Disability Etiquette & People First Language
What do you see when looking at these pictures?
Part One:
Talking *About* Disabilities
The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.

*Mark Twain*
Why Use Appropriate Language?
Why use appropriate language?

People with disabilities are our largest minority group, most inclusive – all ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations and socioeconomic levels.

Source: A Few Words about Person First Language, Kathy Snow, 2008
Why use appropriate language?

• Shape attitudes and perceptions

• Avoid perpetuating old stereotypes

• Model appropriate language
Do’s & Don’ts: Guidelines to Using Person First Language
What is Person First Language?

• Puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is.

Source: A Few Words about Person First Language, Kathy Snow, 2008
Person First Language: Guidelines

He’s autistic
She’s confined to a wheelchair

He has autism
She uses a wheelchair

The disabled
He’s retarded

People with disabilities
He has an intellectual disability
## Examples of **People First Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• he’s Downs</td>
<td>• he has Down Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• she’s learning disabled</td>
<td>• she has a learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• normal or healthy kids</td>
<td>• typical kids / kids without disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• birth defect</td>
<td>• congenital disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• brain damage</td>
<td>• brain injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• she has a problem with…</td>
<td>• she needs… / she uses…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Talking About Disability*, Tennessee Disability Coalition
Out with the Old...In with the New

Handicapped
Out with the Old...In with the New

Mental Retardation

Not

Intellectual Disability
Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Part Two: Communicating With People With Disabilities
Communicating with People with Disabilities

- Recognize people with disabilities as having skills and talents just as people without disabilities have
Communicating with People with Intellectual Disabilities

Assume people with intellectual disabilities are legally competent. They can often sign documents, vote, consent to medical care and sign contracts.

Adults who have intellectual disabilities are adults. Assume their life experiences are similar to other adults and speak with them from that perspective.
Communicating with People with Physical Disabilities

- Offer assistance before providing assistance

- Sit down at an eye level position whenever possible

Source: Interaction & Etiquette Tips, United Cerebral Palsy (National)
Communicating with People with Visual Disabilities

• Identify yourself by name and introduce anyone else present

• Guide a person by offering the use of your arm (at or about the elbow), walking normally

• Not all people with visual disabilities use Braille

Source: Interaction & Etiquette Tips, United Cerebral Palsy (National)
Communicating with People who are *Deaf* or *Hard of Hearing*

- Make direct eye contact and use natural facial expressions and gestures
- Interpreters should not be included in the conversation

Source: *Interaction & Etiquette Tips*, United Cerebral Palsy (National)
Communicating with People who have *Speech Disabilities*

- Do not make assumptions based on facial expressions or vocal inflections

- Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for a person

- Repeat what you understand, or incorporate the person’s statements into what you are saying

Source: *Interaction & Etiquette Tips*, United Cerebral Palsy (National)
Accommodations for People with Disabilities

- Consider building accessibility
- Offer alternative forms of communication
  - Interpreters
  - TTY / Relay Services
- Consider presenting information in alternative formats
Disability Etiquette: Friendly Reminders

- Presume **competence**

- Try to anticipate specific accommodations a person with a disability might need

- Relax…Keep a sense of humor and a willingness to communicate

Source: *Disability Etiquette*, Tennessee Disability Coalition
Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

800-640-4636 (English, Español, Kurdish)
615-322-8529 (English, Español, Kurdish)

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