

19 71  
1 11  
4667

003656

*Allen*

**INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION**

**GUIDELINES ON  
THE LANGUAGE OF FAMILY PLANNING**

---

**TERMS TO AVOID**

---

**ALTERNATIVES**

---

***Acceptors******Users******People (women and men) who choose the service***

People do not passively accept, or submit to, family planning services. They come because they want the service, and select a method to suit their needs. *Clients* indicate a *choice* is made for a *service*.

***Birth control******Family planning******Contraception (and abortion)***

Control suggests some sort of restraint over freedom, and also that the only purpose of contraception is the limitation of births. Decisions about when to have children, and how many, are the outcome of choices.

***Body fluids******Semen, vaginal fluids, blood etc***

Vague and euphemistic language used to describe, for example, possible ways in which sexually transmissible diseases can be contracted will only confuse people and may lead to needless fears, such as the notion that they can be transmitted through sweat or tears.

***(AIDS) carrier******Person with AIDS/HIV infection******(AIDS) victim******HIV (antibody) positive***

The legacy of the past use of the word carrier (in major typhoid epidemics, for example) means that it may create unnecessary fear about levels of risk as well as the ways in which the virus can be contracted.

***Demand creation/generation******Meeting people's felt needs******Unmet contraceptive demand***

Demand creation/generation are marketing terms to express the process of persuading people to buy something new for which there was no apparent need. They are inappropriate in the context of family planning services. Research indicates that people wish to choose the timing and number of their children; the problem is rather to provide sufficient quality services to enable them to do so.

---

**TERMS TO AVOID**

---

**ALTERNATIVES**

---

*Mass counselling/motivation*

*Mass publicity campaigns*

Mass counselling is a contradiction in terms. Mass publicity campaigns may have a role in informing people of the existence of ways in which they can regulate fertility, or of services to help them do so. They may also help to make the topic of family planning more acceptable in general conversation. Providing full information about methods, and a careful assessment of the benefits and limitations of each for a particular individual, can only be done in personal discussion.

*Morning-after-Pill*

*Post coital Pill*

*Emergency contraception Pill*

Many people are confused by the phrase morning-after Pill, believing that it only works if taken literally the morning after unprotected intercourse. As a result the opportunity to avoid an unintended pregnancy may be missed.

*Motivate/  
Motivators*

*Educate/  
Family planning workers/educators*

Suggests a passive 'acceptor' who will continue with contraception only if frequently urged through outside motivation. Successful programmes empower a woman to make her own decisions based on comprehensive information and the opportunity to select a method she is comfortable with.

*Natural family planning*

*Periodic abstinence*

Periodic abstinence is a more accurate and value-free description of the methods of family planning which depend upon the calculation of a 'safe period' during each month for sexual intercourse and abstention at all other times.

*Non-acceptors*

*People who choose not to use the service  
Non-users*

See *Drop-outs*.

*Normal sex*

*Sexual intercourse  
Vaginal sex*

Words which are vague, judgmental or which may be inapplicable to those who practise other forms of sexual activity should be avoided.

---

**TERMS TO AVOID**

---

**ALTERNATIVES**

---

*Pregnancy control*

*Contraception (and abortion)  
Family planning*

*See Birth control.*

*Promiscuous/permissive*

*Multiple partners*

Judgmental terms should be avoided.

*Pro-life*

*Anti-abortion*

Makes this 'opposition' group seem as though it is *for* life. This is not so.

*Prostitute*

*Commercial sex workers/sex workers*

This is often considered a judgmental term and one derogatory to the person. Use 'commercial sex workers' or 'sex workers' instead if one of these is more acceptable in the culture concerned.

*Quotas/Targets*

*Objectives*

Family planning programmes are concerned with helping women to achieve their wishes about timing and spacing of births. The concept of quotas and targets implies that the women are merely numbers to be recruited. Quotas and targets also measure the family planning worker's performance crudely by numbers reached, rather than how satisfied long-term use of the service has been achieved. A quality family planning service will develop alternative measures of performance.

*Research material*

*Users  
Clients*

Those who routinely use a family planning service or take part in a special research project are people, not material, and their dignity and well-being takes priority over research needs. Thus they participate in a survey; they are not surveyed, neither is the survey questionnaire administered to them.

---

**TERMS TO AVOID**

---

**ALTERNATIVES**

---

*Undermotivated*

*(No alternative. Never use.)*

Patronizing and judgmental term for those individuals or groups who do not use contraceptives should be avoided.

*Venereal diseases*

*Sexually transmissible diseases*

This old term was changed to sexually transmissible diseases when it was recognized that, in addition to the classic syphilis and gonorrhoea, there were a range of conditions which could be communicated by sexual intercourse. See also Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

*Victim*

*People with AIDS*

*(as in AIDS victim)*

People with HIV/AIDs are struggling to live a normal life. Others who suffer from fatal illnesses are not described as victims; those with AIDs believe the word both isolates them and detracts from their dignity as people.

*Women (doctors etc)*

*Female*

If possible, just say 'doctors'. If you need to qualify the word, use 'female doctors'. We do not say 'men doctors', but 'male doctors'. In other words, we distinguish them by gender, not by their entire being.

*Unborn child*

*Fetus*

'Unborn' is not a child.

### *Side effects*

Frequently used to describe just the ill effects, or unwanted effects, of a contraceptive. There are also beneficial side effects to most contraceptives. Both categories should be discussed under this overall heading.

### *Unwanted pregnancy*

An abortion client clearly has an unwanted pregnancy. But many more pregnancies are unintended or unplanned than unwanted. Consideration should be given to the context of use. A woman who is as delighted as she is surprised by an unexpected conception is demeaned — and so is her child — if there is an assumption that it is unwanted.