



You Belong Here Training Packet

You Belong Here

Urbana Park District (UPD) is committed to creating and promoting inclusion across all public spaces, places, facilities, and programs that the district manages. Through Urbana Park District's You Belong Here Inclusion Strategy, we welcome and support recreation experiences for everyone, while encouraging an inclusive and responsive staff culture. Celebrating inclusion regardless of age, ethnicity, culture, income, ability, identity interests—everyone and anyone belongs here!

Provided in this document are resources to support supervisors to ensure that all staff have the tools they need to carry out the Urbana Park District's You Belong Here culture. Many part-time and seasonal staff are front-line employees of the district's services and it is important for them to provide quality customer service to all visitors. Supervisors should use this resource to facilitate part-time staff training.

This document is dynamic and will evolve in order to stay accurate and relevant. This resource was developed by members of the You Belong Here Matrix Team using evidence-based research and information. The information provided is applicable to all sectors of Urbana Park District. It is encouraged and important for full-time staff to build on this foundation to develop a document specific to each department's facility, services, and staff.



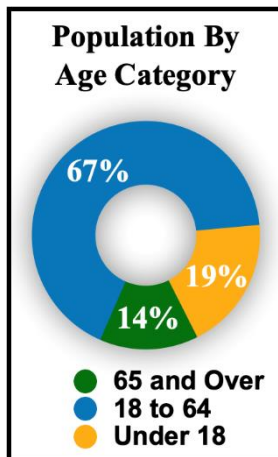
Urbana-Champaign Community

Urbana-Champaign is home to many people; some who are here for a lifetime, others for just a chapter of their lives. The University of Illinois has the highest number of international students of all public universities in the U.S., with students who come from more than 115 countries. Urbana-Champaign’s community has created a melting-pot culture where you can find an abundance of international markets and cuisine, cultural centers, and diverse houses of worship. Community Choices, New American Welcoming Center, and Cunningham Township are just some of the many agencies and organizations in place to support all Urbana residents.

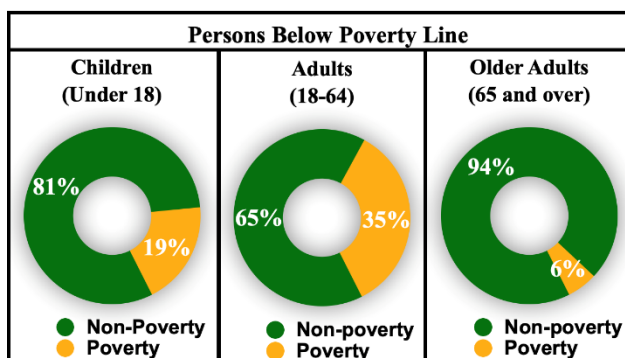
The Urbana Park District plays a valuable role in the community through programs, events, parks and so much more. Below is a snapshot of Urbana’s diversity and uniqueness using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2020).



POPULATION
38,336



| Race and Ethnicity | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| White | 58.6% |
| Black or African American | 18.4% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 0.2% |
| Asian | 17.3% |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 0.0% |
| Two or More Races | 4.3% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 7.8% |



| Types of Disabilities | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Independent living difficulty | 3.0% |
| Self-care difficulty | 1.1% |
| Ambulatory difficulty | 4.2% |
| Cognitive difficulty | 2.7% |
| Vision difficulty | 1.3% |
| Hearing difficulty | 1.6% |




VERERANS
1,191



FOREIGN BORN PERSONS
18.3%



LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH SPOKEN AT HOME
24.2%



HOUSEHOLDS WITH BROADBAND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION
77.9%



POVERTY RATE
29.1%

Inclusive Language

Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities. Intentional language use can avoid habits that may unintentionally lead to marginalization, offense, misrepresentation, or perpetuation of stereotypes. How language is used, especially by governments and education systems, can deeply impact perceptions of race, gender, and cultures (Linguistic Society of America, 2016).

Urbana Park District employees are expected to use language that:

- includes rather than excludes
- acknowledges, accepts and celebrates differences, and
- is welcoming to everyone.

