

Inclusive Language for Canadian Midwives and Midwifery Students: Working with Clients who are Gender Nonconforming



CMRC Competency: 1.B.4 & 1.E.4

Duration: 15 minutes



Canadian Midwifery | Conseil canadien des
Regulators Council | ordres de sages-femmes

GUIDING QUESTION

How can I use **inclusive language** when caring for clients who are gender nonconforming?





Understanding Transgender Health

What does it mean to be transgender?

- A) Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
- B) Someone who identifies with the sex assigned to them at birth
- C) Someone whose sex is different from the sex assigned to them at birth
- D) Someone who is intersex

Click to the next page to check your answer.



Understanding Transgender Health

Correct answer

C) Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth

C) describes a transgender person because it accurately describes an individual whose gender identity (their deeply-felt internal sense of their own gender) does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth based on physical characteristics such as genitalia.



Watch this short video about transgender identity.





Embracing Gender Diversity in Midwifery



Understanding Gender Identity

Transgender individuals may identify with a gender different from the one they were assigned at birth. For example, someone assigned female at birth based on anatomical traits may identify and live as a man.



Recognizing Distress and the Importance of Client-Centred Care

The discordance between a transgender person's gender identity and their assigned sex at birth can cause significant distress. That's why it's crucial for transgender individuals to access client-centred health care that respects their identity and needs.



Celebrating Diversity and Gender Transition

Being transgender is a **valid** and authentic aspect of human diversity. Transgender individuals may or may not undergo social, legal, and/or medical transitions to align their appearance with their gender identity.

You Can Support Transgender Health and Wellness in 3 Ways!

- 1** By recognizing and deconstructing healthcare barriers
- 2** By addressing sexual and reproductive health disparities
- 3** By understanding mental health challenges

Diving Deeper: Support Transgender Health & Wellness

- 1 By recognizing and deconstructing healthcare barriers:** Many transgender people encounter barriers to accessing equitable & safe healthcare, such as facing discrimination from providers and a lack of culturally competent care. This includes challenges to accessing transition-related care like hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgery. By understanding these obstacles and how they impact trans people, we can work towards creating a more welcoming and accessible healthcare environment for all.
- 2 By addressing sexual and reproductive health disparities:** Transgender individuals, particularly transgender women of color, experience higher rates of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBIs). This underscores the critical need for inclusive and accessible sexual health services tailored to each person's unique needs. We play a vital role in promoting equity in sexual health and supporting the well-being of all.
- 3 By understanding mental health challenges:** Transgender individuals often experience gender dysphoria, higher rates of depression, anxiety, and thoughts of self-harm due to facing stigma, discrimination, and a lack of social support. Being aware of these challenges can help us to provide more compassionate and inclusive care.



Understanding Transgender Health

Fill in the blanks.

1. Transgender individuals may identify as a gender from the one they were assigned at birth.
2. The discordance between a transgender person's gender identity and their assigned sex at birth can cause significant .
3. Being transgender is a and authentic aspect of human diversity.

Click to the next page to check your answer.



Understanding Transgender Health

The following words are the correct answers. If you used synonyms, pat yourself on the back as well. Correct answers:

1. Transgender individuals may identify as a gender **different** from the one they were assigned at birth.
2. The discordance between a transgender person's gender identity and their assigned sex at birth can cause significant **distress**.
3. Being transgender is a **valid** and authentic aspect of human diversity.

When Creating a Safe Space, Inclusive Language Matters

Do

Use preferred names and pronouns:

Address clients using their preferred names and pronouns. Implement systems like asking about gender identity on registration forms and entering this information into health records for the care team.

Foster accountability and respect:

Encourage colleagues to use correct names and pronouns and address insensitive comments to create a culture of respect and inclusivity.

Don't

Don't assume nor use gendered language:

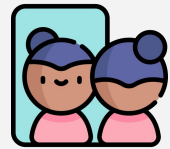
Refrain from using gendered terms and pronouns until the client's preferences are known. Instead of "Mr. or Ms.," use the person's preferred first and last name. If unsure, politely ask the client & their support persons for their preferred name and pronouns.

