagement from the current 3.78 mean by 2023. For a breakdown of the Employee Engagement Report by race see Appendix 2.

STRATEGY: Hire Association-level staff member to focus on D.E.I within the organization with the goal of expanding position(s) into association leadership.
- Tactic: Work with all departments, specifically philanthropy, marketing, and leadership development, to incorporate D.E.I focused initiatives and goals into all operations.
- Tactic: Lead Association Employee Resource Groups.
- Tactic: Provide visionary leadership to DEI Cabinet sub–committees, Newcomer Welcome Center, Welcoming Week, branch board diversity efforts and community partnerships.

STRATEGY: Utilize Social Responsibility Progression Scales with branch Executive Directors and Association SMEs.
- Tactic: Individual quarterly check-in between Executive Director, VP supervisor, and a member of the Association social responsibility team to review status of progression scale progress and develop ways to move branch social equity work forward.
- Tactics: Include Social Responsibility Progression Scales in annual reviews.

STRATEGY: Share widely the various programs and support available to staff.
- Tactic: Promote SharePoint use to increase awareness of programs.
- Tactic: Quarterly notifications of the ERGs through emails or townhall discussions.
- Tactic: Quarterly notifications of EAP program through emails or townhall discussions.

STRATEGY: Measure employee satisfaction throughout the year to understand the overall morale and culture of the organization.
- Tactic: Continue Employee Engagement committee work.
- Tactic: Conduct semi-annual staff satisfaction surveys.
- Tactic: Create a list of questions that can be utilized within staff and cabinet meetings periodically to capture anecdotal employee feedback.
OBJECTIVE: Increase YMCA employees’ opportunities for advancement through transparent, equitable practices.

STRATEGY: Develop a training and succession planning program that promotes/grows part-time staff into a pathway for opportunities for full-time positions.
- Tactic: Develop DEI-specific Mentor program, training provided for mentors.
- Tactic: Utilize ERGs as key pathway clearers, coaches and cheerleaders.

STRATEGY: Advance opportunities for internal candidates to apply for open positions.
- Tactic: Continuation of the peer-coaching model.
- Tactic: Internally recruit staff whose performance indicates growth and potential readiness for a promotion.
- Tactic: Utilize the performance standard process to develop growth opportunities that ready both part-time and full-time staff for promotion.
- Tactic: Incorporate inclusive excellence (definition below) questions that are weighed as heavily as operational functions on performance reviews.
- Tactic: Provide specific feedback and constructive recommendations for future goal achievement when internal candidates are not selected.

METRICS: Conduct culture/climate surveys twice per year. Quarterly audits/examination of hiring, retention and promotion rates—specifically looking at various demographics as compared to the communities—including but not limited to; race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, diverse ability, age, and other identities that are available; utilize external volunteers (board members) to assist with unbiased reviews.
SHARING OUR STORY

Communicating our work in diversity, equity and inclusion is paramount to the success of our strategies in achieving the goals we have put forth. We are determined to increase the collective awareness of the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND as an agent of social change. We are dedicated to open dialogue, transparent actions and accountability to our staff, members, community partners and the general public.

It is vital to communicate the YMCA’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and increase collective awareness of the YMCA as an agent of social change. We are dedicated to open dialogue, transparent actions and accountability to our staff, members, community partners and the community.

We will increase awareness of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives through enhanced, culturally-intelligent communications internally and externally, ensuring that all stakeholders understand the YMCA’s mission to create a more equitable community.

OBJECTIVE: Increase understanding and awareness of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion culture work to Y staff through enhanced communication of internal and external messaging.

Offer quarterly townhall meetings to raise awareness and understanding of the work in the DEI strategic plan. (identify team for this work)

STRATEGY: Create DEI training plan focused on the seven key DEI focus areas YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND has identified: Racial Inequality and Racism, Immigrant Rights, LGBTQ+, Seniors, Children’s issues, Women’s Issues and Diverse abilities.

- **Tactics**: Staff training video required by all FT and PT staff.
- **Tactics**: Development of ongoing training plan for staff.
- **Tactics**: Monthly town hall meetings to discuss ongoing DEI work.
- **Tactics**: Ongoing discussion and roll out updates at the Operations Team, Executive Director, Association Leadership Team, Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team Meetings monthly.

OBJECTIVE: YMCA members and community partners are aware of and understand the YMCA’s mission to create a more equitable community—focused on equity of education, leadership, and health.

The YMCA will continue to push our messaging broadly through various channels that include social media, radio and TV. Currently we have a total of 1,209,600 radio impressions, 855,496 TV impressions, and 58 DEI-specific social media posts that have generated 331 likes, 14 comments and 88 shares. We will continue to drive this work and increase message saturation each year to help the community-at-large know and understand the Y’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. For a detailed list of radio and TV media spots see Appendix 4.

STRATEGY: Share For United Us DEI Campaign broadly to include efforts that the Y supports, organizes and celebrates.

- **Tactic**: Determine effective ways to share with members, partners, community members who are not engaged with the Y, board members, volunteers and other stakeholders.
- **Tactic**: Embed YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND’s DEI Marketing campaign in the online joining process.
- **Tactics**: Updated DEI FAQs.
- **Tactic**: Calendar of events.

21 DEI Calendar.Updated03.15.2021.xlsx

- **Tactic**: Updated Assets—social media posts covering all branches.
- **Tactic**: Updated Branch Assets—fliers and social media posts at a more micro level, banners, posters, digital displays.

STRATEGY: Increase earned media activity in order to elevate YMCA DEI work.

- **Tactics**: Created a quarterly focus calendar in partnership with a reputable third party.

STRATEGY: Execute a media training program for staff, volunteers and other partners.

- **Tactics**: Infuse DEI language into job descriptions.
- **Tactics**: Identify and train Y staff or volunteers as ambassadors for each of the DEI focus areas.
- **Tactics**: Board trainings/presentations.

STRATEGY: Ensure language barriers are not preventing the effective communication of the DEI Campaign.

- **Tactics**: Provide all Marcom assets in both English and Spanish.
- **Tactics**: Provide translation options of our messaging in additional languages.
- **Tactics**: Launch new website in Q2 of 2021 equipped with Google Translator to assist the automatic translation of our messaging to more than 100 languages.
- **Tactics**: Develop Spanish Facebook Page for YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND.
SHARING OUR STORY (continued)

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure that YMCA messaging is culturally intelligent.

**STRATEGY:** Make certain that a broad set of perspectives are reviewing and analyzing marketing materials on at least a bi-annual basis.

- **Tactic:** Formation of marketing advisory group; a group consisting of members of the Anti-Racism Task Force, select ERG and DEI cabinet members and select MEI members.
- **Tactic:** Review with the marketing advisory committee ways to incorporate additional asset-based language —"uplifting community strength" vs. focusing on community needs.
- **Tactic:** Annual external Audit for YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND Marketing and Communications and Member Experience.
- **Tactic:** External audits will take into consideration our peers include both gyms and other nonprofits.

