EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

BY KATHIE SNOW; VISIT WWW.DISABILITYISNATURAL.COM TO SEE THE COMPLETE ARTICLE

Remember: a disability descriptor is simply a medical diagnosis; People First Language respectfully puts the person before the disability; and a person with a disability is more like people without disabilities than different!

SAY:
People with disabilities.
He has a cognitive disability/diagnosis.
She has autism (or a diagnosis of...).
He has Down syndrome (or a diagnosis of...).
She has a learning disability (diagnosis).
He has a physical disability (diagnosis).
She’s of short stature/she’s a little person.
He has a mental health condition/diagnosis.
She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair.
He receives special ed services.
She has a developmental delay.
Children without disabilities.
Communicates with her eyes/device/etc.
Customer
Congenital disability
Brain injury
Accessible parking, hotel room, etc.
She needs... or she uses...

INSTEAD OF:
The handicapped or disabled.
He’s mentally retarded.
She’s autistic.
He’s Down’s; a mongoloid.
She’s learning disabled.
He’s a quadriplegic/is crippled.
She’s a dwarf/midget.
He’s emotionally disturbed/mentally ill.
She’s confined to/is wheelchair bound.
He’s in special ed.
She’s developmentally delayed.
Normal or healthy kids.
Is non-verbal.
Client, consumer, recipient, etc.
Birth defect
Brain damaged
Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc.
She has problems with...has special needs.

Keep thinking—there are many other descriptors we need to change!

Excerpted from Kathie’s People First Language article, available at www.disabilityisnatural.com.