



People First Language

COMMUNICATING WITH AND ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

About 50 million Americans report having a disability. Most Americans will experience a disability some time during the course of their lives. People first language is used to speak appropriately and respectfully about an individual with a disability. People first language emphasizes the person first not the disability.

Here are suggestions on how to communicate with and about people with disabilities.

People First Language	Language to Avoid
Person with a disability	The disabled, handicapped
Person without a disability	Normal person, healthy person
Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	Retarded, slow, simple, moronic, defective or retarded, afflicted, special person
Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, person with a mental health or a psychiatric disability	Insane, crazy, psycho, maniac, nuts
Person who is hard of hearing	Hearing impaired, suffers a hearing loss
Person who is deaf	Deaf and dumb, mute
Person who is blind/visually impaired	The blind
Person who has a communication disorder, is unable to speak, or uses a device to speak	Mute, dumb
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
Person with a physical disability, physically disabled	Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic
Person with autism	Autistic
Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder	Epileptic
Person with multiple sclerosis	Afflicted by MS
Person with cerebral palsy	CP victim
Accessible parking or bathrooms	Handicapped parking or bathroom
Person of short stature	Midget
Person with a congenital disability	Birth defect
Person with Down syndrome	Mongoloid

SHARING SUCCESS



A little over 16 years ago I suffered a spinal cord injury that left me with quadriplegia. After living with my parents in their home for five years, I found myself asking these very questions: What did I want out of life? How could I have more control and be more independent? I just wanted and needed more freedom. Then I heard about self-directed services through the local independent living center and made the choice to self-direct my supports and take charge of my life. That decision changed my life.

To find out more, visit www.dmh.mo.gov/dd/spotlight.

