

# A Place at the Table



**Women's Advocacy and  
Treatment Coalition on HIV**

A program of The Well Project



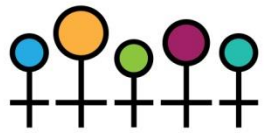
## Session 1: Becoming an HIV Advocate

*Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.*

#onewomanatatime

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

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# Use of Language in HIV Advocacy

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# Advocating

“Because [**advocating for**] HIV and AIDS [**issues**] ultimately deals with matters of life and death, and because many people will form their understanding of HIV and AIDS through [**our advocacy work**], the [**message**] must be approached with clarity, precision, and sensitivity.”

Kaiser Family Foundation. Reporting  
Manual on HIV/AIDS **edits by Vickie Lynn**

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# Power of Language

- Language
  - Helps to shape our world
  - Describes and gives meaning to our lives
  - Persuades and changes minds
  - Can destroy or empower





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# Stigma

- Stigma
  - From society (reaction of general public to people living with HIV)
  - Personal or self-stigma (prejudice that people with HIV tend to turn towards themselves)
- Labeling and stereotyping people, “us” and “them”, discrimination





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# Stigma

Stigma works its way into policy decisions that affect:

- Access to care
- Access to health insurance
- Employment discrimination
- Research funding allocations



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*What can we do to address stigma and why  
does the use of language matter?*

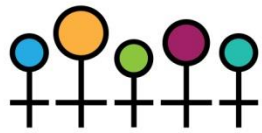
# Inappropriate Language

- Full-blown AIDS – do not use
- Referring to AIDS as a virus – it is a diagnosis and cannot be transmitted from one person to the next
- HIV virus – is redundant; HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- Victim, Sufferer, Contaminated, sick – do not use

# People-first Language

Rather than using labels to define individuals with a health issue, it is more appropriate to use terminology that describes individuals as being diagnosed with an illness or disorder

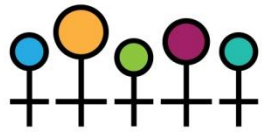
- ~~Cancer patient~~ – person living with Cancer
- ~~HIV+ mother~~ – Mother living with HIV
- ~~Depressed man~~ – Man living with depression



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# Preferred Language

Stigmatizing	Preferred
<del>HIV patient, AIDS patient</del>	Person living with HIV
<del>Positives or HIVers</del>	
<del>AIDS or HIV carrier</del>	
<del>HIV-infected mother</del>	Mother living with HIV
<del>Died of AIDS, to die of AIDS</del>	Died of AIDS related illness, AIDS related complications
<del>Fight against HIV and AIDS</del>	Response to HIV and AIDS or HIV and AIDS response
<del>Infected</del>	Contracted, diagnosed with, transmitted



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## Next Steps

- Avoid labeling and stereotyping people living with HIV on the basis of media and societal stereotypes
- Learn more about HIV stigma and discrimination
- Speak up about HIV stigma
- Listen to people who have experienced HIV stigma and discrimination



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## Next Steps

- Watch your language – use “people first language”
- Use appropriate language, medically correct language
- Portray people with HIV living positively



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If we spoke a different language,  
we would perceive a somewhat  
different world.

-Ludwig Wittgenstein