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”
- “invalid”
- wheelchair-bound”
- “mongoloid”
- “deaf and dumb”
- “defective”
- “special person”
- “suffers from”
- “handicapped”
- “stricken with”
- “a patient”
- “mute”
- “victim”
- “crippled”
- “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.”