

# Glossary of Terms:

## Building Cultural Competence for Providers working in Black Communities

Communication is imperative when establishing trust and good relationships. There is no intentional engagement when the communication is unclear or when the terms used are too medical and far from people’s experiences. This can be devastating for the health and wellbeing of patients and further disparities in Black communities.

When it comes to understanding cultural nuances in some Black neighborhoods, listening and conversing in simple terms and explanations are always a bridge to educating, empowering, and encouraging preventive care that can alleviate and diminish maternal and child mortality rates. EverThrive IL created this guide based on focus groups conducted on the south and west sides of Chicago. While this guide cannot be generalized to all patients, we invite healthcare providers to use this guide to better connect with their patients.

If you are a patient, it is your right to ask questions until you get the answers you need from your medical provider. Suppose you are a doctor, clinician, nurse, or healthcare practitioner working in Black communities. In that case, it is your responsibility to ask your patients if they understand the language you are using and explain things in simple ways.

Here are some terms you can use to bridge the gap and get important healthcare messages across to this community:

### Primary Care Physicians or Primary Care Providers (PCP).

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	Primary Care Physicians or Primary Care Providers (PCP).
What Some People Experience	The term PCP is not always relatable.. Instead, choose words like “doctors” and “clinics” and reference these as “my doctor” and “my clinic.”
What We Recommend Instead	Continued use of the term without an explanation of when you would see a PCP for care, such as for regular yearly annual exams or check-ups, can be a barrier to accessing healthcare services. In some communities, people only think about going to the doctor when they are sick or pregnant. Talking to patients about the benefits of going to the doctor (like a PCP) yearly for a check-up, even if they feel okay, is important to ensure they are healthy and know how to stay healthy.

## Postpartum Care

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Postpartum Care:</b> It encompasses the management of the mother, newborn, and infant during the first few days after delivery, the six weeks after childbirth, and up to the mother's postpartum check-up with her health care provider.
What Some People Experience	When some people hear this term, they relate it to depression. They may be thinking instead, "I must be crazy."
What We Recommend Instead	Using simpler terms can go a long way in clarifying what postpartum care actually is and why it matters. Saying "care after the delivery of a baby" is much simpler and takes away the negative, preconceived interpretation.

## Preeclampsia

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Preeclampsia:</b> A condition that develops in pregnant or postpartum patients, marked by high blood pressure and proteins in urine, with symptoms such as headaches, changes in vision, abdominal pain, or swelling in feet, hands or face or sudden weight gain. Usually, healthcare providers recommend urgent medical attention for all patients with these signs or symptoms.
What Some People Experience	Preeclampsia is a medical term that does not resonate with some people. Sometimes when the community hears the words "high blood pressure," they don't always understand what it means, may not be aware of when it happens, and how it manifests, and how dangerous this condition could be.
What We Recommend Instead	Take the time to explain that Preeclampsia is a condition that can come up in women who are pregnant, or who have recently had a baby. It can happen during pregnancy, or as early as a few days after having a baby or several weeks after childbirth. It manifests through high blood pressure, which can lead to severe headaches, shortness of breath, changes in your vision, abdominal pain or nausea, swelling in your feet, hands, or face, or sudden weight gain.

## Maternal Mortality

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Maternal Mortality:</b> Death of either a pregnant person or death of a person within 42 days of delivery, miscarriage, termination, or ectopic pregnancy, providing the death, is associated with pregnancy or its treatment.
What Some People Experience	Many Black people have experienced family and friends dying. They may not refer to these losses as maternal mortality, they use phrases like “she had a setback after birth.”
What We Recommend Instead	To create understanding and empathy with your patients, use “setbacks and complications” that can occur after having a baby. Emphasize that Black people have a higher risk of having life-threatening complications.

## Preterm Birth

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Preterm Birth:</b> Childbirth that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy. A normal pregnancy lasts for 40 weeks. Preterm birth could have no reason or, in some cases, could be due to the birthing person’s medical condition.
What Some People Experience	In some Black communities, is simply known as having a baby early or too early.
What We Recommend Instead	You can ask them if they had a baby before the due date and then explain that this is considered “preterm birth” or “premature” in medical terms.

## Maternal Morbidity

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Morbidity:</b> It is defined as experiencing one of a collection of diagnoses and procedures occurring at the time of delivery that are likely to cause both short-term and long-term consequences to the mother's health.
What Some People Experience	When asking patients about this term, most were unsure. As a result, community members may be normalizing their complications.
What We Recommend Instead	Ask Black people about their experience with childbirth and if any complications after birth occurred. If so, feelings of sadness may emerge. Listen and support them.

## Domestic violence (DV)

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Domestic violence (DV):</b> A pattern of one person trying to dominate or control another person. This involves different types of abusive ways. It is a repetitive process of abuse where the perpetrator gets hold of the victim in a consistent manner.
What Some People Experience	Many Black people refer to this as fighting. They would say, "We fight all the time."
What We Recommend Instead	Ask your Black patients how they might express their anger and if fights are common and present most of the time with others in the house.

## Obstetrician (OB)

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Obstetrician (OB):</b> A doctor specializing in the conduct of childbirth and possessing the skills, knowledge, and experience required to ensure that this is achieved with the minimum risk to mother and baby.
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What Some People Experience	Some people may call this person “the baby doctor.”
What We Recommend Instead	Explain that the “baby doctor” is also known as the obstetrician, a doctor that knows and supports people during pregnancy, labor, and the time immediately after delivery.

## Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Urinary Tract Infection (UTI):</b> An infection in any part of your urinary system; your kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra.
What Some People Experience	Many people use the term Bladder Infection for a UTI. Some people may use the term Yeast Infection for a UTI.
What We Recommend Instead	Make sure that all patients understand that a UTI is an infection of their urinary system. A yeast infection is an infection in the vagina. Using the term Bladder Infection instead of UTI may be helpful.

## Depression

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Depression:</b> Feeling sad, empty, and/or “down.”
What Some People Experience	For many people, and in some Black communities, feelings of depression translate to “I am crazy.”
What We Recommend Instead	Take the time to sympathize and explain that this is not true and that you and your staff are there to help. Share some of the symptoms and causes of depression (i.e.: hormonal changes).

Anxiety

What the Doctor Says (Medical Terms)	<b>Anxiety:</b> Feeling nervous, worried, and/or scared—a serious medical condition that involves the brain and may occur during pregnancy after birth.
What Some People Experience	Some Black communities do not use this term. Instead, when they see someone having these feelings, they may ask something like “are you cool?”
What We Recommend Instead	Be curious. Ask your patients how they’re feeling and if they don’t seem to be themselves, let them know why they might be feeling off.

Credible Resources

Equity vs. Equality and Other Racial Justice Definitions - The Annie E. Casey Foundation | (aecf.org)

Defining and measuring disparities, inequities, and inequalities in the Healthy People initiative | (cdc.gov)