

# PRSSA

Diversity Toolkit  
2025–2026

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# Being You | PRSSA National BEDI Statement

PRSSA members are creative alone, but together we are visionaries. This means PRSSA members must be their authentic selves, practice inclusivity and be responsible for each other — all with respect and understanding infused within our communication. For PRSSA and the public relations industry to grow and evolve, being creative is not enough. We need visionaries to ensure we will be a more empathetic, dynamic and innovative organization and workforce.

Inclusion is not just about having “a seat at the table.” It’s about ensuring everyone’s voice is heard and fully considered. PRSSA recognizes the importance of listening to all voices and experiences to forge a viable Society that aids the profession and future professionals in serving diverse and increasingly multicultural publics.

The most obvious contexts of diversity include race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, sexual orientation, political belief, gender, gender identity, country of origin, culture and diversity of thought. However, in a rapidly changing society, diversity continues to evolve and can include class, socioeconomic status, life experiences, learning and working styles, personality types and intellectual traditions and perspectives. These defining attributes impact how we approach our work, connect with others and move through the world.

PRSSA encourages its members to always respect, embrace, celebrate and validate each other’s differences. These diverse and inclusive practices, when done proactively, contribute to the growth of our Chapters, the public relations industry, the communities in which we live and work, and ourselves.

Over the years, PRSSA has put in place several programs to support members and their transition into the public relations industry. In 2019, the PRSSA Assembly voted in the inaugural vice president diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and inclusion who quickly developed initiatives that bettered the Society such as the PRoud Council and International Ambassadors. During the 2023 Leadership Assembly, the Delegates passed a bylaw amendment, changing the title of the position to ‘Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.’ Then, in 2024, Delegates agreed to modify the title once again to ‘Vice President of Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion,’ (BEDI) based on the strong PRSSA commitment towards building a strong community for all our members.

PRSSA members are the future of the industry. It is our responsibility as bright, young leaders to be the change we envision.

## Dear PRSSA members,

The Vice President of Belonging, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (VP of BEDI) in PRSSA advocates for a welcoming and inclusive community, amplifies diverse perspectives, and fosters unity among members to enhance education and promote equity in the public relations field. This role involves leadership in outreach, advocacy, and collaboration to celebrate and support the diverse identities within the organization.

I look forward to hearing about the exciting initiatives your chapter will undertake using this toolkit. Together, let us lead the way toward a future where communication catalyzes unity, comprehension, and inclusive representation.

*Sincerely,*

**Uyen Ngo**

Vice President of Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

## PRoud Council

The PRoud Council is a National subcommittee that assists the vice president of belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion and actively facilitates belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives on a local and international level on behalf of PRSSA by acting as a resource for Chapters and individual members. This is an opportunity for committee members to be the change needed in the field of communications and the world.

### **Responsibilities include:**

- Reflecting the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct and performance.
- Being inclusive and respectful of all people and points of view.
- Developing BEDI activities for PRSSA Chapters to engage in.
- Assisting in the implementation of BEDI workshops, webinars and virtual panels.
- Promoting diverse member attendance at national PRSSA events and participation in initiatives throughout the Society.
- Contributing to the creation of accessibility changes for members with disabilities.
- Communicating with Chapters and Faculty Advisers.
- Assisting the mentorship program with PRSA.
- Furthering digital education and professional development resources.

# Do's and Don'ts of BEDI Chapter Leaders

The job of the PRSSA BEDI Chapter leader is one that is vitally important to our PRSSA Chapters. There may be a desire to quickly take on the role, but below are varied “do’s” and “don’ts” to ensure you remain effective while doing your job.

## DO'S

- ✓ Talk to other BEDI leaders for advice and ideas.
- ✓ Make a BEDI plan that matches your Chapter and PRSSA's goals.
- ✓ Put BEDI first on meeting agendas and have a BEDI team.
- ✓ Create a calendar to celebrate different groups and causes each month.
- ✓ Teach members about BEDI through events and activities.
- ✓ Use inclusive language (like “everyone” instead of “guys” or “girls”).
- ✓ Share BEDI work on social media and set clear posting rules.
- ✓ Team up with student groups and local schools.
- ✓ Use PRSSA tools and resources to guide your work.
- ✓ Highlight local changemakers and positive news.
- ✓ Check in often to track progress and improve.

