

People First - Language, Terminology and Etiquette

“People First Language”: A language guide to help you put the person first when communicating with people with disabilities.

“People First Language” means emphasizing the person rather than the disability. For example, say “Mary Able, who uses a wheelchair...” instead of “The wheelchair-bound Mary Able...” Notice that the preferred statement mentions Mary first.

Additionally, saying that a person is “confined” or “bound” to a wheelchair emphasizes limitations and is often incorrect (for example, many people who use wheelchairs sometimes use crutches, canes or walkers).

Most people with disabilities are healthy. Therefore, it is less than accurate to stereotype them as victims or having an illness. In fact, most people with disabilities would prefer their disability not be mentioned if it is not relevant to the situation.

Try not to use the “E-D” words preceded by “the”, Examples of this are “the disabled” and “the cerebral palsied”. Instead, say, “people who have a disability” and people who have cerebral palsy.”

Some terms and expressions used to describe disabilities are incorrect or judgmental. For example, what used to be called mongolism is now called Down Syndrome, and the words “crippled” and “suffers from” are judgmental.

People without disabilities sometimes look up to or admire those with disabilities as having great courage and endurance. Most people with disabilities want to be thought of as ordinary people.

IT’S THE “PERSON FIRST” – THEN THE DISABILITY

- If you saw a person in a wheelchair unable to get up the stairs into a building would you say “There is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp?” Or would you say “There is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building?”
- What is the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability? Consider how you would introduce someone-Jane Doe-who doesn’t have a disability. You would give her a name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in-she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or watching adventure movies. Why say it differently for a person with disabilities? Every person is made up of many characteristics-mental as well as physical-and few want to be identified only by their ability to play tennis or by their love for fried onions or by the mole that is on their face. Those characteristics are just parts of us.

- 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 and handicaps.
 1. Speak of the person first, then the disability.
 2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
 3. Do not label people as part of a disability group – don't say "the Disabled," say "people with disabilities". Don't use "handicapped".
 4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize.
 5. Choice and independence are important. Let the person do or speak for him/herself as much as possible. If addressing an adult say "Bill" instead of "Billy". Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to their guardian/spouse/companion.
 6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc. Use handicap to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.
 7. If you are unsure how to describe a disability, ask someone who knows – or ask the person that has the disability.

Effective Communications

- *People First*
- *Employment Assistance*

Increasing Public and Professional Awareness of Disabilities
PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

SAY.....

Child with a disability
 Person with cerebral palsy
 Without speech, nonverbal
 Developmental delay
 Emotional disorder, or mental illness
 Deaf or hearing-impaired/Communicates with sign
 Uses a wheelchair
 Person with mental retardation
 Person with epilepsy
 With Down Syndrome
 Has a learning disability
 Nondisabled
 Has a physical disability
 Congenital disability
 Condition
 Seizures
 Cleft lip
 Mobility impaired
 Medically involved or has a chronic illness
 Paralyzed
 Has hemiplegic (paralysis of one side of the body)
 Has quadriplegia "tetraplegia"
 (paralysis of both arms and legs)
 Has paraplegia (loss of function in lower body only)
 Of short stature
 Has a (disability)

INSTEAD OF.....

disabled or handicapped child
 palsied, or CP, or spastic
 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
 hair lip
 lame
 sickly
 invalid or paralytic
 hemiplegic
 quadriplegic
 paraplegic
 dwarf or midget
 afflicted with (a disability)