Person-First & Ability Inclusive Language

About one in four US adults has a disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual. Take a “person-first” approach to focus on the person, not their condition. It’s important to note that some individuals with disabilities may prefer “identity-first” language, meaning their disability is part of their identity. When in doubt, ask! (Northwestern: The Family Institute, 2019)

| Try | Instead of using |
|---|--|
| Person with a disability | Disabled person, handicapped, crippled, challenged |
| Person who uses a wheelchair | Wheelchair-bound |
| They have a cognitive delay | They are mentally retarded |
| They have a mental health condition | They are mentally ill |
| Brain injury | Brain damaged |
| They need/they use | They have a problem with |
| People without disabilities | Normal, healthy, typical |
| He has Down syndrome | He’s Down’s |
| Communicates with their eyes/device/etc | Is non-verbal |
| Accessible parking, restroom, boardwalk, etc. | Handicapped parking, restroom, boardwalk, etc. |

Demographic and Race Inclusive Language

| Try | Instead of using |
|---|----------------------------------|
| People, person of color, multiracial | Ethnic, Urban |
| Refugee, New American | Alien, foreigner, “those people” |
| Native American, Indigenous person | Indian |
| Adults, active adults, older adults, 50 & better | The elderly, old person |
| Asian (describing the customs, people, and culture of a particular area of Asia; be specific when possible) | Oriental |

***Do not specify race or demographics unless there is relevance. If so, ask how someone prefers to be identified.*

Socioeconomic Inclusive Language

It is important to use language that maintains a person’s dignity, and does not place blame of their socioeconomic status on the individual. According to the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, as of 2020, there are 140 individuals experiencing homelessness.

| Try | Instead of using |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Friends without Addresses, People Experiencing Homelessness | Homeless people, vagrant, bum |
| people whose income are below the federal poverty threshold, low socioeconomic status | Low-class, the poor |
| low-income housing, low-income areas, underserved areas | Ghettos, the projects |

Family Inclusive Language

Family Inclusive Language specifically aims to avoid making assumptions about the identities of individuals or their relationships to one another.

Language typically used to describe families can inadvertently leave out single-parent, adoptive, queer, multiracial, blended, and multi-generational families. Family Inclusive Language is more accurate and respectful (Middleton, 2014).

| Try | Instead of using |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Grownup, adult, caregiver | Parents, mom, dad |
| Children | Son, daughter |
| Don't say anything... do not assume | Family resemblance |
| Family members | Members of a household |
| Sibling | Brother, sister |

Gender Inclusive Language

Commonly used nouns and phrases often include the word “man” or reference men, which sends a message of exclusivity. These words are easy to spot and replace with more neutral language. Often, masculine nouns and pronouns are used to refer to someone whose gender is unclear or variable, or to groups that contain people who are not ALL men (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2020).

| Try | Instead of using |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Hey friends, y'all, folks, children, kiddos | Hey guys, girls and boys.. |
| Humankind | Mankind |
| Police officer, salesperson, fire fighter... | Police man, salesman, fireman... |

Challenges in Encouraging Inclusive Language (NRPA)

The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) identified challenges that emerged when implementing inclusive language in parks and recreation. Here are some examples of issues patrons may present and how you can support the You Belong Here culture when addressing the situation. If you are uncomfortable navigating these conversations, reach out to or refer them to your supervisor.

“You’re bringing politics into parks”

- Using inclusive language is not about being “politically correct”. It’s about treating people with dignity.

“Talking about race is inherently racist”

- There is virtue in recognizing our differences so that we can commit to building relationships despite them.

“Parks in Recreation isn’t a place for these discussions”

- People from all cultures, communities and identities meet at our facilities, programs and at our playgrounds. It is critical for us to be having these conversations.

NRPA’s Equity Language Guide is a glossary of terms to help park and recreation professionals develop a common language around diversity, equity and inclusion. It also provides guidance to help people become familiar with terms they may not be aware of and best practices for making your writing accessible. This is a living document and will change frequently- to check NRPA’s most up-to-date guide, visit <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/equity/equity-language-guide/>

Scenario: You are officiating a volleyball game and need to gain the attention of both teams. What is an inclusive way to do so?

Restroom Usage

Urbana Park District welcomes visitors to use the restroom that best aligns with their gender identity. Allow individuals, children included, to self-identify which restroom they feel comfortable using.

Equitable Restrooms Act enacted by the State of Illinois mandates that all single-occupancy restrooms (fully enclosed room with locking mechanism controlled by the user, containing a sink, toilet stall and more than one urinal) must be outfitted with exterior signage that **does not** indicate any specific gender (pictured on right). The park district is currently inventorying and updating all signage; while some signage may not be updated yet, it is still important to uphold inclusive restroom practices.



The Equitable Restrooms Act also requires specific locations with restrooms that are open and accessible to the public, community centers included, to have at least one safe, sanitary, convenient and publicly accessible baby diaper changing station for women and men. It's important to note that ADA accessibility laws take precedence when installing necessary changing stations.