## DON'TS

- ✗ Take on too much or go about it alone.
- ✗ Be intimidated by the moment. Breathe.
- ✗ Allow yourself to be defined as having the answers to how to solve all inequities.
- ✗ Be afraid to add your voice to the conversation.
- ✗ Make microaggression behavior such as making feedback in one way that might cause miscommunication with others.

# Engaging and Recruiting With Students and Faculty Advisers at HBCU and HACU Institutions

Faculty Advisers at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and institutions recognized by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACUs) have revealed a consistent need for support both in professional development and financial resources for their PRSSA Chapters. There are often opportunities that are not available for students and Faculty Advisers from these institutions. The lack of these resources should never prevent students or their Faculty Advisers from taking advantage of the exceptional assets PRSSA has to offer.

After numerous insightful conversations between PRSA and Faculty Advisers from HBCUs and HACUs, PRSSA shares some recommendations from PRSA to strengthen our collective commitment to the principles of belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion and future practitioners.

**To that end, below are recommendations for your engagement in this regard:**

- Offer mentorship or internship experiences, even informal ones, to give students real-world exposure.
- Invite guest speakers to help with resumes, LinkedIn, and interview skills.
- Partner with local PRSA Chapters for meetings, training sessions, and events.
- Work with your school's diversity office and connect with HBCU or HACU Chapters.
- Fundraise to help send students to PRSSA District or International Conferences

These are just a few suggestions on how your PRSSA Chapter can grow and strengthen its relationship with PRSA Chapters and Faculty Advisers at HBCUs and HACUs. It's important to note that these suggestions are not all encompassing. We encourage PRSSA Chapters to create opportunities that fit their Chapter personalities and the needs of diverse students within their reach.

Our commitment to providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds has never been stronger. Members of the PRoud Council will continue the dialogue with Faculty Advisers — with emphasis on those at HBCUs and HACUs — and will continue to develop strategies and tactics to meet these needs.

*Examples from HBCU and HACU Chapters:*

## PRSSA Clark Atlanta District Conference



## PRSSA UADE District Conference



# Thinking Outside the Box: Ideas and Events

George Floyd's death in May 2020, combined with a history of systemic racism and police brutality toward innocent Black people and people of color, advanced the rise in protests and caused the mobilization of people to share educational resources and stories across social media. Due to the uproar on social media, organizations and public relations pros have become much more aware of the need for allies and activists to fight against social injustices. As PRSSA works to improve and bolster its belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives, we encourage Chapters not to resort to what is familiar. Instead, we urge Chapters to think outside the box in order to educate students and create a welcoming, fulfilling environment for our diverse members.

According to Business Insider, organizations tend to turn to “unconscious bias training,” or implicit bias training, as the go-to solution for increasing belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion. Unconscious bias training programs are designed to expose people to their unconscious biases, provide tools to adjust automatic patterns of thinking and ultimately eliminate discriminatory behaviors.

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person or group as compared to another in a way that is usually considered unfair. As a result of unconscious biases, certain people benefit and other people are penalized.

Despite the popularity of unconscious bias training, there is growing evidence that these training sessions do not work. Below are several issues regarding unconscious bias training:

- Some organizational members are skeptical of the training sessions to begin with.
- The validity and effectiveness of bias training is weak.
- Companies treat these training sessions as the sole ingredient in the corporate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) recipe.
- There is often a lack of focus placed on structural and systemic issues, which may hamper the success of these training sessions.

This doesn't mean organizations should give up on unconscious bias training. They can improve their training, and they also can look for other opportunities. Below are some strategies recommended by PRSSA for Chapters to address issues of social injustice and ensure that their practices truly lead to long-term changes in the organization.

## Examine Chapter practices.

Your Chapter may have cracks within its structure. Go through the different practices your Chapter has adopted and evaluate whether fair standards have been utilized. Consider if inequities and imbalances within your organization trickle down from the executive board/senior level members. Be honest about your practices and ask if they have or have not improved your Chapter's culture.

## Be accountable.

Open up about your BEDI shortfalls. This could include negative interactions with the executive board, toxicity, cliques, a lack of messaging about your Chapter's BEDI efforts and more. Once you are accountable for your Chapter's shortfalls, environment, mistakes and/or decisions that may have done more damage than good, you can work with your Chapter to move forward on a more positive note. It's also important to emphasize that BEDI is everyone's responsibility, not just the job of the chief diversity officer.

