# CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES

**A Facilitator's Guide to Equity and Inclusion in the Classroom**

FYSB Family & Youth Services Bureau

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# INTRODUCTION

The Administration for Children and Families' Family and Youth Services Bureau has affirmed its commitment to "advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality" (ACF, n.d.). The aim of this facilitator's guide is to enable facilitators of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) education to advance equity in their work with youth.

The guide describes how *implicit bias* can affect an educator's behaviors and judgment and unknowingly elicit microaggressions toward specific groups of people. Such biases can negatively affect services provided and contribute to health disparities (Stone & Moskowitz, 2011). Fortunately, implicit biases are changeable if time, attention, and training are taken to minimize their impact (Dasgupta, 2013; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). The guide provides educators with resources to identify and address their own implicit biases so they are able to relate to youth participants in an equitable and inclusive manner in the classroom. It also enables educators to identify elements in existing curricula or other educational materials that may marginalize certain groups of adolescents through:

- messaging that perpetuates racial or ethnic stereotypes, stigmatizes sexually active or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning plus other gender identities and sexual orientations that are not specifically covered by the other five initials) adolescents, or alienates LGBTQ+ adolescents;
- gender stereotypes that may perpetuate gender inequities; and
- a lack of imagery and messaging with relevance to some cultural groups that could cause program participants to be disengaged.

The guide will provide strategies for increasing the use of equitable and inclusive practices and tailoring curricula to reduce these negative impacts and increase the use of equitable and inclusive language with fidelity.

## What is Bias? What is *Implicit* Bias?

Bias is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution toward any social group or individual based on age, gender identity, physical abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, weight, and many other characteristics and can affect our actions or decisions. Biases may have arisen from an evolutionary development that allowed early humans to quickly distinguish an encounter as dangerous or not (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). People or situations that were unfamiliar may have been more likely to be categorized as dangerous. This tendency to categorize what we encounter is still a part of human nature, even when danger may not be present, because our brain instinctively categorizes information based on previous experiences. Everyone has biases, which affect daily interactions in every facet of life, even though not all bias is intentional. We are conscious of explicit biases, but implicit biases are unconscious, unintentional assumptions that may be shaped by previous experiences or information (Gonzalez et al., 2018). For example, there is a long history in the United States of negatively portraying Black people in culture and mass media, which could trigger implicit biases among facilitators working with youth. Try the activity below to see how your unconscious mind uses previous experience to make sense of information.

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## ACTIVITY

### How does the brain categorize information?

Please read the following paragraph out loud.

"If you can raed tihs praapragh, it's bcsecuae our mnids are vrey good at ptuting tgoehter peiecs of ifnroamtoin in a way taht is esay for us to make snese of. Our mnids do tihs atoumtaicllay, whituot our cosncoius cotnrol."

If you could read this paragraph, even if it took you longer, it was because your unconscious cognition automatically made sense of the misspelled words based on your ability to associate them with words you already know. Implicit bias works similarly, triggering a response based on previous encounters or information.

This activity is adapted from Kirwan Institute (2023). Implicit Bias Module Series. https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-module-series

Project Implicit is a non-profit organization and team of researchers working on understanding unconscious attitudes, stereotypes, and biases. The organization developed the Implicit Associations Test (IAT) to detect implicit bias by measuring reaction time to images and words. Participants are instructed to categorize words and images quickly. The test measures associations between concepts (e.g., a specific group of people) and an evaluation (e.g., good or bad) or a stereotype (e.g., athletic or clumsy) and how much time it takes someone to respond to each item. The test is able to use these measurements to detect hidden biases that are below one's conscious awareness. The IAT includes various assessments that help us understand our own implicit biases relative to certain groups of people, so we can work to minimize their impact.

## ACTIVITY

### Do I have implicit biases?

Try taking one or more of these IAT assessments to discover your own implicit biases. To see the menu of tests without registering, you can log in as a guest. Discovering and becoming aware of your own biases is the first step toward addressing them. After completing an assessment, reflect on your results. Ask yourself, "what surprised you?" and "what stood out to you?"

a) Disability IAT

b) Gender-career IAT

c) Race/Nationality IATs: Race IAT, Arab-Muslim IAT, Asian IAT, and Skin-tone IAT

d) Sexuality IAT

e) Transgender IAT

f) Weight IAT

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# What Are Microaggressions?