Scenario: You are leading a group of children and taking a restroom break. After one of the children goes into the restroom, the others begin asking why they went into the "boys" restroom, and then ask if they are a "boy or a girl?". Others join in asking. How might you address their comments?

Breastfeeding Friendly Certified

Urbana Park District is committed to ensuring that facilities have a designated space for those who are nursing. The Anita Purves Nature Center, Crystal Lake Park Family Aquatic Center, Darius E. Phebus Administration Building, Phillips Recreation Center, Planning and Operations Building, and Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center are certified by the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District as gold level breastfeeding friendly places.

Language Barriers

Language barriers prevent people from sharing their ideas, thoughts, feelings, experiences, information, and expectations, give feedback or communicate effectively.

Here are some solutions to reduce or eliminate language barriers:

- Be respectful. Language barriers can be frustrating.
- Use short, simple sentences; avoid using difficult words, complex sentences, and unnecessary information.
- Choose simple, clear and accurate words and phrases; avoid using vague, ambiguous, or confusing words, technical terms or slang.
- Use verbal and non-verbal messages appropriately; if possible use visual methods such as pictures, diagrams, photos, graphics, and charts to help the receiver understand what the sender is trying to convey.
- Frequently check for understanding by asking for feedback; politely ask for clarification when needed to avoid any assumptions.
- Work to avoid having an ethnocentric perspective.
- Utilize technology such as Google Translate on a smartphone or iPad (Buarqoub, 2019).

Scenario: You are working a shift as a lifeguard at the Crystal Lake Park Family Aquatic Center. A group of children are engaging in some unsafe practices in the water that could endanger themselves or others. When you approach them to remind them of the pool rules, you realize there is likely a language barrier that is a cause for ineffective communication between you all. How might you successfully communicate with them?

Cultural Awareness

The National Center for Cultural Competence defines cultural awareness as being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among and between cultural groups.

Strategies for Cultural Sensitivity

- Get to know participants and campers.
- Include a variety of cultural reference points that are outside of your own lived experience.
- Be aware of the language that may potentially lead to exclusion.
- Be aware of and responsive to the portrayal of certain groups in content and materials.
- Encourage curiosity.
- Be open to reactions and give serious consideration to viewpoints of participants.
- Be aware of different discourses that are spoken in the homes of individuals; adoption of speaking Standard Formal English may challenge aspects of their identity (Briggs).

Be mindful of non-visible cultural differences such as:

- Perceptions of time, timeliness, on-time
- Definitions of professional vs. non-professional
- The role of food, hospitality, breaking bread
- Fluidity or rigidity of gender roles, gender separation
- Permissive or directed parenting styles
- Marked differences in body language, and/or levels of physical contact, such as the significance or lack of eye contact
- The role of family or the family unit
- Customs around audience behavior, length of performance, or whether it is appropriate to change seats during a show, or eat food
- Some cultures and individuals may have an aversion to or hold sacred certain symbols, numbers, animals, and more.
- Flat vs steep hierarchy
 - A flat hierarchy indicates that power is shared and widely dispersed and that society members do not accept situations where power is distributed unequally
 - A steep hierarchy indicates that a society accepts an unequal, hierarchical distribution of power, and that people understand “their place” in the system (Hofstede)

Scenario:

You are excited to welcome a new group of campers for week 2 of Nature Day Camp. As your group of campers is exploring the field station, you notice some of the campers are concerned about Marie because she is “afraid” of the owls. Marie had expressed to you during week 1 of camp that owls are viewed as a bad omen in Congolese culture. How could you as a camp leader have avoided this situation?

Names

Learning to pronounce a participant's name correctly is not just a common courtesy. It is also an important effort in creating an inclusive environment- one that emphasizes psychological safety and belonging.

Here are some strategies:

- Read a roster to yourself (out loud) before meeting your participants. Note potential difficulties.
- If there are recurring participants, take attendance on the first day in a consistent way with each participant, even the ones with seemingly easy names. Use a standard question such as, "What do you like to be called?"
- Write phonetic spellings down when you need to. When you get to a name that might be difficult, ask the individual to say it.
- Don't joke. Don't rush. If you need to ask the individual for more help, do it in private.
- If you make a mistake, apologize but don't make an excuse.

Personal Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about. Often, when speaking about someone in the third person, these pronouns have a gender implied -- such as "he" to refer to a man/boy or "she" to refer to a woman/girl. These associations are not always accurate or helpful.