## Include relevant scenarios in unconscious bias training.

If you do decide to implement unconscious bias training into your Chapter, include several job- or internship-relevant scenarios to increase the training effectiveness. According to a Harvard Business Review study, including job-relevant scenarios into unconscious bias training allowed employees to make concrete commitments to activities and behaviors in the workplace. So rather than focusing solely on concepts and terminology (which are important for a baseline understanding), Chapter BEDI leaders should make sure their efforts are put into creating training that encompasses workplace practices where bias is more likely to creep in such as in agencies or corporations. Chapter BEDI leaders also should be provided with actionable steps to prevent bias from impacting decision-making processes. This is likely to increase members' commitment to goals and objectives set forth in the unconscious bias training, thus increasing the overall effectiveness of the training.

### General suggestions

- Learn as much as possible about unconscious bias and ways to combat it.
- Tell your story ... and listen to the stories of others.
- Avoid stereotypes and over generalizations.
- Separate feelings from facts.
- Have a diverse group of people around the decision-making table.
- Engage in self-reflection to uncover personal biases.
- Develop safe and brave spaces to discuss unconscious bias.
- Don't expect a quick fix.
- Practice empathy.



# Diversity Recruitment Tips

PRSSA Chapters must adapt to ever-changing member needs. Engaging a diverse pool of students adds to the challenge. Below are recommendations that can be used both in person and virtually, for the recruitment of diverse members.

## Publicize your Chapter's belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion policy before the school year begins.

Your policy should set formal goals and strategies pertaining to creating an equal opportunity environment. Once your policy is in place it should be made public both internally and externally.

## Expand your network. Now.

Word-of-mouth is a great method that isn't going anywhere. Building relationships with more employers or students can encourage them to spread the word to potential members with diverse backgrounds. You can reach out to:

- Diverse affinity groups at your college/university.
- People from conferences, seminars, job fairs and networking events.
- Professionals through online networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Your own diverse friends, neighbors, colleagues.
- Your local PRSA Chapter. Perhaps your Chapter has a connection with your local PRSA Chapter. Inform the PRSA Chapter that your PRSSA Chapter is struggling to obtain diverse memberships and let them know your Chapter needs help.

## Highlight member benefits

These can include:

- Workshops on BEDI, ethics, traditional public relations deliverables such as press releases, LinkedIn, different creative platforms used in agencies, etc.
- Scholarships and awards - As a PRSSA member, you can apply for many scholarships and leadership awards provided by the PRSA Foundation that recognize your excellence and provide funding to help you get through school.
- Access to Student-run Firms associated with the Chapter – This provides hands-on public relations experience allowing students to improve their skills before stepping into their first internship or job.
- Chapter size – If you're a big Chapter, emphasize that. You are able to offer a lot of opportunities to grow and gain leadership experience by joining our executive board or getting involved in meetings and events.
- Extensive alumni network and opportunities to connect you with jobs in the future.
- In-person or virtual agency tours.
- Access to the school's internship center.
- Connect with students and professionals from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds.
- Early bird pricing.
- BEDI Instagram Chat.
- Diverse Dialogues.

## Create a Video or Animation

Using social media to share this video or animation, present the job opportunities and internships that can come out of your PRSSA Chapter. This content will help prove that there is value in spending money to be in PRSSA.

## Mention Past, Present, and Future Work

What has the past BEDI officer or co-chair done so far regarding your Chapter's BEDI initiatives? What has worked? What are you currently working on regarding your Chapter's BEDI initiatives? How is your Chapter being proactive, instead of reactive, when it comes to creating meaningful change through BEDI?

- **Example:** Boiler Communication, PRSSA Purdue's Student-run Firm, is helping Purdue's LGBTQ Center by using PR skills to build [a campaign raising awareness about LGBTQ+ in the community](#).

## Reach Out or Collaborate With Chapters You Wouldn't Have Before

Diversity is more than how people look, so target students whose creative minds may mesh well with those already in your Chapter. This could include students in journalism, media studies and production, business, arts, music, etc.

## Leverage the Strengths of the Diversity You Have So Far

Ask yourself: What are the diversity strengths I have so far? How can my Chapter and I build on those strengths? Your Chapter may be diverse in the way you think. It's important for PRSSA Chapters to build a culture where differences in thinking and ways of working are valued and leveraged. So focus on your members' unique strengths or those underlying qualities that energize them, and unlock their full potential for others to witness.

