

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

- ❖ Speak of the person first, not about the disability. People are not their disability.
 - Say: She has a cognitive disability. He has epilepsy. She has cerebral palsy.
 - Instead of: He's an epileptic. She's palsied. He's a downs.
- ❖ Emphasize the person's abilities, not limitations.
 - Say: He walks with crutches.
 - Instead of: He is crippled.
- ❖ Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers from, confined to, a victim of, a prisoner of, unfortunate.
 - Say: She was in a car crash. He uses a wheel chair.
 - Instead of: She was a victim in a car crash. He is confined to a wheelchair.
- ❖ Avoid cute references such as physically challenged, inconvenienced and differently-abled.
 - Say: He has a disability. She has a physical disability.
 - Instead of: He is differently abled. She is physically challenged.
- ❖ Speak about a person's needs—not his or her behaviors or problems.
 - Say: She needs a wheelchair. He needs extra support at work.
 - Instead of: She can't walk. He can't work alone.
- ❖ Treat a person who has a disability with the same respect as everyone else.
 - Do: Shake hands. Make eye contact.
 - Instead of: Avoiding contact. Looking away.
- ❖ Let the person do and speak for him or herself.
 - Do: Wait for a person to ask for help.
 - Instead of: Helping them without asking.
- ❖ Talk directly to the person who has a disability. If you have questions to ask someone who has a disability, ask the person the questions first, rather than asking someone else to answer for him or her.
 - Say: "What do you want to eat?"
 - Instead of: Asking an attendant or support person, "What does she like?"
- ❖ Don't do something to someone who has a disability that you would never do to a person who does not have a disability.
 - Do: Ask for permission to touch a person with a disability.
 - Instead of: Patting the person on the head.

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