Sometimes people make assumptions about the gender of another person based on the person's appearance, name, or pitch of voice. These assumptions aren't always correct, and the act of making an assumption (even if correct) sends a potentially harmful message -- that people have to look or sound a certain way to demonstrate the gender that they are or are not (mypronouns.org).

Here are some other tips to consider when using gender pronouns:

- **Gender-Neutral Language-** Use them/they pronouns when talking about an individual to avoid assumptions. See the Gender Inclusive Language section on Page 5.
- **Model-** If you are comfortable, state your personal pronouns while introducing yourself, on your email signature, or Zoom account to create a safe space for others to share.
- **Practice-** Using gender pronouns frequently can help make it part of your normal day-to-day interactions. Consider using pronouns during introductions or ice-breaker activities.
- **Apologize-** Mistakes happen. If you make a mistake when using gender pronouns, simply apologize and correct yourself.
- There are dozens of pronouns and terms people use to describe themselves. The best piece of advice is to ask and simply call people what they want to be called. (NRPA, 2019)
- Student's and campers might feel comfortable enough to express their preferred pronouns at school or camp-but not at home. It is important to be mindful and respectful of their choice.

Accessibility & Inclusion

Accessibility, in this context, is defined as equal access to programs and physical environments. Urbana Park District has a cooperative agreement with Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation (CUSR) to ensure that Urbana-Champaign residents with specific needs have equal access and opportunities in recreation. CUSR supports inclusive recreational experiences in park district programs. CUSR provides special programming options for community members with disabilities, or when registering for any program, participants can request program accommodations. Individuals utilizing inclusion services participate in all types of park district programs and events. These individuals should be treated the same as all other participants unless you are advised otherwise by CUSR inclusion staff.

People by law have the right to request accommodations. The Urbana Park District strives to facilitate programs and events for people of all abilities. Staff must be mindful and accommodating to participants' specific needs. If requested, communicate with the individual about what specific accommodations they need.

Common accommodations may include, but are not limited to large printed materials, timely translation services, wheelchair access, hearing and visual accommodations, sensory sensitivities adjustment, and providing adapted instruction to participants with limited mobility.

Always be cognizant of program and event locations. Be certain that participants are able to travel to and from the program/event site. If outdoors, stay near paved surfaces and avoid rough terrain. In an indoor setting, ensure that the program location in that facility is easily accessible for everyone.

For Example:

- Locate a public event/program near a bus stop and/or within walking distance of desired participants.
- Pick-up locations for day camps are accessible to caregivers of all ages and abilities.

Scenario: You are excited to lead a bird watching program this week because a rare species has been found in a specific part of the woods. Someone in your group uses a wheelchair and cannot access the spot you were planning to take the group. What could you do to make sure everyone is meaningfully included in the program?

Sensory and Emotion Processing

Sensory processing refers to the mechanism of how we feel. It is how we use what we sense to understand the world around us, and it underpins every aspect of human functioning. Everyone processes sensation, and symptoms of sensory processing disorders and challenges vary greatly depending on the individual. Program and event environments through the Urbana Park District are multidimensional. The Urbana Park District staff strives to accommodate participants with any of the following sensory sensitivities.

- **Sound-** Sudden or loud noises can be upsetting.
 - Individuals with autism may respond by covering their ears or making repetitive noises to cover the sound.
 - Some programs and events may have music too loud for some people.
- **Touch-** Individuals can be highly sensitive to any touch or certain textures.
 - Larger, shoulder-to-shoulder crowds can create anxiety.
 - Individuals may find it easier to focus if given something to fidget with.
- **Smell-** Individuals with smell sensitivities can be acutely aware of strong odors in their environment.
 - Be aware of air fresheners, perfumes, or the smell of cleaning products.
- **Taste-** Some individuals may be averse to certain foods or follow a specific diet
 - Offer a variety of options for camp snacks or events food options.
- **Sight-** The lack of or abundance of certain lighting in a space can be difficult.
 - Fluorescent lighting can be especially harsh.

Emotional Processing is how individuals cope with stressful events. Everyone experiences anger, fear, sadness, anxiety and depression, but those experiences are temporary for the majority of people. Emotional processing happens when an individual experiences an emotionally distressing event and is (or isn't) able to cope with those experiences over time. (Emotional Processing: Definition & Theory)

If someone is having difficulty processing their emotions, remember: remain calm, be respectful and listen. Know when you need assistance - Reach out to a supervisor or coworker if you notice the situation escalating.

Tips for Supporting Positive Behavior & Recognizing Efforts

- Verbal praise- Telling someone specifically what behavior you like sparks interest and motivation.
- Physical praise- High five, fist bump, smile, thumbs-up, dance party, etc.
- Reward incentives- Gold star, choice of next activity, stickers, etc.