**STRATEGY:** Identify ways the Y can support and elevate community-led community engagement work.

- **Tactic:** YMCA convene and host Community Conversations with community partners.
- **Tactic:** MEI committees at each YMCA branch board are active supporters.

**METRICS:** Overall communication saturation—video views, social media audit (reactions, views, shares, etc.) staff survey for information acceptance.

OUR Y COMMUNITY

A vital component of our commitment to equity is that the YMCA is Open to All. This premise is foundational—part of our "DNA"—and we are dedicated to advancing health equity, equity of opportunity, and equity in education and leadership. We work in concert with others, engage alongside community members and partners, through authentic and trusting partnerships. Community Diversity, Equity and Inclusion focuses on investments in marginalized communities, advocacy for the organization’s mission, and commitment to community partnerships.

**OBJECTIVE:** To recruit diverse, multicultural board members, with a focus on BIPOC, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities, that are reflective and representative of the communities in which we serve.

- By 2023, YMCA branch Boards of Managers will be 65 percent reflective of the communities served.
- By 2025, YMCA branch Boards of Managers will be 70 percent reflective of the communities served. This will be reviewed in Q1 of each year. For complete detail of board demographics see Appendix 3.

**STRATEGY:** Work with YMCA branch executive directors to broaden board recruitment tools.

- **Tactic:** Create partnerships with key community stakeholders
  - Ex: Various houses of worship, residential communities, schools, County management (etc.)
- **Tactic:** Build community outreach through partnerships with organizations with like-minded missions and non-profit networks.
- **Tactic:** Equip executive directors with demographic information relevant to their service area footprint.

**STRATEGY:** Incorporate cultural conversations into bi-annual board meetings.

- **Tactic:** Develop training videos and questions that evoke discussion that honors cultural diversity in the volunteers, members, and staff with education around multiple ethnic and racial groups.
**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure YMCA donors are aware of and understand the YMCA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**STRATEGY:** Clearly define gift acceptance policy to include the YMCA's DEI work.
- **Tactic:** Promote the DEI work as part of donor cultivation to ensure understanding in early stages of relationship.
- **Tactic:** Regular updates to volunteers and donors of the ongoing DEI work.

**STRATEGY:** Develop site tour process that is more engaging.

**OBJECTIVE:** To forge community partnerships that support and promote equity, inclusion and asset-based community engagement.

- The completion and expansion of capital projects in under-resourced communities will be a measurement of success.

**STRATEGY:** Devote capital and program investment opportunities within historically marginalized communities.
- **Tactic:** Northside/Petersburg facility renovations.
- **Tactic:** Manchester facility renovation, to include Newcomer Welcome Center.
- **Tactic:** Invite and utilize the talent within the community to drive the programming.

**STRATEGY:** Open opportunities for innovative partnerships with multi-level organizations (small and large) that work to advance community health equity for all.

**Tactics:** Develop relationships with partners that are listed within the platform Help1RVA. [help1rva.org](http://help1rva.org)

**STRATEGY:** Continue to invest in programming within the seven key DEI focus areas YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND has identified of equity focus: Racial Inequality and Racism, Immigrant Rights, LGBTQ+, Seniors, Children’s issues, Women’s Issues and Diverse abilities.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand Power Scholars Academy.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand GRACE Swim programming.
- **Tactic:** Implement and expand alternative student learning options as needed.
- **Tactic:** Newcomer Welcome Centers located in local YMCAs, beginning with the MANCHESTER FAMILY YMCA.
- **Tactic:** Work with partners to identify new additional programming, ex: Power Scholars, GRACE swim lessons and Miracle League.

**STRATEGY:** Identify gaps in programming.
- **Tactic:** Utilize Help1RVA to identify programs that will support our programming gaps.

**OBJECTIVE:** For all YMCA facilities to be welcoming spaces for the community to access resources that support families and individuals in reaching their full potential.

In 2020 the YMCA had 576 total closed referrals through Social Needs Navigation (SNN). By 2025, we will support 4,500 families and individuals through social needs navigation and Help1RVA.

**STRATEGY:** Utilize the Newcomer Welcome Center as a conduit to access the tools and services available for SNN and to build intentional and effective relationships within the community.

**STRATEGY:** The Y is regarded as a community liaison and partner for this work and that relationships are ongoing.
- **Tactic:** Hold regular meetings with key Newcomer Welcome Center partners.

**STRATEGY:** Embed SNN services into the MANCHESTER NEWCOMER WELCOME CENTER with expanded services.
- **Tactic:** Seek sustainable funding opportunities to hire more SNN navigators in order to serve more community members.
OBJECTIVE: To ensure that all community members can access YMCA programs and services in a barrier-free, user-friendly manner.

STRATEGY: Through the use of various technologies, becoming a Y member will be user friendly and barrier-free.

• **Tactic:** Utilize online tools for ease. Online services will offer disability-friendly features for the visual and hearing impaired.

• **Tactic:** Place kiosks within each branch to allow for in-person access to online tools with Y staff support.

• **Tactic:** Utilize the YMCA Engagement and Solution (YES) Center staff who can offer personalized help with membership and program registration.

STRATEGY: Financial Assistance (FA) is easily accessible and has an immediate turnaround.

• **Tactic:** FA will be available to anyone in need.

• **Tactic:** Boldly share the most recent FA policy prominently on our website. [ymcarichmond.org/income-based-membership/](http://ymcarichmond.org/income-based-membership/)

STRATEGY: Services offered to the community happen out in the community and within the YMCA branch buildings.

• **Tactics:** Engage with community partners to co-determine which community strengthening efforts (programs, services, etc.) are desired and potentially achievable.

• **Tactics:** Hire staff and volunteers from within the community to provide vision, leadership and implementation of programs and services.

METRICS: Measurement of success within programs (i.e. Power Scholars Academy); Board/volunteer surveys; program participant surveys; demographic breakdowns of participants and the value they find from it; Social Responsibility Progression Scales.
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RELATED RESOURCES
In addition to this style guide, YMCA of the USA offers a suite of resources to assist you in thoughtful and intentional use of inclusive language:

- Diversity, Inclusion, Global and Multicultural Development (DIGMD) Glossary of Terms
- YMCA Equity Messaging Guide
- Brand Messaging Guide
- Y-USA House Style Guide

QUESTIONS?
Email communications@ymca.net
INTRODUCTION

Why Words Matter

As a community-serving organization committed to advancing equity and inclusion for all, it is critical that the Y demonstrates in words and actions its commitment to becoming an anti-racist, multicultural organization. All Y staff and volunteers can help move the Y forward on this journey by being mindful of and consistent in the words we use to describe the diverse individuals and communities we serve.

