# Incorporating Intersectionality and Health Equity

## Intersectionality

As you know, disability intersects with all populations. Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw that describes how people can experience multiple oppressed identities that compound where they intersect. Many people face systemic oppression along the lines of race, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, ethnicity, religion, disability, and more. Many people face systemic oppression in multiple ways at the same time.

A person with a disability is often discriminated against in many settings. This oppression can compound if the person with the disability is also a person of color, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, a person whose first language is not English, or if they are working-class/poor.

It is important to consider intersectionality when addressing vaccine hesitancy because people with disabilities are often also members of other marginalized communities.

## Health Equity

Many populations are marginalized and discriminated against on individual, community, and systemic levels. This discrimination includes healthcare settings. To better encourage self-advocacy for people with disabilities in accessing vaccines, CILs must consider that healthcare settings are not always equitable or accessible.

CILs can be more effective in getting people with disabilities vaccinated by using a health equity lens.

Your CIL can center health equity by:

* Considering that discrimination impacts health and healthcare access.
* Recognizing that information must be accessible in terms of both disability and culture.
* Avoiding implying that a person or community is at fault for their increased health risks or adverse health outcomes.
* Emphasizing that equal health access and opportunity benefits everyone.

## Inclusive Communication

To reach the most people with disabilities and encourage them to seek vaccination, CILs can make sure their communication is inclusive of all people and does not stigmatize or harm anyone.

Your CIL can use inclusive communication by:

* Avoiding dehumanizing language and using person-first language
	+ Example: Instead of “inmates,” say “people who are incarcerated.”
* Remembering that there are many types of people and communities and being specific
	+ Example: Instead of “minorities,” say “people from sexual/gender/religious minority groups.”
* Avoiding blame
	+ Example: Instead of “people who refuse to get vaccinated,” say “people who have not yet received their vaccine.”
* Using terms preferred by members of certain communities
	+ Example: Instead of “transgenders,” say “transgender people.”
* Avoiding assumptions about gender
	+ Example: Instead of “man/woman/lady/gentleman,” say “person.”

Your CIL can find more information about health equity from the CDC’s [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html).

## Gender Inclusion

While centering the goal of helping people with disabilities get vaccinated, it is necessary to also be inclusive of people of all genders. The DVAO Center requires that you collect data on gender identity.

Your CIL *should ALWAYS:*

* Ask every person what name and pronouns they use
* Share your own name and pronouns
* Collect what information is necessary to serve the person
* Explain why you are collecting information
* Use the name and pronouns that people ask you to use
* Apologize quickly, self-correct, and move on if you use the wrong name or pronouns
* Be an ally to transgender people

Your CIL *should NEVER:*

* Only ask people who you think might be transgender what their name and pronouns are
* Use the wrong name or pronouns for anyone
* Ask invasive or irrelevant questions about birth names, genitalia, or gender-affirming surgeries
* Assume gender, pronouns, or what gendered language someone uses
* Make a big scene when you use the wrong pronouns
* Assume that there are only 2 genders

In addition to sex, the DVAO Center requires that your CIL collects data on gender identity. Below are some examples of how to be respectful when asking about gender identity:

* “My name is \_\_\_\_\_. What name do you like to be called?”
* “My pronouns are \_\_\_\_\_. What pronouns do you use? Do you use she/her, he/him, they/them, or other pronouns?”
* “What is your gender identity? Are you a man, a woman, non-binary, or another gender?”

Keep in mind that gender identity is different than sex. Sex is biological, chromosomal, and hormonal, while gender identity is an individual’s self-conception of their relationship to manhood, womanhood, both, or neither.