Inclusive & Destigmatizing Language

Using inclusive language helps everyone relate to the information. It is also a way of actualizing our value of anti-oppression, by recognizing the way that exclusion impacts people's health and ability to access information and support.

Avoid saying…	Instead try….
Infect or spread *ex. Youth can be infected through sex*	**Pass** *ex. HIV can be passed through unprotected vaginal, anal, or frontal sex*
Infected with HIV or suffers from HIV	**Living with HIV**
Gendered descriptions *ex. Female condoms* *ex. Pap smears are an important part of health care for women*	**Body parts or actions** *ex. Insertive condoms* *ex. Pap smears are an important part of health care for people with a cervix*
Prostitution	Sex work
Junkies, addicts, alcoholic	**People who use drugs, people experiencing addiction, people with a substance use disorder** (depending on what we're talking about; note, most of us use drugs whether that be caffeine, nicotine, etc.)
Clean/dirty used to describe equipment or people	To describe people **– abstinent, not using/actively using** To describe equipment (e.g. needles) – **new, unused/used**
Homosexual; transsexual; identity-based slurs	**Terms people use to self-identify** *ex. gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, pansexual, etc.*
"AIDS" or "HIV/AIDS" when referring to HIV *ex. It is important to get tested for AIDS* *ex. Died from HIV/AIDS*	**HIV** *ex. It is important to get tested for HIV* *ex. Died from AIDS-related complications; died from opportunistic infections*
Judgments *ex. slut, promiscuous, crazy, dirty, bad*	**Speaking neutrally about activities** *ex. Having sex, using drugs*
Risk *ex. Using drugs is a risk activity for Hep C* *ex. Risk activities for HIV include…*	**More specific language –** "risk" is subjective *ex. Sharing needles can pass Hep C* *ex. Activities that can pass HIV include…*
"They," "them" or "those people" *ex. When their immune system is weak* *ex. If they are taking HIV medications*	**"We," "our" or "those of us"** – especially in peer contexts *ex. When our immune system is weak* *ex. If we are taking HIV medications; those of us who are taking HIV medications*
Normal *ex. Normal sex* *ex. A normal CD4 cell count is…*	**More specific language** – "normal" can be othering and exclusive *ex. Penis in vagina sex; sex where a mouth is on a bum, vulva, strapless* *ex. CD4 cell counts above 500 mean our immune system can fight off most infections*
Protect *ex. Protect against HIV*	**Prevent** *ex. Prevent HIV from being passed*

Sexually transmitted disease (STD)	**Sexually transmitted infection (STI) -** infection is more accurate and less stigmatizing
Safe *ex. This is a safe space.* *ex. This is one way to have safe sex / safely inject*	**Safer –** "safe" is a subjective concept *ex. We work together to make this a safer space.* *ex. Safer sex can look like conversations with partners, or letting friends know where we are.*
Guys *ex. Thanks guys for having YouthCO!*	**Folks** – words that are not gendered are more inclusive *ex. Folks, thanks so much for having YouthCO!*
Mother to child transmission *ex. Some youth have HIV as a result of mother to child transmission*	**HIV being passed through birth or breastfeeding, vertical transmission –** this phrasing makes assumptions about the gender of birth parents, and places responsibility for transmission on the birth parent. *ex. Some youth became HIV-positive at birth or through breastfeeding.*

SumOfUs.org and ActivistEditor.com compiled this language resource, callined "A Progressive's Style Guide" which also includes a lot of helpful information. This guide does not address HIV, and does not reflect the language YouthCO uses within our Indigenous programming.
https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf