



Branding Guidelines April 2020



AHF's Brand Standards

These guidelines are meant to articulate the AIDS Healthcare Foundation brand by demonstrating its elements and their use. They are essential to anyone creating any type of branded AHF application such as signage, marketing, advertising, and web design.

The proper use of AHF visual elements helps elevate our mission:

**Cutting-Edge Medicine and Advocacy
Regardless of Ability to Pay.**



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1.0 AHF Brand

Voice and Tone



One way we write empowering content is by being aware of our voice and our tone. This section explains the difference between voice and tone and lays out the elements of each as they apply to the AHF brand.

What's the difference between voice and tone? Think of it this way: you have the same voice all the time, but your tone changes. You might use one tone when you're out to dinner with your closest friends, and a different tone when you're in a meeting with your boss.

The same goes for AHF. Our voice is consistent across platforms, but our tone changes all the time.

Voice and Tone

Voice

AHF at its core is a mission-driven organization with a history of fighting for those in need.

We are an authority on medical issues large and small as well as political policies that affect our patients' lives. AHF is compassionate, we do NOT judge, and we are here to provide high-quality care to our patients and clients. Our audience should be able to recognize our voice, easily engage with our content, and understand our mission no matter where they interact with the AHF brand.

We respect our clients and understand that they come from diverse backgrounds and various walks of life. We do not talk down to or patronize those who come to us for help but focus on reaffirming existing knowledge and educating without judgment.

All of this means that when we write copy:

1. **We are plainspoken.** When you write or speak about AHF use simple and direct language. We aim for a 4th-grade reading level across platforms. Medical and political jargon can be confusing. Try to define terms as often as you can and in the simplest ways as possible.
2. **We are respectful.** Being a sex-positive organization means we DO NOT JUDGE any lifestyles or preferences. Make sure to use inclusive pronouns, do not assume gender identities, and avoid words that are stigmatizing or shaming. Do not use words like “weird” or “strange” when referring to sexual orientations, preferences, or practices.
3. **We are educators.** AHF understands that sexual education is not equally accessible to all of our clients. Do not assume a certain level of knowledge, but always aim to define terms and educate the reader across platforms.



Voice and Tone

Tone

AHF's tone varies across our many business lines. This is where the difference in individual AHF brands comes into play. We aim to keep the same level of respect, education, and straight forward language across business lines, but tone can vary immensely and is one of the defining factors between each AHF brand.

AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Dignified, Service Oriented.

Our main AHF brand and aidshealth.org both have a more formal tone. When writing or speaking on behalf of the AHF brand it's important to avoid slang or jargon. Avoid abbreviations and colloquialisms whenever possible. Use AP Format when writing formally or on political policy issues.

AHF.org. Bold, Innovative, Cutting-edge.

AHF.org is a home for all of our campaigns and advocacy initiatives. The Tone of this site is informative but geared towards an audience who may not be familiar with AHF. It's important to keep the tone informational, but welcoming and approachable. Avoid using words above a 4th-grade reading level.

Healthcare Centers. Warm, Clean, Professional.

Healthcare Centers have a similar tone to aidshealth.org. We are professionals and authorities on HIV care and treatment. Speak with a confident, yet approachable voice. The tone should focus on making patients feel cared for and educated with no judgment.

AHF Pharmacy. Accessible, User-friendly, Clean, Well-organized.

The tone of AHF pharmacies is kind, friendly, and accessible. We want to emphasize the feeling of small, community-based pharmacies. Use language that is simple and accessible to all readers. We want to be clear, concise, and approachable in our tone here.

Public Health Division. Warm, Clean, Professional.

PHD is a part of the national dialogue on HIV and AIDS research. The tone should come across as an absolute authority on cutting-edge medicine. Refer to the tone of healthcare centers and AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Think that we are the professional authority on health issues when writing or speaking on behalf of PHD.

Wellness Centers/FreeSTDcheck.org. Fun, Safe, Convenient, Quick.

