Table 1: Key Principles and Associated Terms

Key principles	Instead of this …	Try this …

Avoid use of adjectives such as vulnerable, marginalized and high-risk. These terms can be stigmatizing. These terms are vague and imply that the condition is inherent to the group rather than the actual causal factors. Try to use terms and language that explain why and/or how some groups are more affected than others. Also try to use language that explains the effect (i.e., words such as impact and burden are also vague and should be explained).	• Vulnerable groups
	• Marginalized communities
	• Hard-to-reach communities
	• Underserved communities
	• Underprivileged communities
	• Disadvantaged groups
	• High-risk groups
	• At-risk groups
	• High-burden groups
		• Groups that have been economically/socially marginalized
		• Groups that have been historically marginalized or made vulnerable; *historically* marginalized
		• Groups that are struggling against economic marginalization
		• Communities that are underserved by/with limited access to (specific service/resource)
		• Under-resourced communities
		• Groups experiencing disadvantage because of (reason)
		• Groups placed at increased risk/put at increased risk of (outcome)
		• Groups with higher risk of (outcome)
		• For scientific publications:
		  – Disproportionately affected groups
		  – Groups experiencing disproportionate prevalence/rates of (condition)

Avoid dehumanizing language. Use person-first language instead. Describe **people** as having a condition or circumstance, not being a condition. A case is an instance of disease, not a person. Use patient to refer to someone receiving health care. **Humanize those you are referring to by using people or persons.**	• The obese or the morbidly obese • COVID-19 cases • The homeless • Disabled person • Handicapped • Inmates • Victims • Cases or subjects (when referring to affected persons) • Individuals	• People experiencing (health outcome or life circumstance) • People with obesity; people with severe obesity • Patients or persons with COVID-19 • People who are experiencing (condition or disability type) • Person with mobility disability • Person with vision impairments • People who are experiencing homelessness • Survivors

Remember that there are many types of subpopulations. General use of the term minority/minorities should be limited, in general, and should be defined when used. Be as specific as possible about the group you are referring to (e.g., be specific about the type of disability if you are not referring to people with any disability type).	• Minorities
	• Minority
	• Ethnic groups
	• Racial groups
		• Specify the type of subpopulation:
		  – (People from) racial and ethnic groups
		  – (People from) racial and ethnic minority groups
		  – (People from) sexual/gender/linguistic/religious minority groups
		  – (People with/living with) mobility/cognitive/vision/hearing/independent living/self-care disabilities

Avoid saying target, tackle, combat or other terms with violent connotation when referring to people, groups or communities. These terms should also be avoided, in general, when communicating about public health activities.	• Target communities for interventions • Target population • Tackle issues within the community • Aimed at communities • Combat (disease) • War against (disease)	• Engage/prioritize/collaborate with/serve (population of focus) • Consider the needs of/Tailor to the needs of (population of focus) • Communities/populations of focus • Intended audience • Eliminate (issue/disease)
Avoid unintentional blaming. Consider the context and the audience to determine if language used could potentially lead to negative assumptions, stereotyping, stigmatization, or blame. However, these terms may be appropriate in some instances.	• Workers who do not use PPE • People who do not seek healthcare	• People with limited access to (specific service/resource) • Workers under-resourced with (specific service/resource)

Adapted from: "Health Equity Guiding Principles for Unbiased, Inclusive Communication" (CDC).