If you are interacting with people who have Disabilities

1. Be yourself. As in any new situation, everyone will feel more comfortable if you relax.
2. Meeting someone. People who use wheelchairs may have a variety of different abilities. Extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. If you are meeting a blind person, identify yourself. If you have met before, remind him/her of the context; he/she won't have the visual cues to jog his memory.
3. Helping. Do not automatically give assistance; ask first if the person wants help and then follow the person's cues, and ask if you are not sure. Be the assistant, not the director. Don't be offended if someone refuses your offer of assistance. It's his/her choice to be independent as he/she can be.
4. Communication. Talk directly to the person, not to an aide, friend, or interpreter. If the person has a speech impairment, listen carefully and patiently. Ask him/her to repeat if you don't understand. If the person doesn't understand you when you speak. Try again. If the person is deaf or hard of hearing, follow his/her lead; use gestures or write. If the person uses a wheelchair, sit down yourself and converse at eye level.
5. Socializing. Do not leave a person with a disability out of a conversation or activity because you feel uncomfortable or fear that the person will feel uncomfortable. Include the person as you would anyone else. Let it be his/her decision whether or not to participate.
6. Disability. Treat the person as an individual. Don't assume that the person's Disability is all he/she can talk about or is interested in. Find a topic of small talk, the way you would with anyone. Don't treat the person as a disability.
7. Environments. Be sensitive about the setting. A noisy or dark environment, or many people talking at the same time might make it difficult for people with vision, speech, or hearing impairments to participate fully in a conversation. Be aware of clear paths of travel for people who use wheelchairs or are blind. Describe goings-on and surroundings (especially obstacles) to a blind person. A person with chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to smoke, perfume, or other toxins in the environment.
8. Touching. Do not pet guide dogs, and do not pet or touch a person with a disability unless there is a good reason (such as shaking hands in greeting or if the person has requested assistance). However, you may gently touch a deaf person to get his attention. Never push a person's wheelchair or lean on the wheelchair without permission. Please do not recoil if you meet a person with

HIV/AIDS; shake hands as you would anyone else's. You can't get AIDS by touching.

9. Auxiliary Aids. Do not touch someone's cane, wheelchair or other device. It is part of one's personal space.
10. Hidden Disabilities (not all disabilities are apparent). A person may have trouble following a conversation, may not respond when you call or wave, or may say or do something that seems inappropriate. The person may have a hidden disability, such as low vision, a hearing impairment, a learning disability, or mental illness. Do not make assumptions about the person or the disability.

Interviewing a person using mobility aids

- Enable people who use crutches, canes or wheelchairs to keep them within reach. If it is felt the person's ability inhibits performance of a job, ask them, "How would you perform this job." For *example*: "I notice that you are in a wheelchair and I wonder how you get around. Tell me about your disability. (Inappropriate)" Instead say, "This position requires some outdoor landscaping and children's activities, as you see from the job description. Do you see any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions as to how these tasks can be performed?"
- Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their chairs into an office chair for interview.
- When speaking to a person in a wheelchair or on crutches for more than a few minutes, sit in a chair. Always place yourself at eye level.

Reception Etiquette

- Know where accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones are located. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives, such as the private or employee restroom, a glass of water or your desk phone.
- Use a normal tone of voice when extending a verbal welcome. Do not raise your voice unless requested.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.
- Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable.
- For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.
- Call a person by his or her name only when extending that familiarity to all others present.
- Never patronize people using wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair, never lean on the person's wheelchair. The chair is part of the space that belongs to the person who uses it.
- When talking with a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person rather than through a companion who may be accompanying them.
- If an interpreter is present, speak to the person who has scheduled the appointment, not to the interpreter. Always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.
- Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. Do not proceed to assist if your offer to assist is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to or accept instructions.
- Allow a person with a vision impairment to take your arm (at or below the elbow). This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person.
- Offer to hold or carry packages in a welcoming manner.

- Do not offer to hand a cane or crutches unless the individual requests.

Conversation Etiquette

- When talking to a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person not to their companion,
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions such as "see you later" that seem to relate to the person's disability.
- To get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand from the side or front and not the back of the person. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, naturally and slowly to establish if the person can read lips. Not all persons who are hearing impaired can lip-read. Those who can rely on facial expression and other body language to help in understanding. Show consideration by placing yourself facing the light source and keeping your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Please do not shout. Written notes may help.
- When talking to a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, pull up a chair, whenever possible, in order to place you at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation.
- When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you.
- When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.
- Listen attentively when you are talking to a person who has a speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for a person with speech difficulty. When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod or a shake of the head. Never pretend to understand. Repeat what you understand, or incorporate the interviewee's statements into each of the following questions. Open-ended questions are more appropriate than closed-ended questions.
Example:

Closed-Ended Question: You were a payroll assistant in your company in the human resources department for seven years. What did you do there?

Open-Ended Question: Tell me about your recent position as a payroll assistant?

- Do not shout at a hearing impaired person. Shouting distorts sounds accepted through hearing aids and inhibits lip reading.
- Do not shout at a blind or visually impaired person, he or she can hear you!
- Be prepared to offer a visual clue to a hearing impaired person or an audible cue to a vision impaired person, especially when more than one person is speaking.

