

Never use the R-Word

Respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities.

Most people would never call a person with a disability by the R-Word, but far too many people do think it's funny to use it in conversation to describe someone who has made a mistake, or a situation that is ridiculous.

When you use the R-word you never know who is listening, it could be someone with a disability or someone who has a family member with a disability. Even if no harm is intended to people with disabilities, the R-word hurts.



On October 5, 2010 the President signed into law "Rosa's Law" which changes references in many Federal statutes that currently refer to "mental retardation" to refer, instead, to "intellectual disability."

As a result, sections of the North Dakota Century Code were amended to change mental retardation and mentally retarded to intellectual disability.

Mission Statement

The Arc, Upper Valley promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

The Arc Thrift Stores

Your donations of good quality, gently used furniture, clothing and household items are necessary for The Arc to continue its work on behalf of people with disabilities in North Dakota.

The Arc, Upper Valley operates two thrift stores, located in Grand Forks, ND and Devils Lake, ND. We invite you to shop, donate or volunteer.

Shop Donate Volunteer



Locations

2500 DeMers Ave
Grand Forks, ND
701.772.3855

213 5th St NE
Devils Lake ND
701.662.2813

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For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Achieve with us.

People First Language



How to speak or write about people with intellectual disabilities



What is People First Language?

People-first language is a form of linguistic prescriptivism in English, aiming to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities, as such forming an aspect of disability etiquette.

The basic idea is to impose a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second, for example “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people”, in order to emphasize that “they are people first.”

Examples of People First Language

Mike has an intellectual disability.

Not: “Mike is mentally retarded.”

Sarah uses a wheelchair.

Not: “Sarah is wheelchair-bound or Sarah is crippled.”

Joe has Autism.

Not: “Joe is Autistic.”

Why is People First Language Important?

Our words and the meanings we attach to them create attitudes, drive social policies and laws, influence our feelings and decisions and affect people’s daily lives. How we use them makes a difference.

People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Using a diagnosis as a defining characteristic reflects prejudice, and also robs the person of the opportunity to define themselves.

Responsible Communication



Journalists, reporters, public speakers, human service providers, educators and other communicators play a critical role in the changing of attitudes toward disability.

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, words should be chosen with care in order to promote dignity and a positive image.

This is not political correctness but a fundamental responsibility to communicate a straightforward image of people with disabilities.

How to use People First Language effectively

- Make reference to the person first, then the disability. Say “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person.”
- If the disability isn’t germane to the story or conversation, don’t mention it.
- A person is not a condition; therefore, avoid describing a person in such a manner. Don’t present someone as an “epileptic.” Instead, say “a person with epilepsy.”
- Do not sensationalize a disability by use of such terms as “afflicted with,” “victim of,” “suffers from.”
- Do not use generic labels for disability groups such as “the disabled.”
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Use “walks with crutches” rather than “crippled.”
- Do not use condescending euphemisms. Terms like “handycapable” and “physically inconvenienced” are considered condescending.
- Do not imply disease. People with disabilities should never be referred to as patients.
- Speak of people with disabilities as active participants in society. They are!