

Using the correct name and pronouns is a client-centered approach supported by AOTA's policy on [Affirming Gender Diversity and Identity](#) (2021). The information below provides guidance on affirming someone's gender identity and pronouns.

Definitions

Name Used

The name someone goes by and is used in communication. This name may be different than the name on their identification documents. It is also known as "chosen name" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022). (e.g., What name would you like to go by?)

Gender Identity

One's personal sense of gender which may or may not correlate with their sex assigned at birth (Arquilla & Newman, 2023).

Misgendering

Referring to someone in a gendered term that does not correctly indicate the person's gender identity and is offensive and can cause psychological distress to the individual (Keuroghlian et al., 2022).

Pronouns

"Words used when referring to an individual but not using the individual's name" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 312).

How to be affirming

- Have your pronouns visible on your badge and introducing yourself with your pronouns. (e.g., "Hi, my name is _____ and I use _____ pronouns. I'm going to be your occupational therapy practitioner today, can you confirm your name and pronouns for me please?")
- Use gender neutral terminology until a person confirms their gender and pronouns (e.g., "They are in the bathroom. Their sibling is outside and their spouse is on their way").
- Remember when individuals may say they have preferred pronouns, these are their identity and not simply a preference. Just ask, 'What are your pronouns?'
- Do not profusely apologize or try to explain yourself if you misgender someone, just apologize and correct yourself moving forward.

- **Use the person's correct pronouns and hold others accountable even if the person is not present.**
- **If you misgender someone apologize, correct, and remember for future conversations.**

Don't assume someone's gender identity until they feel comfortable to disclose that information. Gender neutral terms can be used until the person lets you know how they identify.

References
American Occupational Therapy Association. (2021). Affirming gender diversity and identity. Policy E.15. <https://www.aota.org/-/media/corporate/files/aboutaota/officialdocs/policies/policy-e15-20211115.pdf>

Arquilla, E., & Newman, T. (Eds.). (2023). Sex and gender: Meanings, definition, identity, and expression. Medical News Today. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/232363>

Keuroghlian, A. S., Potter, J., & Reisner, S. L. (2022a). Gender Identity: Terminology, Demographics, and Epidemiology. In Transgender and gender diverse health care the Fenway Guide (pp. 7–15). essay, McGraw-Hill.