






# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## **EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, & CULTURALLY SENSITIVE LANGUAGE-PEOPLE W/ DISABILITIES**

*Below are recommendations based on “person-first language” standards. However, the person you are referring to may have a different preference. When possible, ask the person for their preference on how to be referred to. For more information about inclusion for people with disabilities visit the Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities -Unite to Include <https://www.unite2include.org/>*

 <b>Avoid Saying</b>	 <b>Why?</b>	 <b>Say Instead</b>
Disabled, handicapped	Variations of the condition or describing someone as the condition implies a person is an object of medical care. Use person-first language.	A person with a disability
Normal person/healthy person	This implies that people with disabilities are abnormal or unhealthy	A person without a disability
Special or person with special needs	When special is used by programs/services for disabled people it is meant as a ‘positive’ alternative, but it is patronizing for those with disabilities.	A person with an intellectual, cognitive, and/or developmental disability.
Retarded, slow, mongoloid	The terms are demeaning and used as put-downs in most cases.	A person with intellectual, cognitive, and/or developmental disabilities. A person with Down syndrome
Crazy, insane, psycho	The terms are outdated and stigmatizing.	A person with an emotional or behavioral disability, a person with mental illness or psychiatric disability
Hearing-impaired/suffers hearing loss	Use person-first language. Hard of hearing refers to an individual who has a mild-to-moderate hearing loss who may communicate through sign language, spoken language, or both.	A person who is hard of hearing
Mute, dumb	Use person-first language, deaf is used to describe a person's audiological ability to hear.	A person who is deaf

Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	Wheelchairs liberate, not confine, or bind; they are mobility tools from which people transfer to sleep, sit in other chairs, drive cars, stand, etc.	A person who uses a wheelchair
Crippled, lame, deformed spastic	Terms are outdated and offensive.	A person with a physical disability
Epileptic	Epileptic describes people as their disabilities.	A person with epilepsy
Afflicted with, victim of (multiple sclerosis)	Terms reflect negativity, tragedy, helplessness, dependency, and defeat.	A person with (multiple sclerosis)
Handicapped restroom/parking	Handicapped has a negative connotation	Accessible restroom/parking
Midget/Dwarf	Midget was used to describe an unusually short and proportionate person but is considered derogatory. It is recommended to use descriptors when necessary to discuss stature.	A person small in stature, a person with dwarfism
Has overcome their disability/Is courageous	People with disabilities overcome attitudinal, social, architectural, educational, transportation, and employment barriers, not their disability	A person who is successful/productive
Speaking with someone with disabilities as if they were a young child.	This is a microaggression that sends a hidden message that people with disabilities are not mature.	Speak to people with disabilities as you would with anyone else in their age group.

## RESOURCES

Communicating With and About People with Disabilities:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/materials/factsheets/fs-communicating-with-people.html>

Colorado State University. *Inclusive Language Unhandicap Your Language*. Retrieved from Student Disability Center: <https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/disability-awareness/inclusive-language/>

The Division on Disability Resources & Educational Services College of Applied Health Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. <https://www.disability.illinois.edu/>