

Think “People First”

Language is a reflection of how people see each other.

That’s why the words we use have the power to hurt.

People First language is sensitive and accurate, helps break down barriers and fosters mutual respect, open lines of communication and acceptance.

Use these guidelines on People First language:

Say “a person with a disability” instead of “a disabled person.”

Use “congenital disability” instead of “birth defect.”

Words like “victim, afflicted, crippled, patient, suffering from” communicate disease and sickness, which disabilities are not.

Say “uses a wheelchair” instead of “wheelchair bound.”

Use “has a disability” instead of “handicapped or disabled.”

People with disabilities are not super human models of courage or pity.

Use “deaf, or hard of hearing” instead of “hearing impaired.”

It should go without saying that obviously derogatory words like “retarded, dumb, lame, and defected” are avoided.

Use “Down syndrome” instead of “Mongol” or “Mongoloid.”

Use “person of small (or short) stature” instead of “dwarf or midget.”

A person with a disability “uses a wheelchair” and is not “confined to a wheelchair.” A person’s wheelchair is an extension of his or her body and allows greater movement and freedom!

Use “mental illness” or the specific diagnosis instead of “crazy, maniac or lunatic.”

Use “man (or woman) with epilepsy” instead of “epileptic.”

If using the term “normal” is necessary, replace it with “typical.”

Remember that language shapes attitude!