



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30329-4027

January 5, 2018

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the budget process and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

CDC has not banned, prohibited, or forbidden employees from using any words. CDC continues to use the best scientific evidence available to improve the health of all Americans. CDC also strongly encourages the use of outcome and evidence data in program evaluations and budget decisions.

Recent media reports have mischaracterized staff discussions regarding the annual budget formulation process. Like previous Administrations, CDC used a Congressional Justification guidance resource, which is an internal, technical document distributed to budget staff in each of the operating divisions, to help those participating in the budget formulation process. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) guidance provides general procedures to enable development of Congressional Justifications and facilitate consistency across the wide-ranging budget formulation process. This budget guidance is not official Administration policy and did not come from the Office of Management and Budget. While discussions regarding the budget process are protected because of their deliberative nature, we are providing a copy of the page at issue. As this page makes clear, there are absolutely no “banned” words. These are merely suggestions of what terms to use and what often overused words should be avoided. CDC will always seek to make the budgetary process as accessible and relatable to as many audiences as possible.

Although media reports claim the words “fetus,” “transgender,” or “evidence-based” were prohibited, at no time was any guidance provided regarding these terms. To reiterate, CDC continues to use the best scientific evidence available to improve the health of all Americans.

I sent an agency-wide message to CDC employees affirming the agency’s commitment to provide for the common defense of the country against health threats, and that science is and will remain the foundation of the agency’s work. I stated, “CDC has a long-standing history of making public health and budget decisions that are based on the best available science and data and for the benefit of all people—and we will continue to do so.”

Sincerely,

Brenda Fitzgerald, MD
Director, CDC

Enclosure

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Budget Guidance Style Guide

The Department of Health and Human Services provided general guidance to its operating divisions on development of Congressional Justifications to facilitate consistency across the wide-ranging budget formulation process. This budget guidance is not official Administration policy and did not come from the Office of Management and Budget. While discussions regarding the budget process are protected because of their deliberative nature, we provide below an excerpt from that guidance. As this excerpt makes clear, there are no “banned” words. These are merely suggestions of what terms to use and what often overused words should be avoided.

a) Style Guide

General Word Usage

- “ACA” and “Affordable Care Act” should be called “Obamacare” wherever those terms appear.
- “Marketplaces” should be called “Exchanges” wherever that term appears.
- Words to avoid:
 - Vulnerable
 - Diversity
 - Entitlement

Exception: When terms are referenced within a legal citation or are part of a title.