## Sample Programming Ideas and Events

The PRSA Diversity & Inclusion Committee is a great resource for developing diverse programming and event ideas. The following are samples of programming ideas and topics provided by PRSA Chapters and Districts and the PRSSA National Committee.

## Talk About PR-related Issues You Are Determined to Tackle Throughout the Year

For example, having relevant discussions about companies' race-related public relations/advertising issues are important for public relations students and your Chapter. How do companies' public relations/communications/advertising teams end up with an ad in which a Black woman transforms into a white woman after using Dove body wash, or in which a black boy is wearing a sweatshirt reading "cutest monkey in the jungle" as in an H&M ad? These are real examples of advertisements that were racially insensitive. Your Chapter has the opportunity to escape its comfort zone and address these issues now, before heading into the public relations workforce where there is a lack of diversity.

## Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Managers

Many of today's businesses hire experts to serve as directors, vice presidents and managers of diversity to lead companies in recruiting and retaining diverse candidates. Reach out to some of these individuals to see if they can offer your Chapter's executive board insights for recruiting and retaining diverse members. In addition, invite one of these managers to speak to your campus' human resources and public relations students.

## Visits to Non-Public Relations Classes

To recruit PRSSA members outside the public relations major, visit classes in majors such as marketing, advertising, graphic design and journalism. During the visit, discuss what public relations is and how the specific major you are speaking with can benefit from learning more about the public relations profession. At the end of the discussion, invite the students to your next meeting.

## Diversity and Human Resources

Work with your campuses' office of human resources to create a program that discusses employee communications and communicating with diverse employees on campus. Also, partner with a local HR organization (e.g., Society for Human Resource Management) in your area and invite them to speak about their experiences with employee relations and diversity in local companies.

## Communicating Across Cultures

Our language is filled with interesting colloquialisms and metaphors. But some of these words and phrases can be hurtful to people of certain ethnicities and religions, or other groups. Co-sponsor a writing and language workshop with journalism students or the press/broadcast news club on your campus to learn some of the ways people inadvertently use offensive language — and suggest more appropriate ways to get your message across.

## Public Relations Chairs/Directors

Various organizations on your campus may have public relations officers or chairs. A good way to recruit and retain new members is to reach out to those organizations and communicate the benefit of the public relations chairs being part of PRSSA to learn how to better serve in their roles. Also consider hosting a workshop for this audience.

## School Spirit

Co-sponsor a workshop with student athletes and the athletics department media relations office on your campus. At the workshop, discuss how your university's sports teams are being promoted and how student athletes feel about their image and the image of university athletics. The results could lead to a campaign led by your Student-run Firm. Promote PRSSA membership to any athletes interested in combining their passion for sports with a communications career.

## Greek Life: Image Is Everything

Host a workshop with fraternity and sorority communications chairs and committee members to identify topics such as reputation management, crisis communication and publicity/public relations. Most Greek organizations have public relations officers or programming chairs. Your PRSSA Chapter could offer suggestions on how to best communicate their organization's message to the student body.

## Students With Disabilities

Co-sponsor an event with the Center for Students with Disabilities on your campus. The event could be a partnership with an existing organization in your area such as the Special Olympics. Your Chapter could also generate awareness about the Center for Students with Disabilities by offering public relations services such as news releases.

## Lifestyle Magazines and Publications

Lifestyle magazines are a burgeoning market, particularly in the LGBTQ+ community. Host a roundtable discussion between communications professionals from LGBTQ+-oriented lifestyle magazines, your PRSSA Chapter and LGBTQ+ campus organizations.

## Empowering Women

Invite faculty from your campus' women's studies department and local businesswomen to discuss the promotion of women in today's organizations, and how females in leadership positions affect diversity in the workplace.

## Crisis Case Study

Host a workshop or competition where professionals describe a crisis or challenge they faced within an ethnic market (e.g., Nike racial discrimination suit). Have participants offer solutions for the crisis before the real-life solution is presented.

