
Affirming Gender Identity and Pronouns

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Names

Insurance cards, licenses, and other official documents may not be updated with a client's **name used** or **gender identity**. Having a space on intake forms and within EMRs to collect **relationship styles** and **gender identity** information can help communicate the client's correct name and gender identity and build rapport with the client. Using the correct name and pronouns is a client-centered approach supported by the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) policy on [Affirming Gender Diversity and Identity](#) (2021) and the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework 4th Edition ([OTPF-4](#); AOTA, 2020). Please note, the bolded items are defined in the glossary of terms.

All staff members should be trained in how to ask for a client's name and gender identity and efforts should be made to ensure all staff use the correct name and gender identity when interacting with clients. An example of confirming someone's name is by asking the person "What name should I use?" or "What name and pronouns do you use?" or "What name would you like to go by?"

Name used: "The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, even if it is different from the name on that person's insurance or identification documents (i.e., birth certificate, driver's license, and passport)" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 311). Also referred to as "chosen name".

Gender Identity: "A person's inner sense of themselves as a girl/woman/feminine, boy/man/masculine, beyond girl/woman/feminine or boy/man/masculine (such as having a nonbinary gender identity), or having no gender" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p.8).

Gender Neutral Terminology

It is important to not assume someone's gender identity until they feel comfortable disclosing that information. Until they confirm their gender identity you can use gender neutral terms such as "they" in the singular sense. Other acceptable gender-neutral terms are "sibling," "partner," "parent," etc.

Pronouns

Definition: "Words used when referring to an individual but not using the individual's name. Examples of pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. The appropriate phrasing is, 'What are your pronouns?' when seeking this information" (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 312).

Note on the phrase *preferred pronouns*: Although individuals may say they have preferred pronouns, these are their identity and not simply a preference. Just ask, 'What are your pronouns?'

Asking and Using

"Hi, my name is _____ and I use they/them pronouns. I'm going to be your occupational therapy practitioner today. Can you confirm your name and pronouns for me please?"

- Having your pronouns next to your name on your badge is a silent way of showing allyship!
- If patients ask why it matters, explain that it is a sign of respect in the same way using the correct name is.

Pronouns

When used as the subject of a sentence:	When used as an object in a sentence:	Possessive adjective:	Possessive pronoun:	Reflexive:
_____ has to go to the bathroom.	I gave the food to _____.	_____ backpack is in the hallway.	The car is _____.	I bought _____ a new movie.
He	Him	His	His	Himself
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
Zie	Zim	Zir	Zis	Zieself
Sie	Sie	Hir	Hirs	Hirself

Note: Adapted from Table 2.2 in Keuroghlian et al., 2022

What is Misgendering?

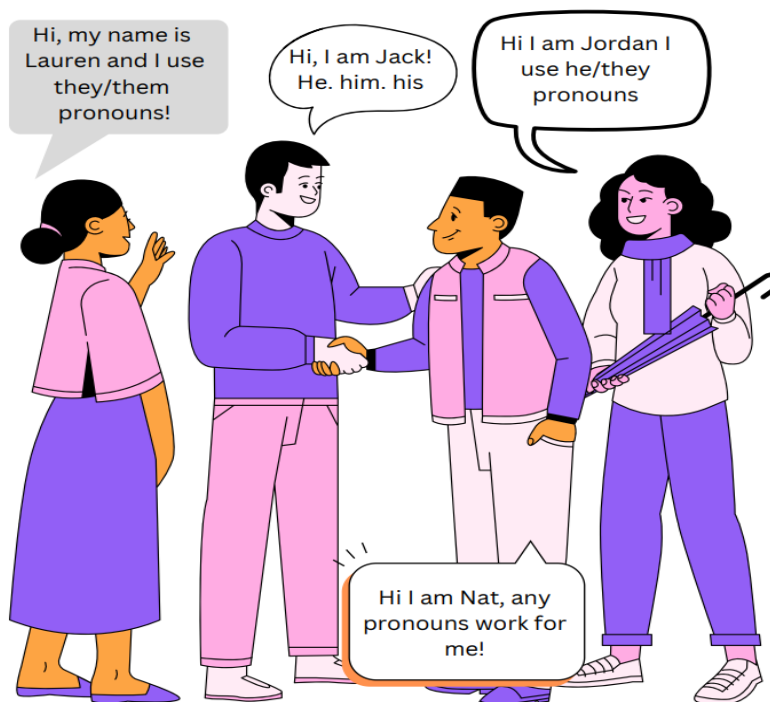
Definition	Impact	Example
<p>“To refer to a person by a pronoun or other gendered term (e.g., Ms./Mr.) that incorrectly indicates that person’s gender identity or is otherwise inappropriate for or offensive to them” (Keuroghlian et al., 2022, p. 311)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological distress • Feelings of being stigmatized. • Anxiety • Depression • Stress due potentially getting misgendered and non-affirmed in their identity. • Internalized transphobia if a transgender person wants their transitional status to go undetected (McLemore,2018). • Negative effect on function and mental health. • Occupational alienation 	<p>If someone identifies as a man and you use female gendering terms (she, her, woman, Miss, etc.), this is misgendering.</p>

How to help prevent misgendering

- Ask people for their pronouns and name used/chosen name.
- Introduce yourself with your pronouns.
- Have your pronouns easily accessible for people (nametag/badge, email signature, and your display name on Zoom, Google meet, social media, etc.).

Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do correct yourself and continue (“Today she—I’m sorry, I should have said; they—are working on…”). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not profusely and continuously apologize.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do hold yourself and other people accountable, even if the person is not present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not try to explain yourself if you make a mistake.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do practice using the correct pronouns when referring to the individual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not use “they/them” for someone who gave you different pronouns (e.g., a trans woman asks you to use she/her, but you use they/them).



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>
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- McLemore, K. A. (2018). A minority stress perspective on transgender individuals' experiences with misgendering. *Stigma and Health*, 3(1), 53–64. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000070>

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