Sensory/Crisis Break Spaces

A calm down corner, also called a mindfulness corner, cool down spot, or peace corner, is a designated place where kids, adults and staff can go when they are feeling overwhelmed, upset, struggling with focus or sensory stimulation, or are experiencing anxiety or panic attacks. It is a separate designated, comfortable, safe place for kids to practice self-regulation skills and work to calm themselves.

A cool down corner is not designed to be used as a “time out” or punishment nor should it be a high-traffic place where others could accidentally interrupt the calming experience such as a public space. Although you may encourage a child to spend time in the space when you feel they're starting to become distressed, the goal is that eventually the child will recognize when they want to be there and will go there on their own in order to self-regulate and calm down.

When kids know what the cool-down space is and its purpose, they are more likely to use it during tough times. Not only can your cool-down space provide a safe place for a kid to regain control of their emotions but it can also provide tools and strategies to help the kid manage their emotions throughout their life.

Personal Space

Personal space is an area around a person that other people should not enter without permission. People may have different levels of comfort when it comes to personal space boundaries that are influenced by a variety of different factors including: environment, communication partner, culture, and individual preferences.

Social skills of establishing personal space we generally gain in childhood and develop throughout life.

Three steps in teaching children about personal space:

Clear understanding

A clear understanding of personal space is the first step of successfully using and respecting personal boundaries. That is why it is essential to explain a kid:

A definition of a personal space bubble. It is good to illustrate it through certain tangible examples, like using a hula-hoop for highlighting personal space.

- Explaining when and why a person can interfere into other personal space bubbles.
- Helping a kid feel his boundaries.
- Learning body language and etiquette.

Self-advocacy

Teach kids to protect their boundaries when someone intrudes on their zone.

Depending on the situation, a child can: back up, walk away, ask a person to back up or stop touching, ask an adult for help.

Gaining explicit rules and practicing

Practice shows it is difficult to give a thorough idea of the personal zone to a kid. Some children need explicit rules, examples, and practice. Visual references and pictures can be helpful.

On Site Visitor Contact Guidelines

Public parks allow for communities to gather and recreate in a shared space, and at the Urbana Park District all walks of life are welcomed and encouraged to utilize the facilities and open spaces in accordance with the park rules. While working on site at one of the parks or facilities, you may become faced with a situation that is concerning or leaves you uncertain of how to handle it.

If you notice someone is sheltering in the park with their personal belongings, there are a few options.

- If you are comfortable with approaching them, you could introduce yourself and mention you are with the park district, inform them camping is prohibited, but you are happy to call CU at Home and they have resources that may be useful.
- If you are not comfortable with approaching a person(s) in this situation, call your supervisor and the CU at Home Street Outreach number.
- The last resort option would be to call the Urbana Police Non-emergency phone number.

Important Contact Numbers

Planning and Operations

217 344-9583

CU at Home Street Outreach

1217 888-0329

Urbana Police-Non Emergency

217 384-2320

Key Terms and Acronyms

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| CUSR | Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation |
| LGBTQ+ | An acronym used for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The plus sign is used to include individuals who are not listed (pansexual, agender, bigender, two-spirit, etc.) While there are other forms of this term in use, this document uses LGBTQ+ without intending to exclude any individuals. |
| UPD | Urbana Park District |
| UPDAC | Urbana Park District Advisory Committee |
| YBH | You Belong Here |
| Culture | The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of heritage, religious, or social group |
| Cultural Awareness | Being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among and between cultural groups. |
| Disability | A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual |
| Diversity | The condition of having or being composed of differing elements; the inclusion of of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organization |
| Emotional Processing | The ability to process stressful life events and move past them. |
| Ethnocentric Perspective | Evaluating another person’s culture based on standards of your own culture. |
| Equity | The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Gender Identity | One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. |
| Gender Neutral | Not referring to either sex, but to people in general |
| Gender Nonrestrictive | Not involving gender-based restrictions or limitations. |
| Inclusion | Bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources |
| Non-Binary | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside of these categories. |
| Race | Any one of the groups that humans are often divided into based on physical traits regarded as common among people of shared ancestry. |
| Sensory Processing | Refers to the mechanism of how we feel. It is how we use what we sense to make sense of the world around us, and it underpins every aspect of human functioning. |
| Sexual Orientation | A person's sexual identity or self-identification as bisexual, straight, gay, pansexual, etc. |
| Transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. |

Resources

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add citation to RR laws

Add NRPA language guide