Wellness Centers are one of the AHF business lines that take a more tongue in cheek approach to STDs and wellness. Here, our humor is dry but relatable. FreeSTDcheck.org is home to many eye-catching billboard campaigns that use humor to catch attention and raise awareness. A well-crafted pun could be appropriate here as well as the use of a well-placed emoji or gif. Feel free to use colloquialisms that will appeal to a wide audience and keep us culturally relevant while focusing on a message of health and wellness.

Voice and Tone

Tone (Continued)

Out of the Closet. Fun, Funky, Cheap, Clean.

Out of the Closet is fun, affordable, and benefits AHF services. We focus on providing a clean, accessible environment for our customers to shop, donate, and do good. In our advertising, we emphasize donating and the fact that 96 cents of every dollar collected at our stores go back into HIV/AIDS services.

Out of the Closet is similar to Wellness Centers in tone. The use of humor and cultural puns, gifs, and emojis are all appropriate but should remain tasteful. Keep humor dry, go ahead and use colloquialisms and abbreviations (wtf, omg, etc.) but use your best judgment to keep the messaging clear, and appealing to an audience that varies in age and education level.

Managed Care. Accessible, Friendly, Well-organized.

Our Managed Care division can feel complicated and can veer into dense health insurance jargon very quickly. When you write about Managed Care, reference the tone of our Healthcare Centers and Pharmacies. It's important to convey medical and healthcare information but use language that is paired down, simple, and understandable at a 4th-grade reading level. We want people to feel like they understand the program, can ask questions, and most of all, are cared for.





3.0 AHF Pharmacy

Tone

AHF Pharmacy. Accessible, User-friendly, Clean, Well-organized.

The tone of AHF pharmacies is kind, friendly, and accessible. We want to emphasize the feeling of small, community-based pharmacies. Use language that is simple and accessible to all readers. We want to be clear, concise, and approachable in our tone here.



4.0 Public Health Division

Tone

Public Health Division. Warm, Clean, Professional.

PHD is a part of the national dialogue on HIV and AIDS research. The tone should come across as an absolute authority on cutting-edge medicine. Refer to the tone of healthcare centers and AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Think that we are the professional authority on health issues when writing or speaking on behalf of PHD.



4.5 PHD: Wellness

Tone

Wellness Centers/FreeSTDcheck.org. Fun, Safe, Convenient, Quick.

Wellness Centers are one of the AHF business lines that take a more tongue in cheek approach to STDs and wellness. Here, our humor is dry but relatable. FreeSTDcheck.org is home to many eye-catching billboard campaigns that use humor to catch attention and raise awareness. A well-crafted pun could be appropriate here as well as the use of a well-placed emoji or gif. Feel free to use colloquialisms that will appeal to a wide audience and keep us culturally relevant while focusing on a message of health and wellness.



5.0 Out of the Closet

Tone

Out of the Closet. Fun, Funky, Cheap, Clean.

Out of the Closet is fun, affordable, and benefits AHF services. We focus on providing a clean, accessible environment for our customers to shop, donate, and do good. In our advertising, we emphasize donating and the fact that 96 cents of every dollar collected at our stores go back into HIV/AIDS services.

Out of the Closet is similar to Wellness Centers in tone. The use of humor and cultural puns, gifs, and emojis are all appropriate but should remain tasteful. Keep humor dry, go ahead and use colloquialisms and abbreviations (wtf, omg, etc.) but use your best judgment to keep the messaging clear, and appealing to an audience that varies in age and education level.



6.0 Managed Care

Tone

Managed Care. Accessible, Friendly, Well-organized.

Our Managed Care division can feel complicated and can veer into dense health insurance jargon very quickly. When you write about Managed Care, reference the tone of our Healthcare Centers and Pharmacies. It's important to convey medical and healthcare information but use language that is paired down, simple, and understandable at a 4th-grade reading level. We want people to feel like they understand the program, can ask questions, and most of all, are cared for.



7.0 Healthy Housing Foundation

Tone

Healthy Housing Foundation. Clean, Simple, Hopeful, Humble, Human.