Interviewing Scheduling Etiquette

- Some interviewees with visual or mobility impairments will phone in prior to the appointment date, specifically for travel information. The scheduler should be

very familiar with the travel path in order to provide interviewees with detailed information.

- Make sure the place where you plan to conduct the interview is accessible, such as,
 - Is parking accessible?
 - Is there a ramp or step-free entrance?
 - Are there accessible restrooms?
 - If the interview is not on the first floor, does the building have an elevator?
 - Are telephone and water fountains at the proper height for a person in a wheelchair to use?
 - If the site is inaccessible, inform the person about the barriers prior to the interview and offer to make arrangements for an alternate site.
 - When scheduling interviews with persons with disabilities, take their needs into consideration.
 - When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, consider distance, weather conditions and physical obstacles such as stairs, curbs, and doors to open.
 - Use specifics such as “take a left when you get off the elevator after approximately 20 feet, then take a right about ten feet, the entrance door is the first door on the right”.
 - Be considerate of travel time that may be required by a person with a disability. People with disabilities use a variety of transportation services when traveling to and from work. Be aware that the person might be required to make a reservation 24 hours in advance, plus travel time. Provide the interviewee with an estimated time to schedule the return trip when arranging the interview appointment.
 - Familiarize the interviewee in advance of the names of all persons he or she will be interviewing with. This courtesy allows the person to be aware of the names and faces that they will meet during the interview.
 - Remember, people with disabilities expect equal treatment, not special treatment.

Interviewing Technique Etiquette

- Conduct interviews in a manner that emphasizes abilities, achievements and individual qualities.
- Conduct your interview as you would with anyone. Be considerate and do not patronize.
- When interviewing a person with a speech impairment, do not complete the person’s sentences.
- If it is felt the person’s ability inhibits performance of a job, ask them, “How would perform this job. For *example*: “I notice that you are in a wheelchair and wonder how you get around. Tell me about your disability. (Inappropriate)”
- Instead say, “This position requires some outdoor landscaping and children’s activities, as you see from the job description. Do you see any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions as to how these tasks can be performed?”

- Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their chairs into an office chair for the interview.
- When speaking to a person in a wheelchair or on crutches for more than a few minutes, sit in a chair. Always place yourself at eye level.

Employment Assistance

Finding a job is easy. Getting the job is a little harder. However, there are a number of local and/or internet websites available to job-seekers, a few specifically focused on individuals with disabilities.

The Florida Department of Education's Vocational Rehabilitation Program Services offers a vocational rehabilitation program for individuals with disabilities. Services include job development, job coaching, and/or assistive devices.

Contact VR at 407-897-2710 or visit the website www.myflorida.com.

The Florida Department of Education's Division of Blind Services offers services similar to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, however, this agency serves individual with visual impairments.

Contact DBS at 407-245-0700 or visit the website www.myflorida.com.

Goodwill Industries offers vocational evaluations and job placement services which includes a self-sufficiency job center.

Contact Goodwill at 407-235-1500 or visit the website www.goodwillcfl.org.

Center for Independent Living offers job placement assistance. In addition, CIL offers training in resume writing, and job interviewing.

Contact CIL at 407-623-1070 or visit the website www.cilorlando.org.

There are also a few websites to assist individuals in finding competitive employment: www.monster.com publishes a monthly newsletter focusing on diversity and inclusion. Visiting the website allows an individual to post a resume and sign up for the newsletter which includes valuable information for job seekers.

www.bis.gov is the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook. The website provides information on training/education requirements, working conditions, and job prospects for specific occupations.

www.jan.wvu.edu provides free consulting services regarding job accommodations, and self-employment opportunities.

Helpful hints:

1. Do your research. Know the company's history, and mission statement (if there is one). Most companies and agencies have their own websites.
2. Make sure you have the qualifications required for the job. Employers are willing to do some on the job training, but you have to have the necessary skills for the job.

