



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF GREATER LOWELL**

Guidelines for Ethical Communications

Ethical Strengths-Based Language

Strengths-Based messages emphasize the power and opportunity of an individual, group or community. For us, it represents Club members positively, in a way that feels empowering to them. It also allows youth to describe their own successes and challenges.

- Our young people are working to build their own great futures. Members have so many visions for success!
- Young people are great at using the tools that they have. The Club is a place where they learn about new tools and meet other builders.
- Here, young people can lean into their optimism: “Believe and Become.”
- Our members are an integral part of realizing the vision of ending generational poverty.

We want to **prioritize Strengths-Based language** over Need-Based language, which focuses more on the needs, barriers, or limitations. We also know that sometimes we must talk about the needs of our kids and our community. It’s essential that when we do this, we talk about real needs and experiences, rather than stereotypes or the assumptions that a visitor might have.

Community Context → Club Activities

Social Context

- The Club and its supporters help to keep membership fees very low, because everyone is welcome at the Club.
- Families come in all configurations, and our members play a wide range of roles in their families. Some are responsible for their own meals and homework or take care of other family members, especially younger siblings. Here at the Club, kids get to focus on themselves and make their own choices, about daily activities and their futures.
- Arts, music, sports and other enrichment activities aren’t the same for all kids, even within the public schools. All kids can try these activities out at the Club -- so sometimes they discover a new love here, whether it’s basketball or robotics or spoken-word performance.

Homework Help

- Schools aren’t yet equitable, so not every student gets what they need to succeed. At the Club, kids can get more quiet time and supportive adult help on their particular questions.
- A lot of Club families speak multiple languages, which is a lifelong learning asset. It also means that some family members don’t always have the English-language skills to sort through specific academic topics.

- Many Club members have a lot of responsibility at home. Schoolwork may take a back seat to family health, child care, and dinner plans, for instance. At the Club, members can focus just on schoolwork before tackling their other responsibilities at home.

Food and Nutrition

- Food insecurity is a significant issue in Lowell, and that was true even before the pandemic.
- Even families who can afford nutritious food often have trouble getting to it -- several of our neighborhoods are “food deserts” based on USDA standards. Especially for kids and households without a car, it can be hard to access a full-service grocery store that has fresh produce and other nutritious options.
- Many kids live where the closest food options are corner stores or fast food. The Club offers them nutritious meals right where they are.

Mentoring and Mental Health

- Positive relationships are essential to mental health at every age. Our staff members add to the number of caring adults in every member’s life.
- For kids who are actively seeking out more connections, we have a more formal mentor-matching program too. A mentor can be a sounding board and coach for kids who want more guidance about challenges they’re finding at school, at home, or with friends.
- We also have a social worker on staff. When kids are dealing with really serious issues -- domestic or community violence, illness or death in the family, or a diagnosed behavioral health issue -- our social worker is another resource. Not just for kids, but also for their family members and our staff members who can be part of the overall support team.

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Progressive Style Guide Summary

For more information visit

https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf

Language to Use	Language to Avoid
<i>Race and Ethnicity</i>	
Black, Indigenous and people of color (when using collectively, but use more specific language as below when possible)	BIPOC (acronym, except after using the full phrase), Minorities, Black and brown, People of color if actually talking about a specific population (eg, Cambodian Americans)
Black (in general) or African, African-American, or Afro-Caribbean for specific populations	Some people who identify as Black do not identify as African-American - for example, people from Haiti or African nations
Cambodian, Vietnamese and Lao(tian) - or Southeast Asian, collectively	Asian, which is so broad that it is not as helpful
Latino/Latina	Hispanic, Latinx, Spanish (unless referring to someone or something from Spain)
White	Caucasian, Anglo
Multi-racial, Bi-racial	Mixed-race, Mixed
<i>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</i>	
Equity = addressing systemic gaps and power imbalances	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are not synonyms; use the best fit for the context.
Diverse re: a group	Diverse re: an individual - eg, a single staff member cannot be described as “diverse”
<i>Socioeconomic Context</i>	
Youth in Lowell or in our city	Urban youth, Inner-city youth
Youth and families who face systemic barriers to success / are systemically excluded from resources and power / Marginalized	Under-represented / Under-served

Youth who are less likely to graduate because of systemic challenges → <i>specific about risks or context</i>	At-risk youth, High-risk youth, At risk of dropping out
Leave school without a diploma/before graduating	Drop out
More likely to experience interpersonal or community violence	At risk of gang involvement
Disproportionately affected by / Lived experience with [a specific factor]	Vulnerable, under-served
Homeless	Unhoused, experiencing homelessness
Early pregnancy / Young parent	Teen pregnancy / Teen parent
Leaders / Leadership	Citizens / Citizenship