We want to emphasize the feeling of hope and humanity while being clear, concise, and approachable. Similar to Managed Care, we want people to feel like they understand the foundation, can ask questions, and most of all, are cared for.



9.0 Writing Guidelines

HIV and AIDS Terminology

Proper terminology reduces stigma and maintains an environment of dignity and respect. Please see the examples below for the appropriate language used by AHF.

Stigmatizing	Preferred
HIV Infected Person	A person living with HIV
HIV Positive Positives HIVers	A person living with HIV
HIV Patient, AIDS Patient	A person living with HIV
AIDS or HIV Carrier	A person living with HIV
Infected with HIV	Diagnosed with HIV, acquired HIV Contracted HIV
Catch AIDS Contract AIDS	Receive an AIDS diagnosis, develop AIDS
Dies of AIDS, to die of AIDS	Died of AIDS-related illness, AIDS-related complications or end-stage HIV
AIDS Virus	HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis, not a virus, it cannot be transmitted)
HIV Virus	This is redundant, use HIV. The “V” stands for the virus.
HIV or AIDS	HIV AIDS (only when referring to AIDS) HIV and AIDS
Full-blown AIDS	There is no medical definition for this phrase, simply use the term AIDS, or stage 3 HIV
Clean/Dirty	Do Not Use
Risk Group	Risk (identifying means of being vulnerable to HIV as opposed to categorizing, “othering” people)
Promiscuous	This is a value judgment and should be avoided. Use- having multiple partners.
Fight against AIDS	Respond to HIV or HIV response
End HIV, end AIDS	End HIV transmission, be specific as we aren’t ending HIV
Zero new infections	Zero new HIV acquisitions or transmission
Drug addict	A person who uses/injects drugs

Stigmatizing	Preferred
Risk group	Risk (identifying means of being vulnerable to HIV as opposed to categorizing, “othering” people)
Risky or unprotected sex	Be specific on what you are saying. Condomless sex, Condomless sex with PrEP or without PrEP. Add something about U=U? E.g., condomless sex without knowing your partner’s status or without knowing their treatment status?
At-risk	Vulnerable
Victim Sufferer Contaminated Innocent (victim)	Do not use
AIDS orphan	Children orphaned by the loss of parents or guardians who died of AIDS-related complications
HIV infected mother	A mother living with HIV
Mother to child transmission	Vertical transmission, a child who acquired HIV at or near the time of birth - perinatal transmission?
Bodily fluids	Be precise on which fluids you are referring to: blood, semen, vaginal fluids or secretions, breast milk, amniotic fluid, pre-ejaculate
Intravenous drug users; a drug addict	A person who injects drugs or a person who uses drugs
Sharing (needles, syringes)	Use of non-sterile injection equipment
HIV/AIDS (HIV slash AIDS)	Use HIV when appropriate and use AIDS when appropriate
AIDS Test	HIV Test
Compliant	Adherent; taking medication as prescribed
“a drug that prevents HIV infection”	A drug that prevents the transmission or acquisition of HIV
consumer	Person receiving services

Abbreviations and Acronyms

This section outlines common abbreviations and acronyms used by AHF.

Acronym	Definition
AHF	AIDS Healthcare Foundation
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
DOM	Department of Medicine
HCC	Healthcare Center
HHF	Healthy Housing Foundation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MD	Doctor of Medicine
MIC	Middle Income Country
MPR	Marketing Project Request
MTU	Mobile Testing Unit
OA	Office Administrator
OI	Opportunistic Infection
OTC	Out of the Closet
PCP	Primary Care Provider
PEP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
PHD	Public Health Division
PHP	Positive Healthcare (Managed Care Plan)
PHC	Positive Healthcare California
PIC	Pharmacist in Charge
PrEP	Pre-exposure Prophylaxis
Rx	Pharmacy
SOS	Sunrise on Sunset (Transitional Housing)
SRO	Single Room Occupancy
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection

Grammar and Mechanics

Adhering to certain rules of grammar and mechanics helps us keep our writing clear and consistent. Refer to these guidelines when writing for AHF and only break them when the tone or content calls for an appropriate break of conventional rules of grammar. But before you break the rules, you have to know them.

