Examples of People First Language

BY KATHIE SNOW

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SAY: INSTEAD OF:

People with disabilities. The handicapped or disabled.

He has a cognitive disability/diagnosis. He's mentally retarded.

She has autism (or a diagnosis of...). She's autistic.

He has Down syndrome (or a diagnosis of...) He's Down's; a mongoloid.

She has a learning disability (diagnosis). She's learning disabled.

He has a physical disability (diagnosis). He's a quadriplegic/is crippled.

She's of short stature/she's a little person. She's a dwarf/midget.

He has a mental health condition/diagnosis. He's emotionally disturbed/mentally ill.

She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair. She's confined to/is wheelchair bound.

He receives special ed services. He's in special ed.

She has a developmental delay. She's developmentally delayed.

Children without disabilities. Normal or healthy kids.

Customer Client, consumer, recipient, etc.

Congenital disability Birth defect

Brain injury Brain damaged

Accessible parking, hotel room, etc. Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc.

She needs . . . or she uses . . . She has a problem with . . .

She has special needs.

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

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