

Preferred Terminology

It is important to use language that focuses on people, rather than on disabilities and to shift our thinking to focus on abilities and what people can do. The following preferred words and phrases will help you choose language that is person-first and appropriate.

Instead of	Please use
<p>Afflicted by a disease or condition (e.g. cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.)</p> <p>Victim of/suffers from/ stricken with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.</p>	<p>Person who has _____</p> <p>Person with a disability</p> <p>Person with diverse-ability</p>
Autistic	<p>A person with autism</p> <p>A person who has autism</p> <p>A person who is neurodiverse</p> <p>A person who has neurodiversity</p>
Blind (the), visually impaired (the)	<p>A person who is blind</p> <p>A person with a vision disability</p> <p>A person with vision loss</p> <p>A person with a visual impairment</p> <p>A person with low vision</p>
Brain damaged	<p>A person with a brain injury</p> <p>A person with a head injury</p>
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound	A person who uses a wheelchair
Crazy, insane, lunatic, psycho, mental, mental patient, maniac, neurotic, psychotic, unsound mind, schizophrenic	<p>A person with a mental health disability</p> <p>A person who has depression</p> <p>A person with schizophrenia</p>
Disabled (the), Handicapped (the), cripple, crippled, lame, physically challenged	<p>A person(s) with a disability</p> <p>A person with a mobility impairment</p> <p>A person who uses a walker</p> <p>A person who uses a mobility aid</p>

Deaf (the), hearing impaired (the)	<p>A person who is deaf</p> <p>A person with profound hearing loss who communicates using sign language</p> <p>A person who is hard of hearing (person with hearing loss who communicates primarily by speech.)</p> <p>A person with a hearing loss</p> <p>When referring to the deaf community and their culture (whose preferred mode of communication is sign language) it is acceptable to use "the Deaf"</p>
Hidden disability	Non-visible disability
Learning disabled, learning disordered, the dyslexics	A person with a learning disability or people with learning disabilities
Mentally retarded, idiot, simple, retarded, feeble minded, imbecile	<p>A person with an intellectual disability</p> <p>A person with a developmental disability</p> <p>A person with a cognitive disability</p>
Midget, Dwarf	<p>A person of short stature</p> <p>A person who has a form of dwarfism</p> <p>A little person</p> <p>A person diagnosed with _____</p>
Mongoloid, Mongolism	<p>Person with Down Syndrome (One can use this terminology only when it is directly relevant)</p> <p>A person with an intellectual or developmental disability</p>
Stutterer	A person with a speech impairment or impediment

Adapted from HRCouncil.ca.*

**hrcouncil.ca (2017). Diversity at Work - Supporting Employees with Disabilities - Preferred terminology. Retrieved from <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-disabilities.cfm>