Basics

Write for all readers. Our clients and readers come from diverse backgrounds and different walks of life. That means not everyone will come to us with the same level of reading comprehension or educational background. Help readers of all levels understand our messaging by writing at a 4th-grade level.

Focus your message. Some people will read every word you write while others will skim. Help everyone understand our messaging by grouping related thoughts and using descriptive and informative headers and subheaders.

Be consistent. When writing for different platforms and across business lines, it's important to stick to the copy patterns and style points in this guide. That will help keep the AHF voice consistent and recognizable across platforms.

Guidelines

Abbreviations and Acronyms

If you've spent any time within the world of AHF you're no stranger to acronyms. While we abbreviate almost all of our business lines internally, it's important to remember that our audience might not know what "HCC" or "MTU" means.

Whenever you use an abbreviation, even "AHF", make sure you've either already defined the acronym in the body of your copy or you include the definition in parentheses. While some terms might seem basic to us, such as PrEP or STD, we don't want to assume that our audience understands these terms without defining them. This section includes a comprehensive list of commonly used abbreviations within AHF and their definitions.

The only exception to this rule is HIV and AIDS. These acronyms are widely used as stand-alone terms for the phrases they represent. They appear in the list below as all AHF employees should know the definition of HIV and AIDS.

Grammar and Mechanics

Preferred Phrasing

This section outlines preferred AHF phrases and terms. Some of these are terms that AHF has created while others may be disputed in grammar guidelines elsewhere. Whatever the term or phrase, make sure you check this section before you use them to ensure consistency in our brand voice and tone

Preferred	Incorrect
AIDS Healthcare Foundation	AIDS Health-Care Foundation
Cutting-edge	Cutting edge
health care (In body text)	healthcare
Healthy Housing Foundation Powered by AIDS HealthcareFoundation or AHF	HHF by AHF
OTC or Out of the Closet	OOTC
Safer Sex	Safe Sex
STDs	STD's or STDS

Advocacy & Policy Writing

AHF has a long history of fighting for what's right. Our organization was founded in response to the draconian Proposition 64, which would have created de facto concentration camps for people living with HIV and AIDS in 1986. Shockingly, a majority of California voters supported the initiative. Because of this, Michael Weinstein, Chris Brownlie, and their friends created the "Stop the AIDS Quarantine Committee".

Through aggressive advocacy and tireless public outreach, the committee was instrumental in defeating the proposition in November 1986. That committee has since evolved into AHF as we know it today, with advocacy at the core of the culture and mission of our organization.

As policy and politics have been central to our mission, they've become integral to our voice as an organization. When you write about advocacy initiatives, breaking news or anything to do with politics make sure you consult the guidelines below.

Writing Guidelines

Avoid Political Affiliations and/or Endorsements

AHF avoids political party affiliations. When you're writing about politics and policies, make sure that you remain impassioned yet impartial. Our focus is on lending a voice to the voiceless and advocating for basic human rights (healthcare, housing, access to prescription medication, etc.) rather than playing into partisan politics.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we can't endorse specific political candidates. Even though certain political parties and politicians may seem more open to our issues, be careful not to officially endorse any one politician or party unless specifically told otherwise.

Use AP Format

When you write on advocacy initiatives or breaking news, it's important to use standard AP format and style. All of our articles relating to news and policy are written in a formal tone using the standard AP Format guidelines.

Use Links

Incorporating links in your press releases and/or blog posts are a great way to point readers, especially the press, to more information on AHF and our services. It's also important when writing blog posts for SEO purposes and will help raise our SEO organically. We highly encourage and recommend including links to as many of our business lines, websites, blogs, social media, etc. as you can.

When linking to outside publications make sure to vet the link i.e. does it link to the appropriate content? Is that content AHF approved? Has that publication or website posted inappropriate or offensive content? Make sure that any outside links you incorporate into your content have been approved and are AHF brand compliant.