Implicit biases often conflict with a person's explicit and declared beliefs and can lead to microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle verbal or nonverbal remarks, looks, gestures, tones, or exchanges communicated toward a marginalized person. They are often made without the initiator being aware of the impact of their words or actions (see Types of Microaggressions ). They can be based on age, gender identity, physical abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other characteristics and occur in the form of microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations.

Implicit biases and microaggressions within educational programming may lead to microinequities, making students feel overlooked, disrespected, or devalued (Sue et al., 2007). Internalization of microaggressions and stereotypes may affect self-esteem, shape how one views their sexuality, and increase engagement in risky sexual behaviors (Bond et al., 2021).

**Types of Microaggressions**

*Microassaults* are intentional acts of discrimination that may include racial, gender, and sexual orientation slurs, intentionally misgendering someone (i.e., referring to a person who is transgender, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming using terms they do not identify with) and purposefully using stereotypes as examples (e.g., showing Black women as single mothers and showing white women with partners/husbands).

*Microinsults* show insensitivity toward or demean a person's heritage or identity. Examples include commenting on how well-spoken someone from a particular racial group is (with the implicit assumption being that most people from that group are not well-spoken), making comments that imply that women are not proficient in math and science, touching someone's hair without their permission, and refusing to say someone's correct name because it is an unfamiliar name in your culture.

*Microinvalidations* are messages or behaviors that dismiss the thoughts, experiences, or feelings of individuals from historically disadvantaged groups. Examples of microinvalidations include saying, "I'm color blind" or "I don't see color," accusing individuals who have experienced racism or sexism of being overly sensitive, and not responding to discriminatory behavior that should be addressed and corrected when brought to your attention. These behaviors can make it seem as though marginalized people's experiences with discrimination are unjustified.

(Sue et al., 2007)

**ACTIVITY**

Observe reflections on microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations experienced by a diverse group of college students.

Review these short PBS clips. Ask yourself which of these examples you have seen in your own experience? Which, if any, might you have unconsciously done?

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## ACTIVITY

**Can I identify microagressions?**

Look at each statement. Ask yourself whether it is a *microassault, microinsult,* or *microinvalidation,* and why you chose your answer. Then, hover over each statement to see an interpretation.

"Being gay is just a phase."

"You speak English very well."

"You throw like a girl."

[One facilitator to another]
"I hate teaching classes full of English as a Second Language students. They can be so slow to catch on."

"I don't see color."

"What do [insert racial/ethnic group] think about this?"

"I have plenty of Black friends."

"No, where are you really from?"

"Everyone take out your smartphones. Let's take a poll."

"The only race is the human race."

"You're pretty for a big girl."

"The pronoun 'they' is plural. I'll keep referring to you as 'he'."

[To a student who is a girl or woman]
"You sure are opinionated."

[One minority group to another]
"I understand how it feels to be a minority."

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Adapted from Togans, L., Robinson, L., & Meredith, K. (2014). Microaggression activity. In M. Kite (Ed.). *Breaking the prejudice habit.* Ball State University. breakingprejudice.org

# How Do I Make My Programming Inclusive and Safe for Diverse Participants?

Review your curriculum for stereotypes and stigmatizing language and to ensure the examples are inclusive. Most states do **not** have policies that support equity and inclusivity in sex and HIV education programming, and in fact, several states have policies that could make sex education more stigmatizing (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). For example, instruction that is appropriate for a student's cultural background and that is not biased against any race, sex, or ethnicity is required in only nine states. This may marginalize Black, Hispanic or Latino, Native American or disabled youth who may not relate to images, examples, or terminology used. Ten states and the District of Columbia mandate the inclusion of curriculum content about sexual orientation (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). Five states require supplied information to emphasize heterosexuality and negatively portray other sexual orientations (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). These elements may stigmatize and marginalize gender-nonconforming and LGBTQ+ youth. As a result, it is important that program directors and facilitators carefully review the planned programming and curriculum before implementation. You can reduce biases by reconstructing the representations of people of color, Indigenous people, and other marginalized groups in educational materials and media used in your programming. Avoiding or modifying curricula that contain stigmatizing or marginalizing messaging can help reduce microinequities, increase youth engagement in prevention education, and lead to better health outcomes and decision-making. Adaptations that tailor curricula to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive are encouraged if done with fidelity. The Family and Youth Services Bureau *Making Adaptions Tip Sheet* provides guidelines on making adaptations. Here are a few recommendations to help you identify and avoid or modify elements that could stigmatize or marginalize some groups of participants.