Words matter, especially the words we use to describe one another. Words used carelessly can make people feel diminished, devalued and alienated, as well as perpetuate hurtful and harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about diverse individuals and communities. Conversely, intentional, inclusive language can make people feel seen, validated, respected and welcomed.

Using inclusive language also aligns with our organization’s core values and brand personality, which guide us in communicating in ways that are welcoming, genuine, nurturing, hopeful and determined.

The Purpose of This Style Guide

A style guide documents style preferences related to particular words or terms to ensure consistency of usage across an organization. It is not a glossary or a set of key messages (both of which are available in other Y resources as noted on page 2). Rather, it is a complementary resource that offers recommended terms, terms to avoid, guidance when it comes to capitalization and other grammatical elements, as well as general inclusive language guidelines. For full definitions of terms, please consult Y-USA's DIGMD Glossary of Terms.

How Were These Style Decisions Made?

For the initial launch of this resource, YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) prioritized four categories of identity language: ability; faith, belief and religion; gender and sexual orientation; and race and ethnicity. Relevant stakeholder groups across the Y Movement contributed to the creation of the style guide, including several of the Y’s National Employee Resource Groups.

Understanding that language evolves, Y-USA is committed to reviewing and updating this style guide periodically. The review process will also offer opportunities to expand the style guide with additional categories. We invite any Y staff or volunteer to share suggestions for additional topics and terms to update or add to future versions of this style guide by emailing communications@ymca.net.
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Self-Identification

While this document establishes specific style and wording choices for content created by Y-USA (which are also recommended for YMCAs to adopt), these choices may not apply to every individual. It is always important to respect how people choose to self-identify and defer to their preferences, interacting with them as the unique individuals they are.

Guidelines, Not Rules

While words do matter, their purpose is to facilitate — not discourage — honest dialogue around difficult topics. It’s important to remember that language evolves quickly, and preference can vary widely by region, age, and culture and based on individuals’ life experiences. We encourage Y leaders to use the recommendations included here with grace and as tools to support intentional, empathetic communication rather than fixed rules to be employed regardless of context.

Flexibility for Field-Specific Terminology and Audiences

Certain situations and audiences may require deviations from the styles presented here (e.g., the need to align with U.S. Census Bureau classifications for race and ethnicity). Such situations still represent an opportunity to take steps — for example, initiating conversations with partners or adding context and framing to communications — to demonstrate the Y’s commitment to equity and inclusion and remain true to the foundational principles of this style guide.

Offensive Terminology

Some terms are universally understood to be offensive; this style guide does not list such terms. However, we have noted certain terms to avoid, which, while considered offensive to many, may not be understood as offensive by all.
GENERAL GUIDELINES

When communicating about people and communities, keep these guidelines in mind:

- **Use person-first language** to elevate the individual and emphasize that there is more to each person than their descriptors. Mention characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race/ethnicity or ability only when relevant.
  
  *Example:* a person with diabetes instead of a diabetic

- **Use language** that empowers individuals and communities by focusing on their positive attributes and strengths and avoids portraying them as passive and/or powerless.

  *Example:* instead of saying the YMCA served at-risk youth, try the YMCA designed a program to engage youth who could benefit from literacy training

- **Be specific.** When describing an individual or community, use specific language when possible and relevant. This can help us avoid applying terminology or colloquial phrases inaccurately or in ways that are confusing and not helpful to the reader.

  *Example:* a person with bipolar disorder instead of a person with mental illness

- **Avoid stereotypes and labeling.** Stereotypes are widely held but oversimplified opinions or prejudiced attitudes about a particular group of people. They cannot accurately or effectively describe a unique individual or group and instead can imply unfair judgment or connotation. When possible, provide specific data to support your statements and add clarity.

  *Example:* instead of saying older generations struggle to use technology, try 70 percent of members over the age of 70 said they struggle with technology
ABILITY

General Guidelines

- Most importantly, follow an individual’s or a community’s preference for self-identification. Once someone has self-identified, if you are still unsure what term(s) to use, inquire to learn their preference.

- Use person-first language (e.g., a person who is deaf), but be mindful that some individuals and communities prefer identity-first language (e.g., a deaf person). For example, identity-first language is commonly preferred in the Deaf community and increasingly so in the autistic community.

- Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual’s disability. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual’s disability is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.

- Focus on what a person does rather than limitations or negative labels (e.g., a person who uses a wheelchair, not a person confined to a wheelchair, and a person with a traumatic brain injury, not brain-damaged).

- Avoid using *defect* or *defective* when describing a disability, which are considered derogatory. Instead, state the nature of the disability or injury and use the general term condition when needed.

Common Ability Terms Used in the U.S.

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<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
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</table>
| people with disabilities | people with diverse abilities serving a diversity of abilities | handicap; handicapped; handicapable the disabled the differently abled abnormal people with special needs | - This recommendation represents a shift in Y-USA style from recent years and is grounded in a recognition that *diverse ability* is not a widely used term and that many individuals have reclaimed the term *disability*. Even so, it’s important to note that *disability* is not always the preferred term of individuals and communities. Some may still view it as having a negative connotation and prefer *diverse ability*.
- *Abnormal* can be found in medical or scientific contexts but should not be used to describe an individual or community. |
### Recommended | Also Acceptable | Avoid | Context and Considerations
--- | --- | --- | ---
people without disabilities | neurotypical | normal | • *The disabled* should be avoided as a descriptive category for the disability community. However, it’s important to note that more individuals with disabilities are reclaiming the term *disabled* as a way to define their identity and discourage unpreferred alternatives.

disability community | healthy | disabled community | • The term *special needs* is still commonly used in some geographic regions, often by guardians of youth with disabilities. It is not commonly used when describing adults.

a person with [specific condition or diagnosis] | a person diagnosed with [specific condition or diagnosis] | mentally ill | • Using *normal* to describe people without disabilities implies that people with disabilities are *abnormal*.

a person with mental illness | a person with a psychiatric disability | crazy | • Refer to a person’s specific diagnosis when possible. For example, *a person with bipolar disorder* is preferable to *a person with mental illness*.

a person with a developmental disability | a person diagnosed with a developmental disability | mentally retarded | • Some individuals may dislike use of the term *mental illness* because of the stigma often associated with a mental health diagnosis.

a person with an intellectual/cognitive disability | a person diagnosed with an intellectual/cognitive disability | mentally challenged | • Avoid using psychotic, bipolar, multiple personality disorder, schizophrenic, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) colloquially or to describe anything other than a diagnosed medical condition.

| | | retarded | • While the terms *developmental disability*, *cognitive disability* and *intellectual disability* are acceptable, it is best to be specific about the disability when possible.

