

# memo

**DATE:** April 20, 2022  
**TO:** WIC Staff  
**FROM:** State WIC Staff  
**SUBJECT:** Bias Free Communication

## Guidance on Bias Free Communication

To promote and support bias free communication, the following guidance has approaches and examples of inclusive language that MDH WIC will use in materials to promote diversity and inclusivity. MDH WIC will use neutral terms related to gender, lactation and weight. *When working with individuals use the language and communication that they prefer.*

### Gender

Gender inclusive language is language that’s inclusive (or neutral) to all genders. Language plays a central role in the way we all think, so it is important to consider how we use individual words in communication. MN WIC will use the following gender-neutral terms. In circumstances where one can refer to the noun rather than the pronoun is an approach to make the communication more inclusive. For example, one can refer to “pregnancy and birth stages on the way to becoming a parent” rather than saying “...on the way to becoming a mother.”

Gendered Terms	More Inclusive
Husband, Wife, Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Partner, Significant other, Spouse
Brother, Sister	Sibling
Daughter/Son	Child
Father/Mother	Parent
Man/Women	Person, Individual
Ladies/Gentlemen	Folks, Everyone, You all, Friends
He/She	They/Their

### Lactation Related Terms

Everyone who wants to breastfeed, chestfeed or feed their baby human milk should feel supported in reaching their goals. Expanding related lactation terms in WIC shows inclusivity and supports diversity.

Current Language	More Inclusive
Breast	breast or chest

Current Language	More Inclusive
Breastfeeding	Breast or chestfeeding, Breast/chestfeeding, human milk feeding, lactation
Breast milk	Human Milk
Breastfeeding coach/counselor	Lactation counselor
Breast pads	Pads
Breast pump	Pump
Maternity/Paternity leave	Parent or family leave

## Lactation/Gender-Inclusive Resources

Education/Training	Resource Link
Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mariposa. Bodyfeeding is a Political &amp; Cultural Act. Great Lakes Breastfeeding Webinar On-Demand. <a href="#">Register here</a>. **Available for continuing education until Tuesday, August 17, 2022</li> <li>○ Etecia Brown. Queer like Radical: Affirming Abundance with Newborn/Infant Feeding. Great Lakes Breastfeeding Webinar On-Demand. <a href="#">Register here</a>. **Available for continuing education until Tuesday, February 16, 2022</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ LGBTQIA+ Resources and Pride Month. <a href="#">United States Breastfeeding Committee</a>.</li> <li>○ Transgender and Non-binary Parents. <a href="#">La Leche League International</a>.</li> <li>○ Transgender/transsexual/genderfluid Tip Sheet – General Information Prepared by Trevor MacDonald. <a href="#">La Leche League Canada</a>.</li> <li>○ Anna Brauch. Clinical Lactation Support for LGBTQI2S Families. Lecture presented: Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition 2018 Workshop. <a href="https://mnbfc.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/clinical-lactation-support-for-lgbtqi-families-abrauch-mbc-ws-2018.pdf">https://mnbfc.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/clinical-lactation-support-for-lgbtqi-families-abrauch-mbc-ws-2018.pdf</a></li> </ul>

Education/Training	Resource Link
Research and Position Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Position States and Guideline: Infant Feeding and Lactation Related Language and Gender. <a href="#">Breastfeeding Medicine. Aug 2021. 587-590.</a></li> <li>○ Duckett LJ &amp; Ruud M. (2019). Affirming Language Use When Providing Health Care for and Writing About Childbearing Families Who Identify as LGBTQI+. <a href="#">Journal of Human Lactation, 35(2):227-232.</a></li> <li>○ Rasmussen, K. M., Felice, J. P., O'Sullivan, E. J., Garner, C. D., &amp; Geraghty, S. R. (2017). The Meaning of "Breastfeeding" Is Changing and So Must Our Language About It. <a href="#">Breastfeeding medicine, 12(9), 510-514.</a></li> <li>○ Farrow, A. Lactation Support and the LGBTQI Community. <a href="#">Journal of Human Lactation. 2015;31(1):26-28</a></li> <li>○ MacDonald, T., Noel-Weiss, J., West, D. <i>et al.</i> Transmasculine individuals' experiences with lactation, chestfeeding, and gender identity: a qualitative study. <a href="#">BMC Pregnancy Childbirth 16, 106 (2016).</a></li> <li>○ Lee, R. Queering Lactation: Contributions of Queer Theory to Lactation Support for LGBTQIA2S+ Individuals and Families. <a href="#">Journal of Human Lactation. 2019;35(2):233-238.</a></li> </ul>

## Weight-Inclusive Communication

Inclusive language regarding body size creates a welcoming space for all participants. In recent years there has been increased research and discussion regarding weight-inclusive practices. MN WIC along with other organizations like the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and wichealth.org are reviewing and creating communications that support honoring body diversity while fostering healthy habits. Clinical terms and body descriptors can be triggering or shaming to some participants. Weight-inclusive communication puts less focus on weight-centered discussion and focuses rather on the full nutrition assessment and includes other health indicators.

Rather Than Labeling...	Try This When Working with Families to Describe Growth...
Body size descriptors (e.g., stocky, chunky, skinny, scrawny, "little peanut," etc.)	Higher/lower weight Larger/smaller body
Obese/overweight/normal weight/underweight on growth grid	Let's look at your child's growth pattern; how do you feel your child is growing?
Obese/overweight child	Child with higher weight
Underweight child	Child with lower weight
High/low maternal weight gain	How do you feel your pregnancy is progressing so far? How is your appetite? What are meal patterns? What concerns do you have about access to food?

