



Policy Type: Board

Category: Administrative Practices

Policy Name: Board Policy 3.71 Gender Inclusive Language

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3.71 GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Purpose

The Purpose of the Gender-Inclusive Language Policy is to ensure that to the maximum extent possible, and to the extent permitted by law, all official documents and communications from the County of Santa Clara are drafted with gender-inclusive language.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

"Gender-inclusive language" means using gender-neutral terminology, including pronouns such as "they" (for both singular and plural uses) and/or rephrasing and editing sentence structure to avoid the use of gendered pronouns, such as by repeating the noun rather than using a pronoun. To the extent feasible, rephrasing and editing sentence structure to avoid gendered pronouns is preferred. When gendered pronouns are used in phrasing, the authors should default to "they" or include a minimum of three gendered pronoun options such as "she/he/they."

"Gendered pronouns" means pronouns such as "her" "sher" "t'himr" "her," ""hisr" "hersr" and binary combinations such as "he/she," "him/her," and "his/hers."



"Personal pronouns" means the pronouns that people use to refer to themselves. These pronouns may include more than one set of pronouns, if an individual so chooses. Some common personal pronouns include, but are not limited to, "he/him/his," "she/her/hers," "they/them/theirs," and "zehlirhirs" Personal pronouns are determined by the individual and should not be presumed.

County Ordinances, Resolutions, and Proclamations

All new County Ordinances, Resolutions, and Proclamations of the Board of Supervisors shall be drafted using gender-inclusive language to the extent permitted by law. When referring to specific individuals, County documents and communications may use the appropriate personal pronouns. County staff may respectfully inquire with the individual to ensure use of appropriate personal pronouns. In limited other circumstances, and in consultation with County Counsel, gendered pronouns may be used when necessary to convey the intended meaning of the official action.

As existing ordinances and Board policies are being updated for any purpose (for example, ordinances being revised to comply with changes in state or federal law), Administration and County Counsel shall ensure that the ordinance or policy updates include revisions to use genderinclusive language to the extent permitted by law.

County Administrative Policies, Forms, and Other Documents

All new official documents and communications from County agencies, departments, boards, and commissions-including, but not limited to, administrative policies, procedures, forms, websites, press releases, and social media communications-shall be drafted using genderinclusive language to the extent permitted by law. When referring to specific individuals, County documents and communications may use the



appropriate personal pronouns. County staff may respectfully inquire with the individual to ensure use of appropriate personal pronouns. In limited other circumstances, specific gendered pronouns may be used when necessary to convey the intended meaning of the official document or communication.

All County agencies and departments shall periodically, and as time and resources permit, review existing official documents and communications and revise them to use gender-inclusive language to the extent possible and to the extent permitted by law. Priority shall be given to revising existing forms and websites that are public-facing to facilitate members of the public interacting with the County encountering gender-inclusive language.

Related Policies

- **None.**

Related Forms and Information

- **None.**
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History

Date	Changes Made
12/7/2021	Policy adopted. View legislative file.