

USING PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE EFFECTIVELY

Language can build bridges or create barriers. Person-First Language (PFL) seeks to build bridges by promoting dignity and respect through avoidance of labels, and always putting the person first. The intent of PFL is to discuss situations, conditions, and disabilities in a way that respects the individual involved.



By using PFL, we utilize language that is respectful to people. We demonstrate our commitment to being culturally and linguistically appropriate, reducing stigma and judgments, and putting the person ahead of their condition. Keep in mind, individuals may have personal preferences in how they want themselves or their conditions to be addressed. As always, ask questions, listen, and communicate with empathy.

SOME COMMON PHRASES	PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE
She's crippled or she's quadriplegic	She has a physical disability
She's handicapped or she's disabled	She has a disability
Handicapped parking or bathrooms	Accessible parking or bathrooms
He's confined to a wheelchair	He uses a wheelchair/mobility chair
He's brain damaged	He has a brain injury
She's retarded, mentally retarded, slow, moronic, or special	She has a cognitive disability, or she has a developmental disability
He's special ed	He receives special educational services
She's developmentally delayed	She has a developmental delay
He's mute, dumb, or nonverbal	He has a communication disorder, is unable to speak, or uses a device to speak
She is senile or she is demented	She is living with dementia
He is "normal"	He is a person without disabilities
He's a diabetic	He lives with diabetes
She's an addict	She is in recovery from (or challenged by) a substance use disorder
She's crazy, mental, or emotionally disturbed	She is living with mental health issues
He's homeless	He is without adequate housing
He committed suicide	His death was by suicide