

People First Language

“It’s not the disorder but society’s reaction to it that creates the disability”
(Person to Person: A Guide for Professionals Working with People with Disabilities, 1997)

The following are examples of “People First Language.”

Throughout the training please keep in mind as we talk about the people we serve and how we describe who we are working with in our jobs.

People First Language to Use

People with disabilities.
People who experience disabilities.
Person who has cognitive disabilities.
Person who lives with disabilities.
Person who uses a wheelchair.
Person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
Person who is blind or low vision.
Person who is short stature
Accessible or designated parking
A person who has had a stroke

Labels Not to Use

The disabled
The handicapped
The retarded or mentally retarded
Crippled
Wheelchair bound; confined to a wheelchair
The deaf, deaf and dumb
The blind
Dwarf or midget
Handicapped parking

Words to Avoid

Would you want anyone to refer to you in any of these ways?

Special	crazy
Special needs	mute
Afflicted	physically challenged
“suffers from”	slow
Impaired	insane
Charity case	
Birth defect	
Mongoloid	
“kids” when referring to adults	
Differently abled	
ill	