

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

History tells us it takes at least one generation between the time an idea is born and the time it is actually incorporated into our society.

People First language is about no more labels. Focus is on the person first, the disability or disorder last. **People First** language describes what the person **HAS**, not what he/she **IS**.

People with disabilities.
My sister has attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
My father has a visual impairment.
My child has autism.

No one “*suffers from*”, “*is afflicted with*”, or “*is the victim of*” anything!!! Nor is anyone “*wheelchair-bound*”. There are people who *use* wheelchairs, nothing else.

In speaking or writing, remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else -- *except* they happen to have a disability. Therefore, here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities:

- Speak of the person first, then the disability or disorder.
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
- Do not label people as part of a disability group. Do not say “*the disabled*” -say “*people with disabilities.*”
- Don’t give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability or patronize them.
- Choice and independence are important. Let the person do or speak for him/herself as much as possible.
- A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, behave, etc. Use the term “*handicap*” only to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, i.e., people with disabilities who use wheelchairs are handicapped by stairs.
- **Promote understanding, respect, dignity and positive outlooks!**

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE TO USE...

- Child with AD/HD
- Adult with hyperactivity
- Child/adult with a disability
- Person with cerebral palsy
- Person who has...
- Without speech, nonverbal
- Developmental delay
- Emotional disorder, or mental illness
- Person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Uses a wheelchair
- Person with mental retardation
- Person with epilepsy
- Person with Down's Syndrome
- Has a learning disability
- Non-disabled
- Has a physical disability
- Congenital disability
- Condition
- Seizures
- Cleft lip
- Mobility impaired
- Medically involved, or has a chronic illness
- Paralyzed
- Has quadriplegia
- Has Paraplegia
- Of short stature
- Accessible buses, bathrooms, etc.
- Reserved/accessible parking for people w/ disabilities

INSTEAD OF ...

- AD/HD child
- Hyperactive adult
- Handicapped or disabled child/adult
- Palsied or spastic
- Afflicted, suffers from, victim
- Mute or dumb
- Slow
- Crazy or insane
- Deaf and dumb
- Confined to a wheelchair
- Retarded
- Epileptic
- Mongoloid
- Is learning disabled
- Normal, healthy
- Crippled
- Birth defect
- Disease (unless it is a disease)
- Fits
- Hare lip
- Lame
- Sickly
- Invalid
- Quadriplegic
- Paraplegic
- Dwarf or midget
- Handicapped buses, bathrooms, etc.
- Handicapped parking