Acentra
HEALTH

IOD People First Brochure

IOD People First Brochure

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." — **Mark Twain**

Language is powerful!
It reflects, reinforces, and shapes our perceptions of people. Words which reflect positive attitudes and awareness help develop positive communications.

Words about disability have been strongly influenced by legal, medical, and political terms. As a result, our daily language is filled with technical terms which often do not convey our intended social message.

The suggestions made in this brochure are intended as a guide to improve language usage. Most suggestions are just common sense; others are a matter of becoming aware of appropriate, current terminology.

Each of us can
- **Educate**
- **Inform**
- **Politely correct** inaccurate use of language.
- **Encourage** a societal attitude where only positive, accurate words are acceptable in the context of any conversation.

Language should accurately portray an individual or a situation.
It should emphasize the person rather than the disability.

Examples of good and bad language:

Don't say:
Dr. Lee is a crippled professor and is confined to a wheelchair. All of his students are normal.
Say Instead:
Dr. Lee is a professor with a disability. He uses a wheelchair, which enables him to be mobile and independent. All of his students do not have disabilities.

Don't say:
The community is sponsoring a class for the retarded and the mentally ill.
Say instead:
The community is sponsoring a class for people with intellectual disabilities and people with mental illness.

Don't say:
We just hired a deaf mute to work in our office. He talks with his hands.
Say instead:
We just hired a man to work in our office who is deaf and uses sign language.

Some **inaccurate terms** and expressions have negative, derogatory connotations. Avoid using them and discourage use by others.

afflicted
crazy, insane
cripple, crip
deaf and dumb / deaf mute
defective / deformed
handicapped
retard
spastic, spaz
confined to a wheelchair
invalid / wheelchair bound
victim

Some currently **preferred terms** and expressions that reflect a positive attitude:

Person who is …
blind,
deaf, hard of hearing
or visually impaired

Person with …
cerebral palsy
a developmental disability
disabilities
emotional disabilities
intellectual disabilities
a mobility impairment
physical disabilities
paralysis

Person who uses …
a wheelchair

Using the right words can make a dramatic difference!

IOD People First Brochure (continued)

For more information, please contact

**Institute on Disabilities
at Temple University
tel. 215.204.1356 (voice/TTY)
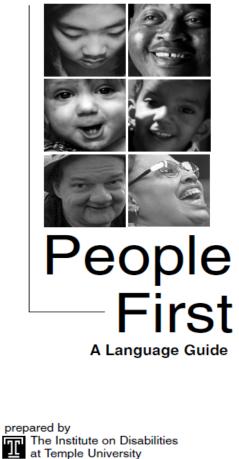fax 215.204.6336
http://disabilities.temple.edu**

This brochure is available in alternate formats, upon request.

Suggested additional resources on People First:

• *People First*, a free pamphlet "… intended to increase awareness of appropriate ways to address and refer to individual with disabilities" published by Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development's Housing and Disability Technical Assistance Program, available at www.newsontap.org or contact Technical Assistance Program
6 South Easton Road
Glenside, PA 19038
tel. 215.576.1150, ext.4

• *Disability Etiquette,* a free booklet published by United Spinal Association "for anyone-with or without a disability who wants to interact more effectively with people with disabilities," available at www.unitedspinal.org or contact
United Spinal Association
Regional Office
5000 Wissahickon Avenue
Box 42938
Philadelphia, PA 19101
tel. 800.807.0190

Note: Parts of this brochure are reprinted with permission from the California Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities.

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People First
A Language Guide

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