

Disability language do's and do nots

As we go through this module, we will be hitting the high points.

It is not possible in the short time we have to cover all the issues related to disability.

If you have questions, please email me (Doug Towne) at chair-ceo@accessready.org

We begin with People First Language.

Always use positive, people first language that empowers rather than marginalizes people with disabilities.

Never, never, never, use the word handicapped.

It is as offensive to a person with a disability as the N word is to a person of color.

Here are some examples of offensive language and language that should be used.

Offensive Preferred

AIDS victim - Person with AIDS

Birth defect - Person who is disabled since birth, born with a congenital disability.

Cerebral palsied - Person who has cerebral palsy.

Cripple - Person who needs mobility assistance. The last crippled person was Tiny Tim.

Deaf and dumb, deaf mute - Person who is deaf and does not speak.

Deformed - Person who has a physical disability.

Emotionally disturbed - Person with an emotional disability.

Handicapped - Person with a disability

Hunchbacked - Person with a spinal curvature.

Insane, deranged, deviant - Person with a mental illness.

Midget, dwarf - Person who is small in stature.

Mongoloid - Person who has Down Syndrome.

Normal - Non-disabled, able-bodied.

Retarded - Person with an intellectual disability.

Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair - Person who uses a wheelchair.

Think Before You Speak. Avoid using labels.

They are offensive to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Avoid outdated terms like "handicapped" or "crippled."

Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike jargony, euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently abled."

It is okay to use idiomatic expressions when talking to people with disabilities.

For example, saying, "It was good to see you," and "See you later," to a person who is blind is completely acceptable they use these expressions themselves all the time!

People with disabilities are allowed to use all the words in all languages.

Always use people first language when writing about or speaking to people with disabilities.

Avoid showing pity or being patronizing. People with disabilities are not victims.

As a person in a wheelchair said, I am not a wheelchair victim.

Wheelchair victims are the people I run into with my footrest at the supermarket.

When you talk to a person with a disability, do not use pet names, such as "honey".

It is also very disrespectful to pat people with disabilities on the head or talk down to them as though they were children.

Focus on People First.