<p>| | | slow |</p>
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<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
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<th>Context and Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a person with a learning disability</td>
<td>diverse learners</td>
<td>learning disabled</td>
<td>• The terms developmental disability, cognitive disability and intellectual disability are acceptable when used in a person-first context to describe someone with Down syndrome, such as a person with a developmental disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a student who receives special education services</td>
<td>a person who has had a disability since birth</td>
<td>a special ed student</td>
<td>• Some individuals and communities use identity-first language and prefer to be described as an autistic person rather than a person who has autism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who has a congenital disability</td>
<td>a person who has been born with a disability</td>
<td>a special education student</td>
<td>• Avoid terms that describe an individual’s limitations or carry a condescending or negative connotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with Down syndrome</td>
<td>a person who is living with Down syndrome</td>
<td>Downs person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who has autism</td>
<td>a person who has been diagnosed with autism</td>
<td>Down’s syndrome or Down’s Syndrome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who has a physical disability</td>
<td>a person who walks with crutches</td>
<td>a quadriplegic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with quadriplegia</td>
<td>a person who uses a walker</td>
<td>a paraplegic physically challenged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with paraplegia</td>
<td></td>
<td>cripple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended: intellectual/cognitive disability

Also Acceptable: diverse learners

Avoid: high functioning, low functioning

Context and Considerations:

- The terms developmental disability, cognitive disability and intellectual disability are acceptable when used in a person-first context to describe someone with Down syndrome, such as a person with a developmental disability.

- Some individuals and communities use identity-first language and prefer to be described as an autistic person rather than a person who has autism.

- Avoid terms that describe an individual’s limitations or carry a condescending or negative connotation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a person with a mobility impairment</td>
<td>a person who uses a wheelchair</td>
<td>confined to a wheelchair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who is unable to speak</td>
<td></td>
<td>disfigured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who uses a communication</td>
<td>a blind person</td>
<td>mute</td>
<td>Some individuals and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>device</td>
<td></td>
<td>nonverbal</td>
<td>communities use identity-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who is blind</td>
<td>a person with limited vision</td>
<td></td>
<td>first language and prefer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who is visually impaired</td>
<td>a person with low vision</td>
<td></td>
<td>to be described as a blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who is deaf/partially deaf</td>
<td>a deaf person</td>
<td></td>
<td>person rather than a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person who is hard of hearing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>who is deaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Deaf community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Generally, when referring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with a brain injury</td>
<td>a person who has sustained a brain injury</td>
<td>brain-damaged</td>
<td>to an individual’s sense of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with a traumatic brain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hearing, lowercase deaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>However, be prepared to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>reflect an individual’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preference if they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capitalize Deaf when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>referring to themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When referring to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>culture or community of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>individuals who are deaf or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>partially deaf, capitalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deaf (e.g., the Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>community).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
<td><strong>Also Acceptable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoid</strong></td>
<td><strong>Context and Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with dwarfism</td>
<td>a dwarf</td>
<td>a midget</td>
<td>When using these terms, it is especially important to reflect an individual’s or a community’s self-identification preference as there is no universally preferred terminology. While some individuals identify as a little person and find the term dwarf offensive, others take the opposite view of these terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a little person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person of short stature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with a substance use disorder</td>
<td>a person struggling with addiction/alcohol addiction</td>
<td>an addict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with an alcohol use disorder</td>
<td>a person who uses/misuses drugs</td>
<td>a junkie/druggie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person in recovery</td>
<td></td>
<td>an alcoholic</td>
<td>Addiction is a neurobiological disease, so it is best to use the word only to refer to a disease or medical disorder. Avoid using the term colloquially or in a manner that implies it is a condition one can easily change (e.g., a drug problem).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person recovering from alcoholism</td>
<td></td>
<td>a person with a drug problem/alcohol problem</td>
<td>Use the word misuse in place of abuse when describing harmful drug usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a drug abuser/substance abuser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person with [chronic disease] (e.g., a person with diabetes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>a former/reformed addict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a diabetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAITH, BELIEFS AND RELIGIONS

Below are the basic identification terms related to the six most-practiced faiths, beliefs and religions in the United States. For additional context and terminology related to these religions, please reference the resource, Strengthening Inclusion: Engaging Communities of Diverse Faiths and Beliefs in Your YMCA.

General Guidelines

• Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual’s faith, belief or religious affiliation. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual’s faith, belief or religion is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.
• Be mindful that within a religion, there can be different denominations with diversity of beliefs and cultures. Avoid making broad generalizations about individuals or communities of a particular religion.
• Don’t make assumptions about a person’s religion based on their country of origin.
• Follow an individual’s or a community’s preference, and be specific when possible and relevant.
• As an organization dedicated to diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism, it is important for Y staff to consider religious holidays and observances when planning communications and events. Consult the Y’s Religious Holidays and Observances calendar to learn more.

Common Faith, Belief and Religion Terms Used in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A person who practices Buddhism is Buddhist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A person who practices Christianity is Christian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td></td>
<td>• A person who practices Hinduism is Hindu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>Also Acceptable</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Context and Considerations</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A person who practices Islam is <em>Muslim</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A person who practices Judaism is <em>Jewish</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Some individuals who do not practice Judaism may still identify as Jewish based on their ancestry, ethnicity or cultural background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• According to the Pew Research Center, the religiously unaffiliated includes atheists (do not believe in God), agnostics (not sure if there is a God), and those who respond with, “nothing in particular” when asked to state their religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religiously unaffiliated</td>
<td>atheist</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Don’t assume that someone who is not religious is an atheist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Do not conflate or draw connections between gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender is an individual’s own, internal personal sense of being a man, woman, or someone outside of the gender binary. Sexual orientation describes a person’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. To further reinforce this distinction, the identity terms that follow are separated accordingly.

General Guidelines

• Avoid references to both, either or opposite sexes or genders as a way to refer to all people. Not all people fall under one of two categories for sex or gender.

• When asking people to identify their sex or gender (e.g., on a form or survey), ensure individuals have the space to enter their own preferred term.

• Avoid heteronormative language, which is defined as language that implies that everyone is heterosexual or that heterosexuality is superior to other sexual orientations (e.g., avoid the use of terms like normal to refer to male-female relationships and special to refer to male-male or female-female relationships; avoid terms like mom and dad if you are unaware of the sexual orientation of a child’s caregiver.).

• Consider carefully when deciding whether to reference an individual’s gender identity, sexual orientation, or intersex status. Often, it is an irrelevant factor, and drawing unnecessary attention to it can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination. In addition, ensure any reference to an individual’s gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex status is used only with their knowledge and approval. This information is theirs to define and share when and how they prefer.

• Avoid attributing gender to an individual without understanding first how they identify. How a person presents does not necessarily reflect how they identify. In addition, avoid gender pronouns. When referring to unspecified persons, make your subject plural or otherwise reword to avoid gender whenever possible.

  Singular (avoid): If a member has questions, ask him or her to call me.
  Preferred: If members have questions, ask them to call me.

