

Language Guide

Abortion

Introduction

In support of our vision and mission, EngenderHealth promotes access to comprehensive abortion care for all people who need or want it. All EngenderHealth language regarding abortion should similarly reflect this vision and our overarching **Principles of Language Use** by being (1) current as well as medically and technically **accurate**, (2) consciously **nonjudgmental** and **destigmatizing**, and (3) deliberately and explicitly **inclusive** of the diversity of our partners and impact populations.

Key Terms

The table below explains select, commonly used terms related to pregnancy and abortion. **Note:** For all explanations herein, a pregnant person may be a woman, girl, or nonbinary or transgendered individual.

Explanations of Common Terms
Pregnancy refers to the state of an individual carrying a developing embryo or fetus within their body.
An unintended or unplanned pregnancy is one that occurs when a pregnant person has not purposefully sought to conceive (this includes cases in which a person uses contraception but experiences method failure). An unwanted pregnancy is one that a person does not desire. Note: A pregnancy that is unplanned or unintended may be either wanted or unwanted—intention and planning do not equate to a desire to continue a pregnancy.
An abortion is the termination of a pregnancy.
An abortion may be induced or spontaneous. Induced abortion refers to the intentional ending of a pregnancy. A spontaneous abortion is one that occurs naturally; this is also known as a miscarriage .
A safe abortion is one that is completed with a method recommended by the World Health Organization, that is appropriate to the pregnancy duration, and when the person completing the abortion has the necessary skills (whether provider- or self-managed) and the environment meets established medical standards. An unsafe abortion is one that is completed by a person lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both.
Comprehensive abortion care (CAC) includes all components of postabortion and safe abortion care (see below).
Safe abortion care (SAC) involves an induced abortion performed by a trained provider, under sanitary conditions, and using modern techniques (e.g., vacuum aspiration), or the use of high-quality medications with an effective regimen for medical abortion. Safe abortion care also includes counseling, contraceptive services, links to other sexual and reproductive health services, and connections to the community, as defined under postabortion care.
Postabortion care (PAC) includes the provision of: (1) medical treatment (often emergency) of incomplete and unsafe abortions and related complications, (2) contraceptive counseling and services, (3) counseling to identify and respond to any physical and emotional concerns (including pain management needs), (4) sexual and reproductive healthcare (on-site or via referral), and (5) community support services, via partnerships and resource mobilization activities to generate acceptance and support for high-quality care.

Core Principles

Our core principles related to abortion focus on **client rights** and **safety** and include the following:

- All persons have the right to make decisions about their own bodies and lives.
- All persons have the right to explore and engage in consensual, healthy, respectful sexual activity—for emotional, mental, social, and physical pleasure *as well as* for reproduction.
- All persons have the right to determine if, when, and with whom to have children.
- All persons have the right to safe, affordable, and unbiased abortion care.
- No person should be forced to continue with a pregnancy or to become a parent.
- Abortion is safe and safe abortions saves lives.
- When performed safely, abortions do not pose a medical risk to the pregnant person. Complications, morbidities, and mortalities related to abortion are associated with unsafe abortions.

Recommended Language

The table below* provides examples of accurate, inclusive, unbiased language—as well as language to avoid.

✓ Say this...	✗ Not that!
Have an abortion or end a pregnancy	Get rid of or abort a baby/child
Decide to continue a pregnancy	Keep a baby/child
Abortion provider or healthcare provider or service provider	Abortionist
Pregnant women, girls, and nonbinary or trans individuals or pregnant clients or pregnant persons	Mothers or pregnant women
Partners or spouses of pregnant clients/persons	Fathers
Women, girls, and nonbinary and trans individuals who need/desire, have, or had abortions or abortion clients and postabortion clients	Women who need/desire, have, or had abortions
Embryo (<10 weeks gestation) or fetus (≥10 weeks gestation)	Baby or dead fetus or unborn baby/child
Providers who refuse to deliver abortion care	Conscientious objectors
Antiabortion or antichoice	Pro-life
Prevent or reduce unintended pregnancies or prevent or reduce unsafe abortions	Prevent abortion or reduce abortions (e.g., number, rate of)
Promote choice or generate awareness around abortion	Promote abortion
Abortion in the second or third trimester or abortion at XX weeks	Late or late-term abortion
More than one abortion	Multiple or repeat abortion
Abortion is legally restricted or abortion is legal under the following conditions...	Abortion is illegal.

*Refer to *How to Talk about Abortion: A Rights-Based Messaging* for additional examples and details explaining the rationale for select recommendations.

Resources

- Gold, J., Hurley, L., Wachsmann, H., and Wilkins, R. (2015) 2018. *How to Talk about Abortion: A Rights-Based Messaging Guide*. London: International Planned Parenthood Federation. https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/ippf_abortion_messaging_guide_web_0.pdf.
- Ipas. 2018. *Abortion Stigma Ends Here: A Toolkit for Understanding and Action*. Chapel Hill, NC: Ipas. <https://www.ipas.org/resource/abortion-stigma-ends-here-a-toolkit-for-understanding-and-action/>.
- World Health Organization (WHO). 2020. *Preventing Unsafe Abortion*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preventing-unsafe-abortion>.

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