

Language Guidelines Relating to people with disabilities

An important aspect of

GENERAL GUIDELINES

OUTDATED OR OFFENSIVE:	REASON(S):	CURRENTLY ACCEPTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handicapped • Cripple • The disabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connotes that people with disabilities need charity; • Disabilities do not handicap: attitudes and inaccessibility handicap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • Disabled people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able-bodied • Normal people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When speaking about people without disabilities as compared to people with disabilities; • Implies that the person with a disability isn't normal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-disabled • Person without a disability

SPECIFIC DISABILITIES

OUTDATED OR OFFENSIVE:	REASON(S):	CURRENTLY ACCEPTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf and dumb • Deaf-mute • Hearing Impaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implies mental incapacitation; • Simply because someone is deaf does not mean that they cannot speak; • Negative connotation of "impaired." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf or Hard of Hearing • Non-verbal • Person who does not speak • Has a speech or communication disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confined to a wheelchair • Wheelchair-bound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchairs don't confine; they give people mobility! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a wheelchair • Wheelchair user • Person who uses a wheelchair • Person who has a mobility disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connotes repulsiveness, oddness; • Dehumanizing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple disabilities • Severe disabilities

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insane • Maniac • Psycho 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigmatizing; • Considered offensive; • Reinforces negative stereotypes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral disability • Emotional disability • Person who has a mental illness • Person who has a psychiatric disability • He has bipolar disorder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentally Retarded • Retard • Mentally defective • Slow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigmatizing; • Implies that a person cannot learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive disability • Intellectual disability • Developmental disability • Learning disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroke victim • Stricken by MS • She suffers from epilepsy • Stricken, Afflicted, suffers from, or victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative connotation; • Emotionally charged language adds the unnecessary element of pity to the person's disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who had a stroke • Person who has multiple sclerosis • Person who has epilepsy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth defect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implies there was something wrong with the birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congenital disability • Born with their disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated term; • Considered offensive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person of short stature • Person with dwarfism

Adapted by the Institute for Community Inclusion from material developed by the Mid-Hudson Library System, Outreach Services Department, 103 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (914) 471-6006.