## Avoid messaging that may stigmatize youth who have had sex.

Some messages or activities present in curricula geared toward pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection prevention may inadvertently stigmatize youth who have already had sex (either consensual or non-consensual sex), which could lead to feelings of shame or hesitancy to seek referrals for sexual and reproductive health concerns and decrease engagement in your programming. Such stigmatization could be particularly traumatizing for youth who have been involved in human sex trafficking. Examples include the following:

- Activities that use adhesive tape or other demonstrations to suggest that having sex with multiple partners can affect one's ability to form a healthy bond in future relationships. This messaging has the potential to make youth who have had sex feel as though they may have already ruined their chance at creating strong bonds in a future relationship.
- Activities suggesting that youth who have had sex have given up something of value that cannot be replaced, that they are less attractive to future partners, or that they have been "used up" (e.g., used pieces of gum or candy; toothpaste that cannot be placed back into a tube).

## Avoid promoting stereotypes.

Many curricula geared toward pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection prevention reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, curricula often include scenarios where boys initiate or seek out sexual encounters with girls, reinforcing the concept that "boys push, girls resist." Such messages naturalize male desire and portray girls as passive sexual gatekeepers (Lamb et al., 2011). Scenarios based on gender stereotypes often portray women who express sexual desire and want to initiate sex as aggressive, devious, or manipulative (Lamb et al., 2011). As such, sexual desire, especially among African American communities, may be stereotyped as inherently promiscuous or even predatory, which often leads to African American young women, and even young men, being over-sexualized and objectified (Bond et al., 2021).

Unchallenged gender stereotypes can perpetuate unhealthy relationships and may lead to microinequities. To mitigate this bias, you can be deliberate in incorporating activities that break gender role stereotypes. You can also encourage students to create their own example scenarios that challenge gender stereotypes.

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## Promote inclusion.

To set the tone for equity and inclusion, start by creating a group agreement (see *Appendix 1*) that creates a safe space, encourages mutual respect for all participants, and rejects any form of discrimination. Make it clear to students that you value contributions from participants of all backgrounds and that diversity of perspectives creates a beneficial learning environment for all. Another approach to creating a more inclusive setting, and one that affirms, validates, and respects the identities of all youth, is to provide diverse images, media, names, and terminology representing different cultures, genders, sexual orientations, body types, abilities, and values. See *Appendix 2* for a glossary of inclusive language  When examining and adapting a curriculum to your population, consider making "green light" adaptations if needed, such as modifying words, images, and scenarios to better represent the youth in your population.

Prevention curricula may not explicitly refer to sexual orientation or gender identity, and if they do, there is a chance that information may be inaccurate or could negatively depict youth who are LGBTQ+.  For example, curricula may suggest that heterosexuality is the norm or preferred sexual orientation or it may fail to include examples of LGBTQ+ relationships, which marginalizes youth who are LGBTQ+. To be more inclusive, you can use gender-neutral names (see examples in *Appendix 3*) from a variety of cultures in scenarios and refer to significant others using gender-neutral words such as "partner." In role-play scenarios, you can assign same-sex actors and provide students with the opportunity to revise role-play scenarios in curricula that only depict heterosexual relationships as a way to be more inclusive.

Learning and using participants' pronouns is another way to increase equity and inclusion. Pronouns are how we refer to people if not directly by name. Pronouns should not be assumed; instead, someone's pronouns should be asked and used to signify respect and affirmation. Some pronouns include the following:

- He, him, his – gendered pronouns often used to refer to men

- She, her, hers – gendered pronouns often used to refer to women

- They, them, theirs – non-gendered or all-gender pronouns, which may be singular and plural (they/them may be used when pronouns are unknown)

- Ze, hir, hirs, co, cos, per, pers – non-gendered pronouns

- Miss, Ms, Mrs, Mr, Mx – honorific pronouns

Normalize using pronouns by modeling pronouns when you introduce yourself, setting the tone for a safe space. Ask for pronouns: "What pronouns do you use?" is a common way to ask. Participants can also add pronouns to name cards/tents or their names/pictures if they are in a virtual space. If a person does not want to share their pronouns, use they/them/theirs unless told otherwise. Remind participants to use the correct pronouns for their peers (University of Northern Iowa, n.d.).

Consider using Universal Design Principles to provide equitable access to your material to all participants, regardless of their circumstances or ability.  These principles can help you ensure that your programming

- is useful to people with diverse abilities,

- accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities,

- is easy for all participants to understand,

- is adapted to various learning styles and ways of perceiving information,

- minimizes unintended consequences,

- requires minimal physical effort, and

- includes content and activities that can be accessed by all, regardless of a participant's body size, posture, or mobility.