  In limited cases, when rewording is impossible or awkward, it is acceptable to use they/them/their as a singular or gender-neutral pronoun (e.g., The person left their credit card at the membership desk.).

• When asking individuals to share their pronouns, avoid the phrase “preferred pronouns” as the use of “preferred” can imply the pronouns used do not align with the individual’s gender identity. Simply ask for their pronouns.

• Avoid gender-specific language that can exclude people or promote stereotypes (e.g., folks or y’all instead of guys; humanity instead of mankind; first-year student instead of freshman; chairperson or chair instead of chairman).
### Common Gender Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>transgender (adj.)</td>
<td>trans man, trans woman, trans community (adj.)</td>
<td>transgendered (adj.)</td>
<td>- Identify individuals as transgender only if pertinent and only with their knowledge and approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transsexual (n. or adj.)</td>
<td>- In referencing this population, seek to include language that underscores a commitment to protecting the privacy of individuals who identify in this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a transgender (n.)</td>
<td>- Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, use the term <em>trans</em> with caution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tranny (n.)</td>
<td>- When referring to transgender individuals, use the name by which they live publicly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transvestite (n.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonbinary (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>Nonbinary</em> and <em>genderqueer</em> are not synonymous with one another or with <em>transgender</em>. See the <a href="#">DIG Glossary</a> for a full definition of these terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genderqueer (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>Nonbinary</em> and <em>genderqueer</em> are not synonymous with one another or with <em>transgender</em>. See the <a href="#">DIG Glossary</a> for a full definition of these terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender-nonconforming (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used. See the <a href="#">DIG Glossary</a> for a full definition of this term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Note the placement of the hyphen in <em>gender-nonconforming</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>Also Acceptable</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Context and Considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intersex (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>hermaphrodite (n.)</td>
<td>• Identify individuals as intersex only if pertinent and only with their knowledge and approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transition,</td>
<td>gender transition</td>
<td>sex change (n.)</td>
<td>• Individuals who are transitioning may use medical procedures to match their sex to their gender, but not necessarily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transitioning (v.)</td>
<td>(v.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cisgender (adj.)</td>
<td>non-transgender</td>
<td>normal (adj.)</td>
<td>• <em>Cisgender</em> is not synonymous with <em>heterosexual</em>, which refers to sexual orientation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Common Sexual Orientation Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asexual (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bisexual, bi (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.</td>
<td>• Do not hyphenate bisexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pansexual (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Given the lack of understanding that can sometimes accompany this term, use it only if someone specifically self-identifies that way and asks for this term to be used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay (adj.) queer (adj.) gay(s) (n.) homosexual (n. or adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lesbian is the more common term for women who are attracted to the same sex.</td>
<td>• Use the term questioning only when individuals first use the term to describe themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesbian(s) (n. or adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The use of gay as a noun (a gay, the gays) is sometimes considered offensive. Instead, use the term as an adjective (e.g., gay man, gay woman, gay people).</td>
<td>• Use the term queer with caution. While it has been reclaimed by some, it is not a universally accepted term even in the LGBTQ+ community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questioning (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The term homosexual can be seen as evoking negative stereotypes and outdated clinical understandings of homosexuality as a psychiatric condition. In general, it should be avoided unless being used to provide historical context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
<td><strong>Also Acceptable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoid</strong></td>
<td><strong>Context and Considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heterosexual (adj.)</td>
<td>straight (adj.)</td>
<td>normal (adj.)</td>
<td>• Avoid the use of <em>straight</em> in a way that implies those who identify this way are part of an in-group or that anyone who does not identify this way is somehow outside the norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ+ (adj.)</td>
<td>LGBT+ (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• These terms are best used as umbrella terms. Avoid using them, for example, to refer to a group that is limited to bisexuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGBTQIA+ (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The plus used at the end of these terms is inclusive of all the different ways people think of their sexual identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If using LGBTQIA+, explain the other letters. <em>I</em> generally stands for intersex. <em>A</em> generally stands for asexual (a person who does not experience sexual attraction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ+ community</td>
<td>LGBT+ community, LGBTQIA+ community</td>
<td>gay community, gay lifestyle, alternative lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexual orientation (n.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>sexual preference (n.)</td>
<td>• Avoid <em>sexual preference</em>, which implies that sexuality is a matter of choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>same-sex attractions (n.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sexual identity (n.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage</td>
<td>marriage for all, marriage equality</td>
<td>gay marriage same-sex marriage</td>
<td>• Use the term <em>same-sex marriage</em> only when necessary to distinguish it from marriage between male-female heterosexual couples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RACE AND ETHNICITY

General Guidelines

• Consider carefully when deciding whether to identify individuals and communities by race. Often, it is an irrelevant factor and drawing unnecessary attention to someone’s race or ethnicity can be interpreted as bigotry or discrimination.

• Follow an individual’s or a community’s preference, if known, and be specific when possible and relevant. Be careful not to make assumptions about an individual’s race or ethnicity based on their appearance.

• When designating dual heritage (e.g., *Mexican American*), do not use a hyphen, regardless of how the term is used.

Common Race and Ethnicity Identity Terms Used in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
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<th>Avoid</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>people of color</td>
<td>BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color)</td>
<td>minorities (n.)</td>
<td>Avoid describing people and communities as <em>minorities</em>, <em>vulnerable</em> or <em>at-risk</em> as this implies a deficit or deficiency. When necessary to compare a nondominant racial group with a dominant racial group to identify an inequity, the terms <em>racial minority</em>, <em>ethnic minority</em>, <em>marginalized community</em> or <em>underrepresented group</em> may be more appropriate (e.g., <em>According to CBS News, Black people are underrepresented in senior leadership roles at large companies, representing only 3.2 percent of C-suite positions.</em>). Similarly, <em>nonwhite</em> should be avoided, as it implies that <em>white</em> is the norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communities of color</td>
<td>Black and Brown</td>
<td>minority (n., adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vulnerable, at-risk (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nonwhite (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“all the colors of the rainbow” terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>urban, inner-city (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>diverse (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Use the term *BIPOC* with caution. While it appears more frequently as a more expansive alternative to *people of color*, it is still not widely understood by the public and could further confuse the individuals being referred to because many Black and Indigenous individuals identify as people of color. Remember to spell out the term at first mention in keeping with preferred Y-USA style.

