People First Language

What is People First Language?

This is the definition provided by SABE:

People First language is a respectful way of speech.
People First language puts the person before the disability.
People First language uses words all people understand.

Here's how the ARC defines it:

People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person. People-First Language is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating, and reporting on disabilities. It eliminates generalizations and stereotypes, by focusing on the person rather than the disability.

I like to think of it this way:

Using respectful language is a conscious choice. We can choose to use derogatory descriptors and fire hateful, angry labels at anyone who is different. Likewise, we can choose to use positive references and highlight a person's attributes. It's that simple.

Significance

In history, words people use today to insult or demean others were universally accepted labels or even medical diagnoses. Sadly, the words are even funny to certain people. These words include:

•**Imbecile** – This French term meaning "without support" was used to describe a person with a physical disability from the 1500s-early 1800s, then became a medical term used to describe intellectual disabilities, and is now used as an insult interchangeably with other horrendous ex-medical terms such as "idiot."

•**Moron** – This invented term was created by psychologist Henry Goddard to describe persons with mild intellectual disabilities. His intent was to replace the term "feeble-minded" which was a medical diagnosis and term used to describe persons with severe intellectual disabilities.

•**Retarded** – From the Latin term, "retardare" meaning to hinder, this word has been used in association with intellectual disabilities since 1895 to replace words such as imbecile, idiot, feeble-minded, and moron. Today, advocates are still fighting to erase this once medical now damaging word from our language.

Clean up your language.

Words can be a taunt, a slur and an insult ... and that's unacceptable. A person with a developmental or intellectual disability is first and foremost a person. Let's use language that respects people as part of our community. Find out more at MPCDD.com
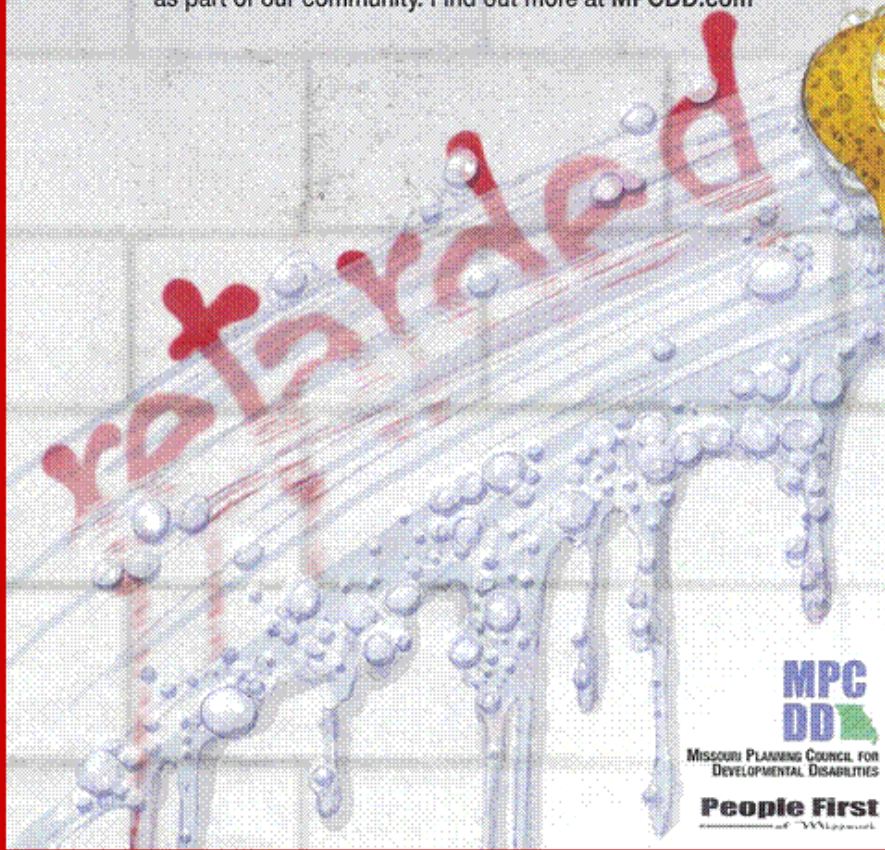
MPC DD
MISSOURI PLANNING COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

People First
of Missouri

Clean Up Your Language!

Say...	Instead of...
Person with a disability	Disabled or handicaped
Person with Cerebral Palsy	CP or spastic
Person who is deaf or hard of hearing	Deaf and dumb
Person with a cognitive or intellectual disability	Mentally retarded, retard
Person with epilepsy or person with a seizure disorder	Epileptic
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair
Person with Down Syndrome	Mongoloid, retard
Person who has a physical disability	Crippled
Non-disabled	Normal, healthy
Accessible parking	Handicapped parking

Let People with Disabilities Live Real Lives!

EQUALLY HUMAN

People with disabilities are not broken.

People with disabilities are not defective.

People with disabilities are not impaired.

People with disabilities are PEOPLE.

People with disabilities need to be our

NEIGHBORS

CO-WORKERS

FRIENDS

It is the mission of Developmental Disabilities Advocates to provide resources to create opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities, in Jefferson County to live full and enriched lives.

Promoting People First Language

- Set an example by addressing a person directly, assuming competence, understanding that a disability is merely one attribute, choosing respectful descriptors, and speaking in the same manner with which you expect others to speak to you.

- Talk with your local government officials and ask them to pass a People First Language resolution for all writing, reporting, and business with or about persons with disabilities.

- Set a workplace policy or ask your employer to adopt a People First Language policy, educate all colleagues and employees, and encourage people in your workplace to only use respectful words when talking about others with or without disabilities.

- Challenge people you know to clean up their language!

Promoting Community Inclusion

- Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities

- A Credo for Support: excerpts, "Do Not hide your uncertainty behind 'professional' distance. Be a person who listens and does not take my struggle away from me by trying to make it all better…Do Not help me, even if it does make you feel good. Ask me if I need your help. Let me show you how you can best assist me…Do Not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration. Respect me, for respect presumes equity."

- Beliefs Necessary to Achieve Community Inclusion

- To ensure INCLUSION, FREEDOM, and RESPECT for all, it's time to embrace People First Language

Above all, pay attention to physical and attitudinal barriers in the community. Spark discussion about them with the people in your life. If you can make one adjustment, take one different step on your path, or consciously choose to speak respectfully to another human, you have positively changed the world.

RESOURCES

- SABE (Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered) website: sabeusa.org

- The ARC for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities website: thearc.org

- The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities website: mnddc.org
  Parallels in Time history of disability

- Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council website: moddcouncil.org
  Clean Up Your Language

- City of Arnold, Commission on Aging and Disabilities, website: arnoldmo.org

- University of Kansas, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, website: rtcil.org
  Guidelines for Writing and Reporting about People with Disabilities

- A Credo for Support by Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift in memory of Tracy Latimer

- Disability is Natural, Kathie Snow, website: disabilityisnatural.com