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# Equity and Inclusion Checklists

On the following pages, you will find the following three checklists:

## Pre-Implementation Checklist

**Use this checklist to prepare for program implementation.**

This checklist should be completed before each series of sessions with a new group of students. It will help you review the curriculum, assess the program environment, and identify areas to increase inclusion and minimize bias. Some changes (e.g., modifying a curriculum component) may require meeting with your supervisor/program director before implementation.

## Implementation Checklist

**Use this checklist during program implementation.**

This checklist will serve as a reminder of steps to take during each session to ensure that all participants feel respected and valued. When possible, either between sessions or at the end of the day, note any concerns you have about your group or any specific challenges you have encountered.

## Post-Implementation Checklist

**Use this checklist after program implementation.**

Use this checklist to reflect on program implementation and plan improvements in your approach for the next cycle of program implementation. These checklists should complement other training and activities that build on the skills and expertise of facilitators and enable your organization to maximize equity and inclusion.

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# PRE-IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

This checklist reflects best practices for thinking about an equitable and inclusive approach before you begin your program implementation. Review the curriculum you intend to use and identify language or other program components that may stigmatize or marginalize youth. Review the glossary of terms and pay particular attention to language that may not be inclusive. This step should occur each time the curriculum undergoes a revision.

| Class Description: | Session Dates: |
| --- | --- |
| | |

| Equity and Inclusion Activity | Check Once Completed | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Does the curriculum use gender-neutral names? | | |
| Does the curriculum use varied pronouns and other inclusive language? | | |
| Do the curriculum's lingo and pictures match that of the population you serve? | | |
| Does the curriculum contain language and activities equally relevant to teens who have and have not had sex? | | |
| Does the curriculum contain messaging that shames sexual identities, orientations, or a particular culture? | | |
| Does the curriculum contain negative depictions or narratives based on race, gender, sexual orientation, sexual activity, or culture? | | |
| Does the curriculum help youth develop skills that are respectful of participants' cultural and social norms and their families? | | |
| Do planned resources and examples avoid stereotypes? | | |

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# IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

| Class Description: | Session Dates: |
|---|---|

| **Equity and Inclusion Activity** | **Notes** *(e.g., concerns about your group or specific challenges encountered)* |
|---|---|
| Set the tone by using equitable and inclusive language. Discuss with the group the importance of respecting others' perspectives and avoiding generalizations. | |
| Establish group agreements that provide a foundation of equity, inclusion, and confidentiality. Model the expectations for your class. Revisit the agreements at the beginning of each session. | |
| Remind yourself to avoid asking students to represent or speak on behalf of a group you perceive them to represent. This can take pressure off underrepresented students to play the role of those who "have" race, sexual orientation, or a disability. | |
| Build rapport in your class by learning the correct pronunciations of students' names. Use name cards/tents in a large class and use names and pronouns as identifiers on virtual platforms. | |
| Carefully choose your examples to be meaningful to students with a range of backgrounds and acknowledge that not all students will share the same points of reference. If you use examples specific to a particular group, try to vary them to be inclusive of your students' varied backgrounds. | |

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# POST-IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

| Class Description: | Session Dates: |
|---|---|
| | |

| Equity and Inclusion Activity | Date Completed | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Collect and receive feedback from youth, co-facilitators, and other stakeholders regarding program implementation. This may be in the form of an anonymous survey or suggestion box (paper or virtual) or other methods that would make contributions equitable and inclusive. Include a question that assesses inclusion and apply what you learn to future sessions. | | |
| Reflect on the program implementation to determine if additional adaptations are necessary to eliminate stigmatizing or marginalizing language. | | |
| Seek additional training for challenges that came up with program implementation. Review resources, training opportunities, and events on *The Exchange*. | | |

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# Additional Resources on Implicit Bias and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. How to Outsmart Your Own Unconscious Bias | Valerie Alexander | TEDxPasadena - YouTube

2. Microaggressions in the Classroom - YouTube

3. How unintentional but insidious bias can be the most harmful - YouTube

4. Making Adaptations to Evidence-Based Programs Tip Sheet (hhs.gov)

5. Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom

6. Practical Strategies for Creating Welcoming and Supportive Environments for All Youth (webinar)

7. How Adolescent Boys Learn: Tailoring Prevention Messages

8. Advancing Racial Equity:  The Time is Now! (webinar)

9. Supporting Families and Youth Experiencing Poverty with PREP Programming

**FYSB** Family & Youth Services Bureau

# Appendix 1: Group Agreements

**Group Agreements** or ground rules set the tone for expectations during the class. Student participation in establishing Group Agreements will increase buy-in and prevent conflict by creating an agreement on how all group members will behave and work in the group.