3. Use the resources available to help you write your resume and cover letter. The Internet and your local library have valuable tools to help you write a resume that will guarantee you that interview.
4. When applying for jobs online, be precise, and list the most important skills you possess. Space is usually limited on the online applications, so be short, but precise.
5. Be on time for your interview. If given the opportunity try to be the 1st applicant interviewed. If at all possible, try and avoid being the last applicant interviewed for the day.
6. Remember, an interview is just a conversation. An important of course, but don't get nervous. Answer all questions truthfully. Think about the question before you answer. A slight hesitation gives you an opportunity to BREATHE.
7. Finally, be yourself. Let your personality shine. Employers are not only looking for what skills you possess, but how you will interact with current employees.

Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace

Reasonable accommodations enhance the opportunity for qualified individuals with disabilities who may not otherwise be considered for a job or to be or remain employed. The purpose of providing reasonable accommodations is to enable employers to hire or retain employees regardless of their disability by eliminating barriers to their employment.

According to the Department of Justice government wide regulations, Section 41.53, Reasonable Accommodation, "A recipient shall make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified handicapped employee or applicant unless the recipient can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of its program."

Inquiries made of an individual about limitations in job performance must be directly related to the prospective or existing position. Accommodations are tailored for a certain job or situation that an individual is hired to perform. The law requires that each person with a disability must be consulted prior to the planning and be involved in the implementation of an accommodation.

Types of Accommodations include:

- Assistive devices
- Reassignment
- Modified work schedules
- Job modifications
- Relocation
- Change in physical plant (location)
- Examples of assistive devices often used in the work place include:

- TTY/TDD teletypewriter or telephone amplifier, often used by persons with hearing impairments
- Wooden blocks to elevate desks and tables for wheelchair users
- Large type computer terminals and Braille printers to assist person with vision impairments

Decisions to implement an accommodation should include making a choice that will best meet the needs of the individual by minimizing limitation and enhancing his or her ability to perform job tasks, while serving the interests of your majority work force.

Interviewing a person who is blind or has Vision Impairments

- Always identify yourself and introduce anyone else who might be present.
- If the person does not extend their hand to shake hands, verbally extend welcome.
- When offering seating, talk to the person and tell them where a chair is located and place the person's hand on the back of the seat. Give verbal cues first.
- Let the person know if you move or need to end the conversation. Allow people who use crutches, canes or wheelchairs to keep them within reach.
- Give your whole attention with interest when talking to a person who has a speech impairment.
- Ask short questions that require short answers but you receive the specific information you are looking for.
- Don't raise your voice. Most speech-impaired persons can hear and understand.

Interviewing a person who is Deaf or Hearing Impaired

- Touch him or her on the shoulder from the front or side to attract their attention.
- If the person lip-reads, remember to look directly at them and do not exaggerate your lip movements. It is estimated that only four out of ten spoken words are visible on the lips. The person will rely on your facial expressions, gestures and eye contact.
- Always check with the person you are interviewing if an interpreter is requested and note taking is not possible. ADL is a language used in the United States but it is no the language needed by a non-English speaking person. Be certain to retain an interpreter that speaks and interprets in the language of the person. Remember that interpreters are facilitators; they are not to be consulted during an interview.

Other Do's and Don't About Disability

- Do learn where to find and recruit people with disabilities (Workforce, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services, Brain & Spinal Cord Injury program, Business leadership Networks).
- Do learn how to communicate with people who have disabilities.
- Do ensure that your applications and other employment forms do not ask disability-specific questions and that they are in formats that are accessible to all persons with disabilities.
- Do consider having written job descriptions that identify the essential functions of each job.

- Do ensure that requirements for medical examinations comply with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Do provide reasonable accommodations that the applicant will need to compete (equal opportunity) for the job.
- Do treat an individual with a dignity and respect.
- Don't assume that people with disabilities do not want to work.
- Don't assume that certain jobs are more suited to persons with disabilities.
- Don't hire a person with a disability if that person is at significant risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of the public and there is no reasonable accommodation to reduce the risk or harm.
- Don't hire a person with disability who is not qualified to perform the essential functions of the job even with a reasonable accommodation.
- Don't assume you have to retain unqualified employee with a disability.
- Don't assume that supervisor's will need special training to learn how to work with people with disabilities.
- Don't assume that reasonable accommodations are expensive. The average cost of a reasonable accommodation is around \$500.
- Don't assume that you don't have any jobs that a person with a disability can do.
- Don't make medical judgments.