- **Good Example:** P&G - “The Talk”  
The campaign featured Black parents discussing racism, sparking national conversations about bias. It was praised for authenticity, backed by real partnerships, and aligned with the company’s DEI values.
- **Bad example:** Pepsi - Kendall Jenner Ad  
The campaign used protest imagery and Kendall Jenner to promote unity, but it trivialized real social justice movements. The public backlash was swift, forcing Pepsi to pull the ad and issue an apology

## Challenges of Diversity

Partner with your area’s largest public and private employers to discuss the different diversity challenges they have faced, especially those related to communications.

## Working With Ethnic Public Relations

Ask PRSA professionals in corporate or governmental areas to be guest speakers on your campus and discuss how they work with ethnic public relations agencies, ethnic initiatives and ethnic campaigns.

## Emerging Markets

Host a discussion with your local PRSA Chapter that addresses emerging business markets. Discuss the different opportunities the emerging markets can provide for public relations professionals.

## Ethnic Radio or Podcast

This is a powerful and often overlooked medium. Try to identify ethnic radio markets in your area and invite members of the station to speak to your Chapter regarding ethnic radio and how public relations professionals can use it to reach diverse audiences.

## Perceptions

What are the changes experienced by today’s ethnic communities? Hold a discussion regarding issues of perceptions of certain ethnic groups and how to communicate when differences exist, both in person and in public relations campaigns. Invite diversity officers from businesses in the area to be guest speakers.

## International Chapter Connections

PRSSA currently has five international Chapters in Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Puerto Rico. If you have members with connections or an interest, encourage them to reach out to those Chapters to learn how public relations differs in their location — or ask one of the Chapters’ members to have a virtual meeting. These are just a few topics you can cover to bring the value of diversity to your members.

Reach out to your local PRSA Chapter or PRSSA vice president of belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion at [vpdiversity@prsa.org](mailto:vpdiversity@prsa.org) for more ideas and to discuss how to make these programs work for your Chapter.

# Appendix

## Race, Ethnicity and National Origin

Identity	Explanation	Example(s)
African American/Black	<p>Black and African American are not always interchangeable. Some individuals prefer the term Black because they do not identify as African and/or American.</p> <p>Individuals may identify as African, Afro Caribbean, Afro Latino or other.</p>	<p>Refer to groups as Black students, Black faculty members etc., not Blacks.</p> <p>Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'white student' or 'white faculty member' when discussing others?"</p>
Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander	<p>Asian Refers to people who are citizens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent, or to describe people of Asian Descent.</p> <p>Asian Americans trace their origins to these regions.</p> <p>Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian and other peoples of the Pacific Island nations.</p> <p>Use Asian/Pacific Islander when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. Otherwise, use the preferred term of the individual or group.</p>	<p>Refer to groups as Asian students, Asian Faculty members, etc., not Asians.</p> <p>Consider the necessity of using race within your text. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'white student' or 'white faculty member' when discussing others?"</p>
Hispanic, Latino(a/o) and Latinx	<p>Hispanic refers to people from Spanish-speaking countries.</p> <p>Latino, Latina or Latinx is a person of Latin American descent who can be of any background or language. If the individual or group does not identify as either Latino or Latina, the gender-neutral term Latinx can be used. When referring to a group, generally use Latinx as it is gender inclusive.</p>	<p>People from Mexico, Cuba and Guatemala who speak Spanish are both Hispanic and Latin(o/a)/Latinx.</p> <p>Brazilians who speak Portuguese and Latin(o/a)/Latinx but not Hispanic.</p> <p>Spanish-speaking people in Spain and outside Latin America are Hispanic but not Latin (o/a)/Latinx.</p>
Native American	<p>Native American is preferred unless the individual or group specifies otherwise.</p> <p>Occasionally some prefer American Indian, however, this is not universal.</p>	<p>The term "Indian" is used only when referring to people from India, not for Native Americans.</p>
People of Color	<p>Sometimes, we don't use the term people of color because not all minorities have the same experience. Instead, refer to groups with their name.</p>	<p>Do not use the term "colored people." ie) African American, Asian and Hispanic vs. people of color</p>
Underserved/Underrepresented	<p>Do not use the term minority to describe students from diverse backgrounds. When referring to multiple groups of students from diverse backgrounds, use "Underserved/Underrepresented students," however, use the specific group title when possible.</p>	<p>For example: LGBTQ+ students, Black students, undocumented students etc.</p>
Immigration Status	<p>Do not use the word "illegal immigrant" or "illegal alien" to refer to individuals who are not U.S. citizens/permanent residents, who do not hold visas to reside in the U.S. or who have not applied for official residency.</p>	<p>Example: Undocumented students, Undocumented individuals</p>