Gender/Sex

- Whenever possible use language that is preferred by the people being talked about.
- *They* is a good alternative if you aren't sure of the person's pronoun.
- If a gender-neutral term is available and does not change the meaning, consider using it.
 - “Employees should read their packets carefully,” not “Each employee should read his packet carefully.”; “Invite your spouse or partner,” not “Invite your boyfriend or husband.”
- Avoid terms that show gender biases in the profession: cleaner, police officer, chair, not cleaning lady, policeman, chairman.
- Do not assume heterosexual orientation.
- Avoid defaulting to umbrella terms like gay or homosexual. Use LGBTQ+ to refer to a broad community or be specific when relevant: lesbian, gay man, bisexual woman, etc.
- Note that transgender is an adjective not a noun. She is a transgender woman, vs. he is a transgender
- ‘Gender diverse’ will join ‘male’ and ‘female’ categories in a new gender-identity classification

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Club Tours

What to do	What to avoid	Why
Ask permission/check in before entering a room or stay on the periphery	Barging in, interrupting a program in place	This is our members' space, not the donors.
Introduce ourselves and guests to Club members before engaging with them	Assuming they know who we are, or that they should know who the guests are	To avoid a power imbalance
Highlight major points before starting the tour	Making generalizations, blanket statements or superlative statements in front of Club members	Not all Club members see themselves as 'poor', 'hungry' or from a 'vulnerable' place
Note the many possibilities Club members have to pursue their dreams, STEM, Technology, as well as Music, Art, Teaching, etc	Suggesting that high-paying careers are the only ones members should be striving for	Success may be defined differently by different individuals
Show members doing things actively in the program spaces/show off products of their work/encourage one on one conversations	Asking members (on the spot) to describe what they are doing to a whole group	Not everyone is comfortable sharing or speaking in front of strangers. Makes members feel like they are on display.
Set up expectations before starting the tour – this is real life at the Club	Make apologies for noise, programs that may seem chaotic, members that don't seem perfectly behaved	Outside folks need to 'get their boots dirty' to really understand the Club
Share with the supporter how they/the community are benefitting from the Club and the work our staff and members are doing	Painting a picture that the members need the donors to 'save' them	Our members, with the help of staff, are doing the work. It is their hard work that will ultimately end generational poverty in Lowell

Key messages:

About our members:

- They are resilient, willing and ready to help, aware of surroundings and what is needed, ready to do what is asked of them.

- They are not all poor and not in need of saving by people around them.
- Living in a low-income household is just one of the challenges a Club member may face -- others are mental health issues, parents are struggling or don't live with parents, etc.
- What donors see on T.V. with regards to race is what our members, families and their communities are experiencing-- it may seem like Portland or Louisville is far away, but it is happening here in Lowell too.

Prepare them for the world they are about to enter:

- This is a second home for many of our members. We are joining their world, and we will get to see what is so special from their perspective.
- We will invite you to ask members questions about what they are doing, and perhaps even join them for a few minutes.
- Our members are not different from any other young person, they have all the same hopes, dreams and aspirations.
- A key indicator of success is having adults who hold you to high expectations, and believe in your ability to be successful. It is the relationship between our staff and volunteers and our members that is most impactful in helping our members become the person *they* want to be. Our staff are guides on this journey.

Highlight our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion without shying away from the reality of racism in our community. This is our members' reality, and we should center the conversation around them.

Remember to speak from a place of success and strength, rather than a place of vulnerability and challenge. (see page one for ideas).

Instead of talking about the problems our members face outside the Club, talk about the challenges society/systemic racism and classism cause for many families in our community.

Remember – our members didn't create the problem but are part of the solution to ending generational poverty. A tour guide should be well-versed in the causes of and solutions to ending generational poverty.

Causes of generational poverty:

- Low expectations – receiving messages from society, parents or school that they will not amount to much
- Lack of many close relationships with caring, responsible adults, parents may not be able to provide guidance/support as they don't know how or received none as a child themselves; adults in their life may not be predictable or stable
- Concern about basic needs, constantly living in a state of stress about making ends meet
- More mental health issues due to ACEs
- [High cost of being poor](#)
- Lack of emphasis on academic success – parents may not know how to help with homework, do not always equate hard work with success (a belief that kids get good grades because they are

smart, not because they work hard), high absenteeism due to lack of importance placed on school/need to work outside the home to support family/care for siblings

- “less time finding out about the world around them and more time trying to survive in it”

What has been shown to break the cycle of generational poverty

1. Offering quality personal relationships with caring adults over time
 - a. Ex: mentors, staff who hold them to high standards and expectations
 2. Reducing stress by attending to basic needs – safe, clean environment, providing meals
 3. Supporting social and emotional skill development and mental health of members
 4. Supporting academic success
 5. Providing an ‘on-ramp’ to employment for teens, Work-based learning experiences with positive adults
1. Adopting a 2-gen approach – opportunities for economic stability for families
 - a. Ex: monthly life skills classes, on-site counseling from family advocate, access to certification programs for parents, training on how to help with homework, focus and support groups, ‘career launch’ type programs for adults – programming beyond referral services