Don't use terms like "real" name:

Respect the client's chosen name and avoid terms that imply their preferred name is not valid.

Examples of Gendered Language

Gendered	Non-gendered
Mother	Parent
Penis, Vagina	Genitals
Pregnant woman	Pregnant person / client



Avoiding Gendered Language Reflection Exercise

Instructions:

Take a moment to think about your go-to phrases, expressions, and terms in working with clients. Write down as many as you can think of and consider what you might say in the future instead. If you're not sure whether the term is gendered, you can refer to this [reference sheet](#).

When You Misspeak, Remember to Make Things Right



Apologize for mistakes:

If a miscommunication occurs, apologize respectfully and correct the mistake. For example, "I apologize for using the wrong pronoun. I'm here to support you."



Clarify sensitively:

If clinical records do not match your client's gender identity, privately ask the client questions to resolve the discrepancy and to ensure consistent record keeping. Record the client's preferred name & pronouns.



Maintain confidentiality:

Discuss gender identity in private settings and only with staff directly involved in the client's care.



Responding When You've Misspoken

You are conducting a prenatal check-up with a client named Jamie, a transgender man who uses he/him or they/them pronouns. During the appointment, you accidentally refer to Jamie using her/she pronouns and refer to them as 'mom'. How should you handle this situation?

Select the most appropriate response that demonstrates respect and inclusivity towards Jamie's gender identity.

- A)** Ignore the mistake and continue with the appointment as usual.
- B)** Correct yourself immediately and apologize respectfully. Use Jamie's correct name and pronouns consistently, and ask about how their children address them.
- C)** Wait until the end of the appointment to apologize privately to Jamie for the mistake.
- D)** Ask Jamie's partner (who is present at the appointment) to correct you on the pronouns.

Click to the next page to check your answer.



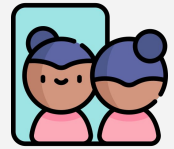
Responding When You've Misspoken

Correct answer

B) Correct yourself immediately and apologize respectfully. Use Jamie's correct name and pronouns consistently, and ask about how their children address them.

It's important to acknowledge and correct mistakes immediately when you have misgendered someone. By correcting yourself promptly, apologizing respectfully, and using Jamie's correct name and pronouns for the remainder of the appointment, you demonstrate respect for Jamie's gender identity and prioritize creating an inclusive and supportive healthcare environment. This response shows sensitivity and a commitment to providing affirming care to transgender individuals.

5-Minute Reflection Exercise



Instructions: Read and reflect upon the prompt below. Feel free to write your thoughts down.

Remember a time when you or a colleague **used language** that unintentionally excluded and marginalized a client who is transgender or gender nonconforming. How might you approach this situation differently in the future using the inclusive language strategies discussed?



Helpful Points to Remember

- Inclusive language is essential for providing respectful care to clients who are transgender and/or gender nonconforming.
- Individuals who are transgender may face health disparities and barriers to accessing healthcare due to discrimination and lack of cultural competence.
- Using client-preferred pronouns and respecting individual gender identities promotes trust and improves healthcare outcomes.
- Active listening, respectful communication, and ongoing education are key to providing inclusive care to transgender clients.

Want to continue learning? These additional resources are for you.



- **Patient Centered Care for Transgender People**
<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/clinicians/transforming-health/health-care-providers/affirmative-care.html#strategies>
- **Trans Wellness Ontario, “Misgendering: What it is, How it Harms, and How to Respond”**
https://www.2sqtp-nb.com/files/ugd/6dbd27_7becc177a5be4520b90195428b18b504.pdf
- **Trans Care BC, “Gender Inclusive Language: Building relationships with new clients”**
https://www.transcarebc.ca/sites/default/files/2024-03/Gender_Inclusive_Language_General.pdf
- **Body Terminology Quick Reference (Gendered and Non-Gendered Terms)**
https://www.2sqtp-nb.com/files/ugd/b32947_98c1c36c7e874fbb8281f7d3ce50782f.pdf