



TIP SHEET Person-First Language

Using “person-first” language is an important consideration when talking to or about someone with a special need or disability. A general guideline is to always put the person before the disability (i.e., “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”). Below are some helpful words and phrases to ensure respectful communication by putting the person first:

<u>Say/Write</u>	<u>Instead of</u>
child care	day care
children with typical needs children with special needs	typical-needs children special-needs children
child with a disability	disabled or handicapped child
child with autism	autistic child, the autistic
developmental delay	slow, retarded
emotional disorder, mental illness	mentally ill, insane
person who has a learning disability	learning disabled person
person who has a physical disability	handicapped person, disabled person, crippled
person with cognitive or intellectual disability	retarded
person who has Down syndrome	retarded, Down’s person
person who is without speech or is nonverbal	mute, dumb
person who uses a wheelchair	confined to a wheelchair, crippled
person who has [cerebral palsy, MS, etc.]	person who is afflicted with/suffers from [cerebral palsy, MS, etc.]
person who is deaf/hard of hearing	hearing impaired
a person who has typical needs or is able-bodied	normal person

Language can be used as a powerful tool to facilitate change and bring about new values, attitudes and social integration, embracing disabilities as a unique part of some people, one that we should not be embarrassed about, neglect, feel sorry for or make excuses for, it just is.

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources including. For more tip sheets, visit www.fraser.org.