People-first language uses words that reflect awareness, dignity and a positive attitude about people with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on the person first, rather than the disability. Example: “John is a writer who has a disability,” rather than “John is a disabled writer.” By using people-first language, we gently create awareness that the focus/subject is the person, thereby demonstrating respect toward that person.

People-first language should be used by reporters, headline writers and editors as they produce copy, headlines and photo captions.

What is the distinction between a disability and a handicap?*

Disability – A disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease, which may limit a person’s mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function. Some people have more than one disability.

Handicap – A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Webster’s defines handicap as “to put at a disadvantage.” Example: Some people with disabilities use wheelchairs. Stairs, narrow doorways and curbs are handicaps imposed upon people who use wheelchairs.

Tips for Reporting on People with Disabilities**

- Do not focus on disability unless it is crucial to a story. Focus instead on issues that affect the quality of life of those same individuals, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities, or discrimination.
- Do not portray successful people with disabilities as superhuman. This raises false expectations that all people with disabilities should be high achievers.
- Do not sensationalize a disability by using such language as afflicted with, crippled, suffers from, confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound, etc.
- Do not use generic labels for disability groups such as “the retarded” or “the deaf.”
- Do not define individuals by their disability. Put people first, not their disability.
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Show people as active participants in society.
- Do not use euphemisms to describe a disability.

Additional resources and the latest information are just a click away.

www.ddc.wa.gov/press
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say/Write…</th>
<th>Instead of…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child with a disability</td>
<td>disabled, invalid or handicapped child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual with cerebral palsy</td>
<td>palsied, CP or spastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person who has…</td>
<td>Afflicted, suffers from, victim of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal (with speech)</td>
<td>mute or dumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child(ren) with autism</td>
<td>autistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental delay</td>
<td>slow or retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional disorder/mental illness</td>
<td>crazy or insane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf or has a hearing impairment</td>
<td>deaf and dumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates with sign language</td>
<td>signer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses a wheelchair</td>
<td>confined to a wheelchair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a cognitive disability</td>
<td>retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has epilepsy</td>
<td>epileptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult with Down syndrome</td>
<td>mongoloid, suffers from Down syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a learning disability</td>
<td>is learning disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a physical disability</td>
<td>is physically disabled/crippled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-disabled</td>
<td>normal, healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congenital disability</td>
<td>birth defect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>disease (unless it is indeed defined as a disease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seizures</td>
<td>fits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleft lip</td>
<td>hare lip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has mobility impairment</td>
<td>lame or crippled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralyzed</td>
<td>invalid or paralytic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has quadriplegia</td>
<td>quadriplegic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has paraplegia</td>
<td>paraplegic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your consideration, and for serving as our partner in progress, as we foster true inclusion and diversity. You will make a world of difference for people by using respectful people-first language and encouraging others to do the same.

**Resources for Information about Developmental Disabilities:**

- **Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council**
  800-634-4473 • www.ddc.wa.gov

- **Informing Families, Building Trust**
  www.informingfamilies.org

- **The Arc of Washington State**
  888-754-8798 or 360-357-5596 • www.arcwa.org

- **SAIL Coalition (Self Advocates In Leadership)**
  888-754-8798 • www.sailcoalition.org

Contributing Sources:  * Disability Handbook, City of San Antonio, Texas, ** University of Kansas Publications, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, *** The Pacesetter newsletter, Girl Scout Council of Greater Minn., The Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities for the State of Georgia

Additional resources and the latest information are just a click away. www.ddc.wa.gov/press
Person-first language is a wonderful way to ensure inclusion, freedom, and respect for persons with handicapableness the latest in the lineup of politically correct ways to either respect or patronize disabled people. When referring to disabled people, with specific regard to their disability, one is supposed to preface any mention of said disability with the mention of the fact that they are people, and also not mention that they are actually disabled. As the term implies, People First Language refers to the individual first and the disability second. It’s saying a child with autism instead of the autistic (see Examples of People First Language.) While some people may not use preferred terminology, it’s important you don’t repeat negative terms that stereotype, devalue or discriminate just as you’d avoid racial slurs or saying gals instead of women. People-first language (PFL),[1] also called person-first language (PFL), is a type of linguistic prescription which puts a person before a diagnosis, describing what a person “has” rather than asserting what a person “is.” Competing models. The most common alternative to person-first language is usually called identity-first language, as it places the identifying condition before the personal term. The People First Respectful Language Modernization Act of 2006 was enacted by the Council of the District of Columba on July 11, 2006 to require the use of respectful language when referring to people with disabilities in all new and revised District laws, regulations, rules, and publications and all internet publications. People First Language (PFL) puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is.