You should gain 11-25 pounds during your pregnancy

Based on your pre-pregnancy weight, guidelines suggest gaining about 11-25 lbs. during your pregnancy; what are your thoughts?

The State Agency has encouraged this language in trainings to support weight-inclusivity and provide local agencies resources to enhance their knowledge and interactions in this area. Education materials including nutrition education cards and nutrition implication guidance support this approach and can help reduce barriers when discussing body weight. The following tables provide examples of inclusive terms used in materials that focus on personalized nutrition assessment, education, and trainings to support weight-inclusivity:

## Resources that Support Weight Inclusivity

Resource	Resource Link
Webinars Style Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Baby Behavior Training and Tools - Minnesota Department of Health</a> Focus on hunger and satiety. Responsive feeding and parenting.</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Discussing weight</a> Effective and ineffective discussion of growth charts, asking about weight, explaining growth charts. Tips and strategies for discussing weight with pregnant women. Skills include: recognizing signs of resistance, reflecting resistance, shifting focus. Focus on healthy lifestyle and habits.</li> <li>○ <a href="#">The Language of Health: An Editorial Style Guide to Effectively Communicate to the Public</a></li> </ul>
Nutrition Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 101 Underweight (women) <a href="#">Nutrition Risk Criterion 101 Underweight (Women) (state.mn.us)</a> includes MN Implications</li> <li>○ 115 High Weight-for Length (infants and child &lt;24 months of age) <a href="#">Nutrition Risk Criterion Template (state.mn.us)</a> has USDA Implications</li> <li>○ 131 Low Maternal Weight Gain <a href="#">131 Low Maternal Weight Gain (state.mn.us)</a> has USDA implications</li> <li>○ 135 Slowed/Faltering Growth Pattern <a href="#">135 Slowed/Faltering Growth Pattern (state.mn.us)</a> has USDA implications</li> </ul>
Nutrition Education Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Nutrition Information</a></li> </ul>
Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Anthropometrics Manual</a></li> </ul>

### Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Mariposa. Bodyfeeding is a Political & Cultural Act. Great Lakes Breastfeeding Webinar On-Demand. https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5393697588044559372](#)

[Etecia Brown. Queer like Radical: Affirming Abundance with Newborn/Infant Feeding. Great Lakes Breastfeeding Webinar On-Demand https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4261197308873486096](#)

[LGBTQIA+ Resources and Pride Month. United States Breastfeeding Committee. http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/p/cm/ld/fid=838](#)

Transgender and Non-binary Parents. La Leche League International.  
<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/transgender-non-binary-parents/>

Transgender/transsexual/genderfluid Tip Sheet – General Information Prepared by Trevor MacDonald. [https://www.lllc.ca/sites/default/files/REVISED-Trans-Nursing\\_Tip-Sheet.pdf](https://www.lllc.ca/sites/default/files/REVISED-Trans-Nursing_Tip-Sheet.pdf)

Anna Brauch. Clinical Lactation Support for LGBTQI2S Families. Lecture presented: Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition 2018 Workshop. <https://mnbfc.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/clinical-lactation-support-for-lgbtqi-families-abrauch-mbc-ws-2018.pdf>

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Position States and Guideline: Infant Feeding and Lactation Related Language and Gender.  
[https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2021.29188.abm?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr\\_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr\\_dat=cr\\_pub%20%20pubmed](https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/bfm.2021.29188.abm?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%20%20pubmed)

Duckett LJ & Ruud M. (2019). Affirming Language Use When Providing Health Care for and Writing About Childbearing Families Who Identify as LGBTQI+.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0890334419830985>

Rasmussen, K. M., Felice, J. P., O'Sullivan, E. J., Garner, C. D., & Geraghty, S. R. (2017). The Meaning of "Breastfeeding" Is Changing and So Must Our Language About It  
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2017.0073>

Farrow, A. Lactation Support and the LGBTQI Community  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0890334414554928>

MacDonald, T., Noel-Weiss, J., West, D. et al. Transmasculine individuals' experiences with lactation, chestfeeding, and gender identity: a qualitative study.  
<https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12884-016-0907-y#citeas>

Lee, R. Queering Lactation: Contributions of Queer Theory to Lactation Support for LGBTQIA2S+ Individuals and Families. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0890334419830992>

Baby Behavior Training and Tools - Minnesota Department of Health Focus on hunger and satiety. Responsive feeding and parenting.  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/bb/index.html>

Minnesota WIC PCS Webinars – 2016. Discussing weight – August 2016  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/webinars/index.html#aug2016> – August 2016

Nutrition Risk Criterion 101 Underweight (Women)  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/riskcodes/anthro/101.pdf>

Nutrition Risk Criterion 115 High Weight-for Length (infants and child <24 months of age)  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/riskcodes/anthro/115.pdf>

Nutrition Risk Criterion 131 Low Maternal Weight Gain  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/riskcodes/anthro/131mn.pdf>

Nutrition Risk Criterion 135 Slowed/Faltering Growth Pattern

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/riskcodes/anthro/135.pdf>

Nutrition Information - English

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/nutrition/morenutinfo.html>

Risk Code Resources & Tools

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/nutrition/riskcode.html>

Anthropometrics Manual

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/nutrition/nst/anthro.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 85 E 7<sup>th</sup> Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882; 1-800-657-3942, [health.wic@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wic@state.mn.us), [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us); to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.