• The phrase *Black and Brown* is used in many communities to convey a strong sense of shared
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Black (adj.)| African American (n., adj.) | Black (n.) | experience and solidarity between Black and Latinx communities.  
<p>| African diaspora (n.) | Black/African American | | • Avoid describing diversity and inclusion in colorblind or “all the colors of the rainbow” terms, e.g., “we don’t care if you’re white, black, brown, red, yellow or purple.” These terms rely on the concept that race-based differences do not matter and ignore the realities of systemic racism. They also minimize the value of differences across all individuals and imply the desire to achieve a monocultural experience for all involved. |
| [Specific country/region of origin] | | | • Terms like <em>urban</em> and <em>inner-city</em> can operate as code words that carry a stigma or perpetuate stereotypes. |
| American | | | • Avoid using the term <em>diverse</em> to describe people of color who identify as the same race or ethnicity. Instead, use it to describe a group of individuals of different races and ethnicities. |
| person of color (n.) | | | • Do not use <em>Black</em> as a singular noun. For plural usage, use phrasing such as <em>Black people</em> or <em>Black communities</em>. (Referring to people as <em>Blacks</em> can be seen as pejorative.) |
| | | | • Note that we capitalize <em>Black</em> when used in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense to convey an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black. |
| | | | • In a U.S. context, <em>African American</em> is often an appropriate option; however, even in the U.S., the terms <em>Black</em> and <em>African American</em> are not always interchangeable. Americans of Caribbean heritage, for example, generally refer to themselves as <em>Caribbean American</em>. |
| | | | • Use the outdated terms <em>Afro-American, Negro</em> or <em>colored</em> only in names of organizations or quoted in a clearly historical context. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Also Acceptable</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Context and Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>white (adj.)</td>
<td>[Specific country/region of origin] American</td>
<td>Caucasian (n.)</td>
<td>• Do not use <em>white</em> as a singular noun. For plurals, use phrasing such as <em>white people</em> or <em>white communities</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Many have differing views on whether to capitalize <em>white</em>, and it is an evolving conversation. <em>Y-USA</em> recommends lowercasing the term because generally those who identify as <em>white</em> do not share a history or culture (as would, for example, those who identify as Irish or Italian American). However, we recognize each community is unique and some Ys may capitalize <em>white</em> to enable constructive dialogue and progress to occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/Pacific Islander (n.)</td>
<td>Regional specifications, e.g., <em>Southeast Asian</em></td>
<td>Oriental (n.)</td>
<td>• <em>Oriental</em> is outdated and considered a pejorative term when used to describe people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American (n.)</td>
<td>[Specific country/region of origin] American person of color (n.)</td>
<td>yellow (adj.)</td>
<td>• Avoid misidentifying Asian American/Pacific Islander individuals and communities as belonging to an arbitrary country of origin (e.g., indiscriminately referring to all AAPI individuals as “Chinese”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander (n.)</td>
<td>AAPINH (Asian American/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian)</td>
<td>Brown (adj.)</td>
<td>• Avoid the term <em>Brown</em> on its own as it is a broad and imprecise term with respect to race/ethnicity. As noted above, the term <em>Black and Brown</em> may be appropriate to use in certain contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino (n.)</td>
<td>[Specific country/region of origin] American</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>• <em>Hispanic</em> refers to a person who is from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (n., adj.)</td>
<td>Latinx (n.)</td>
<td>Brown (adj.)</td>
<td>• <em>Latino</em> refers to a person who is from, or whose ancestors were from, a Latin-American land or culture,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>person of color</td>
<td></td>
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<td>including non-Spanish-speaking places (e.g., Brazil). <em>Latina</em> is the feminine form. <em>Latinx</em> is a gender-neutral form that has gained popularity with younger, American Hispanics/Latinos but not widely used in the Hispanic/Latino community as a whole.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Note that <em>Spanish</em> is used to describe the people of the country of Spain and should not be used to describe all Latinos. However, <em>Spanish speakers or Spanish-speaking communities</em> can be appropriate terms to use in certain contexts (e.g., when describing Y programs that serve individuals who speak Spanish).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Avoid the term <em>Brown</em> on its own as it is a broad and imprecise term with respect to race/ethnicity. As noted above, the term <em>Black and Brown</em> may be appropriate to use in certain contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous (adj.)</td>
<td>Native American (n.)</td>
<td>Indian (n.)</td>
<td>• Capitalize <em>Indigenous</em> when referring to the original inhabitants of a place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Peoples (n.)</td>
<td>Eskimo (n.)</td>
<td>• Note that <em>Indian</em> is used to describe the people of the South Asian nation of India and should not be used to describe Indigenous people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Indian (n.)</td>
<td>Aborigine (n.)</td>
<td>• <em>Alaska Native</em> is the preferred term to describe Indigenous people from Alaska (not <em>Eskimo</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alaska Native (n.)</td>
<td>native (n.)</td>
<td>• When referring to a specific Indigenous group, tribe or nation, defer to how they self-style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Hawaiian (n.)</td>
<td>red (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific group, tribe or nation, e.g., <em>the Cherokee Nation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person of color (n.)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiracial (adj.)</td>
<td>person of color (n.)</td>
<td>mixed race (adj.)</td>
<td>• While <em>mulatto</em> is seen widely as an offensive term, some groups may self-identify with the term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biracial (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>half breed (n.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiracial (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>mulatto (n.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biracial (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>melting pot (n.)</td>
<td>• The expression <em>melting pot</em>, traditionally used to describe diverse communities, should be avoided, as it implies that individuals of diverse backgrounds must assimilate into a dominant monoculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bicultural (adj.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
RESOURCES CONSULTED


The Diversity Style Guide. www.diversitystyleguide.com


Little People of America. (2020). Frequently asked questions. www.lpaonline.org/faq-#Definition

Mypronouns.org. Resources on personal pronouns. www.mypronouns.org


YMCA of the USA. (2021). Diversity, Inclusion, Global and Multicultural Development (DIGMD) glossary of terms. https://link.ymca.net/mlink/file/MTIxNTg

YMCA of the USA. (2017). Strengthening inclusion: Engaging communities of diverse faiths and beliefs in your YMCA. https://link.ymca.net/mlink/file/OTk0MDg
DIVERSITY INCLUSION GLOBAL MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (DIG-MD) GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Language is ever-changing. The purpose of the Diversity Inclusion Global Multicultural Development (DIG-MD) Glossary of Terms is to help ground a common language across the Y Movement to better understand and highlight the diversity of the many individuals we serve and employ. Generationally, words have held significance, value, and offense for different groups, and this glossary strives to bridge the gaps between current meanings, previous usage, and new terms to support various identities. For individuals to show up as their most genuine selves, the Y must be intentional with creating space to allow participants, members, staff, and volunteers space to self-identify and share different dimensions of their diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Physical, mental, or psychological power to do something. While physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ableism</td>
<td>Structural and interpersonal oppression experienced by people with disabilities or those presumed or determined to be disabled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>The opportunity or right to experience, participate in or make use of programs, services, facilities, staff/volunteer/leadership roles, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>A U.S. citizen of African descent whose ancestors lived in America before and during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally</td>
<td>One who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their own privilege based on different or multiple dimensions of diversity and takes action in solidarity with marginalized groups to remove advantages created by that privilege. Being an ally is the action of using your privilege to close societal gaps to achieve equity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Blackness</td>
<td>As being a two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in this country. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Antiracism**

Is the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Antiracism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

**Antiracist**

A term used to describe a tendency or preference towards a particular perspective, ideology or result, especially when the tendency interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective.\(^4\)

**Asian Pacific Islander (API)**

This term encompasses any individual who is a native of, or descended from, people from the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

**Asexual**

Someone who does not experience sexual attraction\(^1\) or may only experience sexual attraction in limited situations. They may experience other types of attraction other than sexual attraction (such as romantic, aesthetic, sensual or physical, platonic, or emotional attractions).