1. Ask students to brainstorm rules for the Group Agreement and record their suggestions on chart paper or in your virtual space. Ask students to include what would be needed for them to feel safe, included, and respected during sessions. To ensure equitable and inclusive rules are included, a few rules for the Group Agreement that model expectations are included below.

2. Once all ideas are recorded, ask if anyone needs clarification on any suggested agreement rules.

3. Discuss, revise, or eliminate suggested agreements as needed until the group comes to a consensus.

4. Let students know that everyone is responsible for following the Group Agreements and should speak up if an agreement is not being followed.

5. Post the Group Agreements prominently in the room for all to see.

6. Invite students to suggest additions or deletion of specific rules as the need arises.

7. Consistently refer to the Group Agreements to manage classroom behavior.

8. Consider the Group Agreements a "living document" that can be updated at any time with input and agreement from the group.

**Equitable and Inclusive Group Agreement Rules**
- Be supportive of each other.
- Use "I" statements.
- Remember that everyone has the right to pass on an answer/question.
- Respect the speaker: One person speaks at a time.
- Keep class discussion confidential: What's discussed here stays here.
- Take care of personal and learning needs.
- Use pronouns.
- Refrain from interrupting each other.
- Respect the different opinions and experiences of your classmates.
- Remember that all questions are good questions.
- Step up, Step back. Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and listen.
- Have fun!

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# Appendix 2: Glossary of Inclusive Language

- Biological Sex: Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes. Often also referred to as "sex," "physical sex," "anatomical sex," or as "sex assigned at birth."

- Cisgender: Refers to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the identity typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

- Culture: The cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

- Disability: A condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have that disability.

- Diversity: The variety of personal experiences and values that individuals gain based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and other factors.

- Equity: Guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups.

- Ethnicity: Shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs.

- Gender expression: The external display of one's gender through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as gender presentation.

- Gender identity: Internal perception of one's gender and how one labels oneself.

- Gender pronouns: The pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. Gender-neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns include they, their, and them.

- Gender: The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for individuals on a spectrum that includes feminine and masculine.

- Inclusion: The act of creating an environment in which any individual or group can feel welcome, respected, supported, and valued. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in activities.

- Lifestyle: A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of people who are LGBTQ+. Some dislike this term because it implies that being LGBTQ+ is a choice.

- Marginalize: To relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

- Microaggressions: Verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

- Nationality: Status of being a member or citizen of a particular country. Nation(s) of origin could include, for example, the United States, Nigeria, or Korea. Tribal and indigenous affiliations could include Cherokee, Navajo, Chickasaw, or Aboriginal.

- Race: A mixture of physical, behavioral, and cultural attributes that groups and cultures consider socially significant.

- Transgender: A term describing a person's gender identity that differs from their biological sex.

- Underrepresented: Individuals from racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic populations who have been historically and are disproportionately represented.

- Underserved: Those who are low income and historically underrepresented can be considered underserved.

Adapted from The University of Alabama at Birmingham Inclusive Language Guide.

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# Appendix 3: Gender-Neutral Names

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Addison | Dylan | Logan | Samar |
| Adrian | Eden | London | Santana |
| Alex | Emerson | Liang | Sasha |
| Angel | Finley | Luca | Sawyer |
| Ari | Frankie | Lumi | Shawn |
| Arya | Harper | Max | Shelby |
| Armani | Harley | Morgan | Shiloh |
| Asa | Hayden | Naolin | Sidney |
| Ashanti | Jaime | Oakley | Skylar |
| Aspen | Jalen | Parker | Taraji |
| Avery | Jamie | Peyton | Tate |
| Azariah | Jayden | Phoenix | Taylor |
| Bailey | Jaylen | Quinn | Tommie |
| Blair | Jessie | Reagan | Tristan |
| Brooklyn | Jean | Reese | Whitney |
| Casey | Jordan | Remi | Wren |
| Channing | Jude | Rene | Xoan |
| Charlie | Justice | Riley | Yael |
| Corey | Kadin | River | Zain |
| Dakota | Kai | Rory | Zephyr |
| Dana | Keegan | Rowan | Zola |
| Denver | Kelly | Ryan | Zuri |
| Devan | Kendall | Sage | |
| Dominique | Kerry | Salem | |
| Drew | Kieran | Sam | |

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