

Person First Language

Why Should We Use Person-First Language?

- People who have disabilities live in every community in America.
- Many labels that are used for disabilities in our society have negative connotations or are misleading.
- Using these labels contributes to negative stereotypes.
- **Most importantly, individuals with disabilities are PEOPLE FIRST and it is wrong to define people by a disability.**

General Guidelines:

- Do not refer to a person's disability unless it is relevant to the conversation.
- Use "disability" rather than "handicap" to refer to a person's disability. Never use "cripple/crippled" in any reference to disability.
- Avoid referring to people with disabilities as "the disabled." When referring to a person's disability, use person-first language. (ex. "a person with a disability" not "a disabled person.")
- Avoid negative or sensational descriptions of a person's disability. These portrayals elicit unwanted sympathy or pity toward people with disabilities.
- Don't use "normal" or "able-bodied" to describe people who do not have disabilities.

The following terms should be avoided when speaking to or about a person with a disability.

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| • "retarded" | • "defective" | • "a patient" |
| • "invalid" | • "special person" | • "mute" |
| • wheelchair-bound" | • "suffers from" | • "victim" |
| • "mongoloid" | • "handicapped" | • "crippled" |
| • "deaf and dumb" | • "stricken with" | • "afflicted with" |

Examples of Person-First Language:

People with disabilities are people who have disabilities.

Not: "the handicapped or disabled"

He/she uses a wheelchair.

Not: "He/she is wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair."

He/She has a congenital disability.

Not: "He/She has a birth defect."

Accessible parking or bathrooms

Not: "handicapped parking or bathrooms"

He/She has a need for He/She needs....

Not: "He/She has a problem with..."

He/She has an intellectual disability.

Not: "He/She is retarded."