**Bias**

Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. With *implicit bias*, it refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

**Biological Sex**

Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include both primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes. Sex is often conflated or interchanged with gender, which is more social than biological, and involves personal identity factors as well.

**Bisexual**

Someone who is attracted to people of their same gender and different genders.

**Bigotry**

Obstinate or intolerant devotion to one’s own opinions and prejudices.

**BIPOC**

Black, Indigenous and People of Color. This term grew from People of Color, to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context.

**Biracial**

Consisting of, representing, or combining members of two separate racial groups.

**Black**

An umbrella that includes anyone of African descent, including indigenous Africans, African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and immigrants, within the context of the U.S. In other countries, other non-white/Euro-centric groups may also utilize this similar identity for people of African descent and for other ethnic groups.

**Cisgender (Cis)**

A description for a person whose gender identity, gender expression and biological sex align; describes someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their biological sex.

**Chicano**

Someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States.

**Classism**

Prejudice against or in favor of people belonging to a particular social class.
Colonialism  A form of dominance, dispossession, and subjugation of indigenous peoples and their land by a foreign power. Foreign invaders rule the territory for the economic benefit of their home country. The impact of colonialism on the subjugated population is complex and extensive. It includes economic exploitation, unequal education and medical outcomes, spread of diseases, suppression of political rights and sovereignty, and endangerment of culture, among others.

Color Blind  The belief in treating everyone “equally” in an effort to minimize people’s differences. Color blind attitudes assume that differences are, by definition, bad or problematic and therefore best ignored (i.e., “I don’t see race.”). The consequence of color blindness is that it forces people to repress important aspects of others’ identity and ignores the historic oppressions groups have experienced based on difference.

Coming Out  May refer to the process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersex person (to “come out” to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals.

Cultural Appreciation  When individuals from a particular group share aspects of their culture with members from outside of their group; the outsider of the group is seeking to better their understanding and learn about that culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and strengthen their cultural humility.

Cultural Appropriation  The intentional or accidental theft of cultural elements for one’s own use, commodification, or profit often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant culture’s right to take other cultural elements.

Cultural Competency  The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own.

Cultural Humility  Beyond cultural competency, cultural humility is a lifelong process that commits to reflecting on one’s own biases, an openness to discovery and learning, and addresses power imbalances to build genuine relationships.

Culture  Integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious or social groups. A system of meanings and customs that is developed by a group of people and then adapted by individuals through socialization and evolved through individual experiences.

Diaspora  Diaspora refers to a group of people that has is the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions. Diaspora communities live outside their ancestors’ place of birth (or imagined place) territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce.

Dimensions of Diversity  Refers to the variety of factors and influences which contribute to a person’s identity, such as appearance and body type, class, cultural background, disability, gender identity, mental health, national origin, orientation, race, work location, or veteran and military status.
Disability
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines the term disability, with respect to an individual: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. This is the legal definition of disability. Disability is also shaped by attitudinal and environmental barriers that limit people’s full social, political, and economic participation. Many people with disabilities only have trouble participating in daily life activities due to the inaccessibility of their social environments. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) framework for disability is the interaction between individuals’ health conditions and the features of the social and personal environments in which they live.

Discrimination
The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.

Disparities
Preventable differences experienced by social groups in educational, health, economic, legal and other outcomes. Disparities stem from intentional discrimination, as well as from unconscious bias and systemic forces. (See: Anti-Blackness, Bias, Discrimination, Equity, Privilege, Systems of Oppression.)

Diversity
Diversity means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance or other dimensions.

Dominant Culture
A dominant culture is one whose values, language, and ways of behaving are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication (i.e.: “In the U.S., for example, the dominant culture is white, heterosexual, Christian male.”) Beliefs, thoughts and assumptions of those within the dominant culture often result in a sense of internalized superiority.

Empathy v. Sympathy
Empathy is defined as the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. Not to be confused with “sympathy” in which a person achieves a sense of understanding another person through feelings of pity or sorrow for their misfortune.

Ethnicity
The characteristics of a group of people that share a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic and/or cultural heritage. The U.S. Census Bureau defines ethnicity or origin as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States.

Equity
The process of evaluating the barriers to opportunities, access, and resources which are needed to exist where no one is at disadvantage because of social position.

Gay
A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. This term is also sometimes referred to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, physical, and/or emotional sense.

Gender
A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual along a spectrum of man, woman, both, or neither.

Gender Identity
One’s deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. One’s gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced as early as 18 months old.
Global Engagement Strategies
Intentional strategies for YMCAs to engage global communities at home and abroad in order to break down existing access barriers for communities to achieve a high quality of life. These strategies can be activated through domestic global work (i.e.: engaging newcomers locally, supporting immigrants locally, exploring individual’s national origins) and international global work (i.e.: World Service, international partnerships and coalitions, volunteer and staff exchanges, immersion experiences, etc.). These approaches overlap to drive a global engagement strategy to strengthen global communities by leveraging the global YMCA movement.

Hate Crime
A crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation of any person.

Heteronormativity
The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to any other form of sexuality.

Heterosexual
A person attracted to members of another sex or gender.

Hispanic
Identifies a person who trace their origin or descent to Spanish-speaking countries or other Spanish cultures. It is important to know that this is an umbrella term created by the U.S. Census; therefore many migrants who may be assumed to be Hispanic may not identify as such and prefer identity connected to their home country. Hispanics can be of any race.

Homophobia
The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism as well as heterosexism.

Homosexual
A person who is attracted to members of what they identify as their own sex or gender. An outdated clinical term sometimes considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms gay, lesbian, or queer.

Ignorance
The state or fact of being ignorant : lack of knowledge, education, or awareness.

Immigrant
"Immigrant" is not a term used universally: though common in North America to refer to those living in a country other than their birth country, other terms frequently used include "international migrant," the "foreign born," and "migrant."

Inclusion
The full engagement, participation and development of all existing and potential communities; the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

Indigenous
Individuals who identify as those who were the first people to live on the given land (e.g. in the U.S., indigenous people are often identified as Native Americans). Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcome them, by conquest, settlement or other means and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition.

Internalized Oppression
Is the process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept, rationalize, and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

Internalized Racial Oppression
Is a complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches people of color to believe, accept and live or act out negative societal definitions of self0based on perceived race.

