# Sex-Specific and Gender-Inclusive Language Policy

## Applies to

- All ABA employees

- All ABA trainees and volunteers

- ABA Board of Directors

- Contractors working for ABA

## Definitions

| Word or Phrase | Definition |
|---|---|
| Sex | Sex refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, they tend to differentiate humans as males and females.<br><br>Source: World Health Organization<br><br>Sex stereotyping relates to the preconceived idea about how people should be, act, or behave based on that person's biological sex. |
| Gender | ABA adopts the World Health Organization definition of gender as:<br><br>"the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed.  This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.<br><br>Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, |

| | disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others."

"Gender interacts with but is different from sex. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity." |
|---|---|
| Gender identity | Gender identity differs from both 'sex' and 'gender'. The World Health Organization defines gender identity as:

"a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology" |
| Transgender | Transgender (sometimes shortened to "trans") is an umbrella term used to describe people with a wide range of identities—including transsexual people, people who identify as third gender, and others whose appearance and characteristics are perceived as gender atypical and whose sense of their own gender is different to biological sex.

Trans women identify as women.. Trans men identify as men..Non-binary people do not identify as men or women.

Source: World Health Organization |
| Sex-specific language | Language that refers to a sex. e.g. female, male, woman, man, mother, father, aunt, uncle. |
| Gender-specific language | Gender specific language refers to sex stereotypes or the gender identity of a person. Common examples include e.g. woman, man, mother, father, aunt, uncle, some of which are also used as sex-specific terms. |
| Desexed or gender-inclusive language | Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

Source: United Nations |

## Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers and employees when they are representing the Association, including:

- interactions with service users

- interactions with the media

- use of media channels e.g. social media

- internal and external communications both written and verbal.

## Objectives

- Australian Breastfeeding Association aims to ensure that its services are available to everyone who is entitled to them, and that these services will be offered free from any form of discrimination, irrespective of a person's country of birth, culture, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. (ABA Code of Ethics 1.16)

- This policy aims to provide clarity and guidance on ABA's use of sex-specific and gender-inclusive language to ensure the fulfilment of these aims.

## Principles

1. Reflect the language used by an individual

2. In the delivery of services and communications designed specifically to meet the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community we will adopt the language used by the community.

3. Use sex-specific language in sex-based contexts, when principles 1 and 2 do not apply.

4. Use gender-inclusive language when the context is not sex-based.

## Implementation

### 1. Reflect the language used by the individual

ABA recognises that not all people who give birth and lactate identify as a woman.

It is ABA's intention to be inclusive of all those who wish to make breastmilk available to their babies. Therefore, when referring to or addressing specific individuals, use the language, pronouns or forms of address that are used by the individual. If the situation is relevant, asking the person/people you are communicating with what pronoun or form of address should be used for them, will enable you to refer to them appropriately. Consider that some people may not have reflected on the concept of pronouns or may not be ready to let you know which pronoun they use.

When someone refers to themselves, their partner or support person in a particular way, we reflect the language that they use to refer to themselves. It is also appropriate to continue using the language that you are comfortable using when referring to yourself.

2. **In the delivery of services specifically designed to meet the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community we will adopt the language used by the community.**

Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community prefer language that avoids the use of gendered and sex-specific terms for example transgender and gender diverse people. ABA is committed to ensuring that all families who wish to make human milk available to their babies are supported to do so.

3. **Use sex-specific language in sex-based contexts when <u>principles 1 and 2 do not apply.</u>**

To ensure clarity and accuracy when communicating with large, broad, or general audiences, including social media, refer to a person who has given birth or who is breastfeeding using sex-specific terms, e.g. woman, mother, mum. For example:

- a breastfeeding mother
- a mother with mastitis
- a pregnant woman
- birthing mother
- some mums will face challenges when learning to breastfeed
- support mothers to achieve their breastfeeding goals
- mums access breastfeeding counselling

<u>Do not</u> use de-sexed terms or gender-inclusive language, e.g. parent, person in sex-based contexts

- a breastfeeding parent or a lactating person

- a parent with mastitis

- a pregnant parent

- birthing parent

4. **Use gender-inclusive language when the context is not sex-based.**

When reference to sex and/or gender is **not required for clarity and accuracy in communication,** use:

- the pronouns they/their/them. For example:

- If a member wishes to become a volunteer, they must agree to be bound by ABA's Code of Ethics.
- For a staff member to qualify for parental leave, they must have worked for the Association for at least 12 months.
- gender-inclusive terms. For example:
  - Instead of using the statement 'Mums and dads access breastfeeding information', use the gender-inclusive statement 'Parents access breastfeeding information'.

  - Rather than the statement 'Having a new baby can be an emotional time for any new mothers and fathers', use the gender-inclusive statement 'Having a new baby can be an emotional time for any new parent.'

**Approved by**

ABA Board

**Revision history**

| Revision | Date | Description of modifications |
|----------|------|------------------------------|
| v1 | 20 August 2022 | Policy created |
| V1.1 | 25 May 2024 | Amended to address feedback from D&I Board Advisory Committee |