



# DISABILITY TERMINOLOGY CHART

When referring to people with disabilities, choose words that reflect dignity and respect. Use language that describes the person's disability without defining the individual as his or her disability. The following are just some examples.

## APPROPRIATE - DO USE

- Person without a disability, non-disabled person, sighted person
- Person with a psychosocial disability, or psychiatric impairment or person with mental illness
- Person with intellectual disabilities or persons with learning disabilities
- Person who is blind, person who has low vision; partially sighted person
- Person who is deaf, person who is hard of hearing; a deaf person, a deafblind person
- Person who has multiple sclerosis
- Person with epilepsy
- Person who uses a wheelchair Wheelchair-user
- Person with a physical disability
- Unable to speak, uses synthetic speech
- Short stature, little person
- Seizure
- Lives with/has/experiences a disability/impairment
- Congenital disability, born with an impairment
- Person who had polio, person with post-polio paralysis
- Accessible toilet/parking for persons with disabilities
- Person with a developmental disability, person with mental retardation, person with a developmental delay, person with Down syndrome or person who is brain injured, has traumatic brain injury, is brain damaged, with a closed head injury
- Accessible parking, parking for people with disabilities
- Person with cerebral palsy
- People with emotional disorders, mental illness, mental health disability, psychiatric disability
- Person who has a learning disability
- People living in poverty People living in situations of vulnerability/people living in situations that make them more vulnerable to...
- Low income countries Developing countries
- Use gender neutral language such as referring to a person by their role rather than their gender: e.g. 'A doctor was running the hospital.'
- Language which shows respect for local context and the challenges of individual situations such as: 'X's family had not been told there was a way that they could help X to go to school'

## INAPPROPRIATE - DON'T USE

- Normal person, healthy, whole
- Mental' or 'mad
- Mental handicap or retarded
- The blind; the visually impaired
- Suffers from hearing loss, the deaf, deaf and dumb, deaf-mute
- Afflicted by MS, victim of
- Epileptic
- Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
- Invalid; handicapped person; cripple, crippled, lame
- Dumb, mute
- Dwarf, midget
- Fit
- Suffers from
- Birth defect
- Post-polio, suffered from polio
- Disabled toilet/handicapped parking
- Retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, slow, imbecile, feeble-minded, Down's person, mongoloid
- Handicap parking
- CP victim, spastic
- Crazy, maniac, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho, demented
- Slow learner, retarded
- 'The poor' Vulnerable people/groups (although the UN use the term vulnerable groups)
- Underdeveloped, Third world
- Gender information unless necessary: e.g. 'A woman doctor was running the hospital.'
- Language of blame such as: 'X's family didn't care about her and so didn't send her to school'