Internalized Racial Superiority
Is a complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches white people to believe, accept and or live superior societal definitions of self-based on perceived race.
**Intersectionality**  
Is the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of identity and discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. Understanding how intersectionality informs identities and experiences provides opportunities for building empathy and building bridges. (See *Dimensions of Diversity* for interconnectivity of diversity dimensions sans discrimination.)

**Intersex**  
Refers to individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia.

**Justice**  
The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

**Latino/Latina**  
Identifies a person who trace their origin or descent to Latin American countries (including non-Spanish speaking countries). It is important to know that this is an umbrella term primarily used in the U.S. – many Latinos prefer identification of their home country. Latinos can be of any race.

**Latinx**  
A gender-inclusive way of referring to people of Latin American descent. This new term is more commonly being used by younger generations however, many Latino communities themselves have not adopted this language. The emergence of Latinx coincides with a global movement to introduce gender-neutral nouns and pronouns into many languages.

**LGBTQIA+**  
This is the shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual individuals. You may see variations of this, such as LGBTQ+, GLBT, etc. The plus is inclusive of similar identity that is encompassed with these non-normative gender and orientation identities.

**Lesbian**  
Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, physically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people.

**Marginalization**  
The treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral. This experience applies to individuals or groups who are denied social, economic and political equity in society - and hence, relegated to its margins.

**Mental Health**  
Refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. Mental Health is more than just the absence of mental illness or disabilities.

**Microaggression**  
A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, unintentional or intentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

**Multicultural**  
A person, place, or thing that incorporates and embeds the value of diverse ideas, beliefs and/or people from many different countries and cultural backgrounds.

**Multiculturalism**  
The presence and promotion of the peaceful coexistence and value of diverse races, ethnicities and several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society, community or network.

**Native / First Nations People**  
Native is often used to refer to "original," or "inherited," traits of an individual, or that with which one is associated by birth. Native peoples are the original, or "first" peoples of a given geographic region. However, use of the term "native" or "natives" may carry negative or pejorative historical connotations.

**Newcomer**  
An umbrella term that includes various categories of immigrants who are born outside of the United States.

**Nonbinary**  
Both are identities of a person whose gender identity is neither male nor female (gender variant), is between or outside of the gender spectrum, or is some combination of genders.
Opportunity Gap  Refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students.

Oppression  The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices; systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access.

Outing  Involuntary disclosure of one’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

Pansexual  The potential for sexual attractions or romantic love toward people of all gender identities and biological sexes; the concept of pansexuality deliberately rejects the gender binary.

People-First Language  Language that emphasizes the individual as the most essential element; there is more to each person than their descriptors.

People of Color (POC)  An identity created to unify and mobilize and celebrate the collective power of non-white individuals, towards common goals – rejecting any notion that their life experiences are politically marginal.

Power  Wealth, race, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations include “power with” (used in the context of building collective strength) and “power within” (which references an individual’s internal strength).

Prejudice  Negative beliefs or judgments made about an individual or group prior to any actual knowledge or experience involving that person or group. The word is often used to refer to a preconceived evaluation of another person based on their dimensions of diversity.

Privilege  An unearned advantage, benefit, right or immunity granted to and enjoyed by an individual or group, beyond the advantages, and often at the expense, of others.

Queer  A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ."

Questioning  A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Race  A social construct (human invention) based on physical traits and/or geographic origin, designed to categorize humans and support hierarchical worldviews that maintain some groups (white) as superior while keeping others (non-white) as inferior.

Racial Reconciliation  Reconciliation involves three ideas. First, it recognizes that racism is both systemic and institutionalized, with far-reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities. Second, reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship-building and truth-telling. Lastly, justice is the essential component of the conciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive, while still maintaining its vital punitive character.
Racism
A system of oppression based on the social construction of a racial hierarchy, which is expressed in individual, institutional as well as cultural forms and functions for the benefit of the dominant race at the expense of the others.

- Racism can be internalized by those who it oppressed (internalized racism);
- Racism can be built into the foundation of societal constructs and institutions (institutionalized racism);
- Racism can occur between two individuals (interpersonal racism) or an individual person’s beliefs, attitudes, rhetoric that supports or perpetuates racism (individual racism).

Sexism
A system of oppression based on social constructions of gender superiority and inferiority, which is expressed in individual, institutional as well as cultural forms.

Sexual Orientation
Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. While sexual behavior involves the choices one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation, sexual orientation is part of the human condition, one's sexual activity does not define one's sexual orientation; typically, it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

Stereotype
A standardized mental picture or assumption that is held in common by multiple individuals, that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment about the characteristics of another group, person or thing.

System of Oppression
Systems of oppression are discriminatory institutions, structures or norms that are embedded in the fabric of our society. Examples: racism, sexism, cissexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism.

Systems
A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network. Systems can operate at the organizational level (e.g., the YMCA) or at the societal level (e.g. the education system, health care system, etc.).

Systems Change
Shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.

Tokenism
The practice of demonstrating a disingenuous effort or symbolic gesture toward the accomplishment of an equity goal, in order to deflect criticism or comply with affirmative action rules (i.e.: a company hires a black woman for the VP of Diversity, showcases her as their company-wide diversity, without making changes with policies, practices, procedures).

Transgender
A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term (sometimes shortened to trans) to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.

Transition
This term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they identify with and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

Transphobia
The fear or hatred of persons perceived to be transgender.

White
White is an umbrella term that has changed over time in the United States historical context to identify individuals who have ancestral origins from Europe. Throughout U.S. history, those who were considered white changed based on court cases which defined which groups were considered white based on skin color and continental origin.
**Whiteness**

Whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color based off the historical development of the construct of race in the United States.

**White Supremacy**

White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally-perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

**Xenophobia**

An unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange. Manifestations of xenophobia are usually triggered by intense dislike or hatred against people that are perceived as outsiders, strangers or foreigners to a group, community or nation, based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other grounds.

Adapted From:
1. Washington University Mosaic Project Bias Glossary
2. Xavier University Office of Diversity & Inclusion Glossary of Terminology
3. Racial Equity Tools Glossary of Terms
4. U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs Office of Diversity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms
5. Berkeley University Division of Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms
6. National Performing Arts Convention Diversity Glossary
7. American Civil Liberties Union
8. University of California-Los Angeles LGBT Terminology
9. Laurier University Diversity & Equity Office
10. Race Forward
11. How to be an Antiracist
13. Webster Dictionary
15. Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group Systems of Oppression
16. Chinook Fund General Terms & Forms of Oppression
17. YWCA Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary
18. Afro “Black” or “African America”
19. U.S. Department of Education Newcomer Tool kit
To learn more about the YMCA OF GREATER RICHMOND’s dedication to diversity, scan the code to view our DEI Strategic Plan.

DIVERSITY
INCLUSION
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