## Gender and Sexuality

Identity	Explanation	Example(s)
LGBTQ(+)	Shorthand and umbrella term for individuals who have a non-hetero/cis-normative gender or sexuality. LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The “+” includes all other non-hetero/cis- normative identities not included within the LGBTQ acronym.	
Lesbian	Women who are primarily attracted to other women.	It is not appropriate to use the word “homosexual” or “WSW” (women who have sex with women).
Gay	Men who are attracted to other men,  Some individuals refer to lesbian women as “gay women.” Generally, do not do so unless preferred by the group/individual.	It is not appropriate to use the word “homosexual” or “MSM” (men who have sex with men).
Bisexual	An individual who experiences attraction to men and women.	
Transgender	A gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. Transgender can sometimes be written as “trans.”	It is not appropriate to ask a transgender individual which part of their transition they are currently in. A biological man who is transitioning into a woman is a transgender woman, or transwoman. A biological woman who is transitioning into a man is a transgender man or transman.
Queer	An umbrella term to describe individuals who do not identify as straight and or cisgender.	It is important to consider the context when using the word queer as it was formally used as a derogatory word. It has since been reclaimed.  Never add “a” in front of the word. Example: He is Queer.
Ally	A typically straight and or cisgender person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ+ community.	
Cisgender	A gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity corresponds in the socially constructed and socially expected way.	
Gender Non-Conforming	A gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary (binary: man or woman).	

## Noun usage

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjectives	Possessive Pronouns	Reflective	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	Pronounced as it looks.
He	Him	His	His	Himself	Pronounced as it looks.
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced Zay or Zee/Zim (rhymes with them). Zir (rhymes with their).
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves	Pronounced as it looks.

## Making Chapter Meetings Accessible

### Guidelines for writing and referring to People with Disabilities

The ADA National Network provides information and guidance on how to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and its purpose is to guarantee equal rights and opportunities.

Below are some of the ADA National Network's guidelines for portraying individuals with disabilities in a respectful and balanced way by using language that is accurate, neutral, and objective.

- Choose a language that emphasizes what people can do instead of what they can't do. For example, say "a person who uses a communication device" instead of "a person that can't talk".
- In general, refer to the person first and the disability second: When referring to an individual with a disability it's important to identify them as a person with a disability, not a disabled person. For example, say "a person on the autism spectrum", not "autistic" or "autistic person". The "Person First" mentality should also be applied when discussing mental health conditions.
- However, it's important to keep in mind that people with disabilities have different preferences when referring to their disability. For instance, some people see their disability as an essential part of who they are and prefer to be identified with their disability first. This is called the "Identity First" language. Examples of Identity First language include identifying someone as a "deaf person" instead of a "person who is deaf". Always ask to find out an individual's language preferences.
- Use the term accessible rather than disabled or handicapped to refer to facilities. Avoid outdated, offensive words such as handicapped, retarded, crazy, etc. Avoid using self-diagnosing language such as, "I'm OCD," and "I'm having an anxiety attack right now" unless these mental illnesses have been diagnosed.
- Don't use language that perpetuates negative stereotypes about psychiatric disabilities. For example, say "a person experiencing alcohol/drug problem" instead of "an addict".
- Portray successful people with disabilities in a balanced way, not as heroic or superhuman.
- Don't refer to a person's disability or condition unless it relates to the full understanding of your message. It's okay to identify someone's disability if it is essential to the story. For example, "Peter, who uses a wheelchair, spoke about his experience with using accessible transportation". However, it's important to analyze every situation and consider the necessity of referring to their disability.

### Examine Chapter Practices

When examining Chapter practices it is important to keep all members' needs in the mind of Chapter leadership. This may include changing a location to make the space wheelchair accessible, auditory accessible, and visually accessible for all members.

The intent in evaluating the environment is to make everyone comfortable being themselves and getting the most out of Chapter meetings and events.

## Media Style Guides for Race, Ethnicity and Religion: Writing tips for engaging with diverse audiences

### Inclusive Language Guides

- [National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide](#)
- [Asian American Journalists Association Handbook](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association Reporter's Indigenous Terminology Guide](#)
- [Religion Newswriters Association's Religion Stylebook](#)



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