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Exploitative vs. Ethical Practices

(Caliopy Glaros <https://philanthropywithoutborders.com/>)

Exploitative	Ethical
Evokes feelings of guilt and pity	Evokes solidarity and connection
Highlights power differences	Deepens the audiences' understanding
	Highlights shared values
Removes the agency of those portrayed	People actively participating in solutions
Perpetuates inaccurate assumptions or stereotypes	Showcases diversity and complexity
Speculative, generalized opinions	Statements supported by evidence - "representative truth"
Exaggeration or extreme example	Representative case, accurate expectations
(centers an outside hero)	Centers the people at the heart of the issue
Procured and promoted without consent	Procured and promoted with informed consent
Harms or re-traumatizes the contributor	Heals or empowers the contributor

This should hold true for imagery as well – images used should show the strength and resiliency of our members, and avoid ‘white saviorism’ i.e. showing a white adult ‘helping’ a Club member (rather how can we show them working together, or the Club member helping the adult?)

All imagery that shows a Club member must have both the permission of the Club member and their caregiver before sharing in any format. Permission from the Club member should be obtained before photographing/videoing them.

In some cases, stock imagery may be a better fit for production.

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Staff, Volunteer, Club member and family interview policy

- The Staff, volunteer, Club or family member always has the option to say no to an interview. The request to be interviewed should make this clear, and be made in plenty of time for a thoughtful decision to be made.
- Whenever an interview is taking place with a minor, staff will provide some coaching on answering questions prior to the interview, which would include informing them that they can refuse to answer any question they are uncomfortable with.
- Staff will be present whenever a member is interviewed by an outside entity.
- Storytelling will focus on successes – what the interviewee has accomplished. Interviewer will not ask about challenges they have faced, though they may share voluntarily.
- Open call – instead of picking who we interview, it is preferable that we put it out to the greater group to see who wants to share their story.
- All interviews are in person or can provide an alternative to writing – essay (open ended) verbal, video, recording.
- It will be made clear to the interviewee why we are speaking to them and how their story will be used.
- All interviewees will have the opportunity to review the final product, be part of the editing process and give final permission to be used (for internal sharing, we may not have this control over outside sources like the newspaper).

For situations where Club members/staff/volunteers are interacting with donors/community members:

- Staff members should always be present and willing to jump in if the donor is inappropriate or focusing on challenges instead of successes.
- Staff have permission to step in if problematic behaviors are exhibited by the donor/community member. **Such behaviors might include:** Asking intrusive questions (is your dad still around? Where do you live? Does your mom work?), Making assumptions (I'll bet you have a hard time in school, I'll bet you don't eat well outside of the Club)

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Compensation for Storytelling

At the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell, we rely on our members, staff, parents and volunteers sharing their experiences with the Club in order to tell the story of the Boys & Girls Club. We think it is only fair that we compensate those individuals who take the time to share their personal experiences in order to help the Club engage supporters and raise the revenue needed for Club operations. This plan provides an outline of the ways in which individuals may be asked to share their story, and the associated compensation. It is not necessarily meant to be an exhaustive list, so please check with the Director of Development or Executive Director if you are unsure whether someone's story will be compensated.

Examples of ways in which we may share an individual's story:

- Speeches at Club sponsored events, such as the Holiday Auction
- Interviews about one's personal experience with the Club
- Published newsletter or newspaper articles describing the individual and their experience with the Club
- Artwork that is reproduced and/or shared with supporters, music or videos used at Club sponsored events with supporters

Stories, creative endeavors or performances that are part of Club programming are not eligible for compensation under this plan. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Youth of the Year speeches
- Public Dance performances
- Public Music Performances
- Art contests
- Program demonstrations or talking about the Club on a tour (as individuals will be asked to talk about the Club, not themselves)
- Club member photos/projects/music shared on social media
- Quotes about the Club or Club programs

In short, if what is being shared is about the Club and/or Club programming, that is unlikely to be compensated. If what is being shared is personal to one individual, and is distributed or shared in an effort to generate support for the Club, it may be eligible to be compensated.

Compensation rates and methods:

- Speech at a Club Sponsored event - \$250 paid by check after the event
- Newsletter or Newspaper article featuring an individual (not necessarily where an individual is mentioned, but a story that is about one individual) - \$25 gift card
- Interview (less than one hour of time) - \$15 gift card
- Art work - \$10 gift card per piece that is used

- Original music or Music video - compensation will depend on how the piece is circulated, and the length and quality of the product. Compensation will be agreed upon before the piece is used.
- Stories about individuals that are shared in speeches made by other's or reports to funders - \$10 gift card