

CONDUCT

In addition to following the Brown Act and abiding by adopted meeting rules (e.g. Roberts Rules), the following guidelines are provided to help local behavioral health boards (BHBs) function as effective advisory bodies.

A. Conduct Agreement – A listing can be printed on agendas and/or read at the beginning of each meeting.

The following list is an example:

1. Active Listening
2. Focus on Issues
3. Person-First Language (see below)
4. No Swearing
5. No Personal Attacks or Criticism (of self or others)
6. One person speaks at a time—no side bars
7. Keep comments short if possible—do not monopolize discussion
8. Limit the Use of Acronyms—“When in doubt, spell it out.”
9. Turn Off or Silence Cell Phones

B. Person-First Language

When speaking about people with mental illness or substance use issues, it is important to use "person-first language", terminology that is positive and reflective of the person first.

Generic phrases such as "the mentally ill", "schizophrenic" or “addict” are not appropriate since they convey a lack of appreciation for and depersonalize the individual. These terms communicate and reinforce the discriminatory notion of a special and separate group that is fundamentally unlike the rest of "us."

The use of person-first language such as "a person with schizophrenia," "an individual with bipolar disorder", or "people with mental illnesses" communicates first that they are people and second that they have an illness. Use of person-first language, although sometimes wordy, is important and requires that we be mindful of what we present to the public.

Language to Avoid

- Mentally ill (or “The Mentally Ill”) • Crazy, nuts, etc.
- Mentally defective or disturbed • Emotionally challenged
- Differently-abled • Victim or sufferer • Addict

Person-First Language:

- Individual with lived experience of mental illness • Person with a substance use condition • Person with schizophrenia • Person with a mental illness • Person with bipolar disorder • Person with a psychiatric or psychological disability

C. Unconscious Bias

Training: www.calbhbc.org/training

- Avoid Micro-Aggressions (Inequalities): Comments or actions that are subtly and often unintentionally hostile or demeaning to a member of a minority or marginalized group. (Such as looking at your cell phone while someone is speaking.)
- Be intentional about treating everyone with dignity and respect. (The Public, Speakers, BHB Members, Staff, Contractors, etc.)