



DISABILITY JUSTICE TASK FORCE: QUICK REFERENCE TOOL FOR SHARED LANGUAGE AT TRIANGLE, INC.

Introduction

Triangle, Inc.’s Disability Justice Task Force (DJTF) was formed to address injustices and inequalities brought about by ableism. One of the foundational initiatives of the DJTF is to produce a shared language manual to ensure the use of language that is inclusive and promotes dignity.

This guide will serve as a reference point for words and/or phrases regarding human services and how we use them at Triangle. It includes preferred and dignifying words to describe people or situations and definitions of common words/phrases. This is a summarized version of the full, extended guide.

Language and Identity

This guide was created in collaboration with the members of the Triangle, Inc.’s Disability Justice Task Force. Language is a living, evolving device of communication, and it is constantly changing. The language in this guide is based on the current understanding of what is appropriate and preferred by the greater Disability community. Different groups within the Disability community may have their preferred language, and each individual person will have the language they are comfortable with and use. Our mission is not to correct the language of a group or individual, but instead to create a guide for staff.

Please respect the preferred language of the people you work with and encounter daily, only correcting if their language is especially grievous or harmful to others based on race, religion, nationality, disability, sexuality, gender, etc.

Person First Language vs. Identity First Language

Person First Language puts the person before the disability.

Examples:

- A person with a disability
- A person with an intellectual disability

Identity First Language puts the person’s Disability Identity first.



Examples:

- A disabled person
- An autistic person

Which one should I use?

At first, you should use whatever language you feel most comfortable using. Both Person First and Identity First Language are acceptable. Once you know how a person self-identifies, you should use the language they use to self-identify.

Disability Language: Use This, Not That

Topic	Terms to Use 	Terms to NOT Use 	Reason
Disabilities in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Disabled Person with a Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special needs Differently abled Handicapped 	The Disability Community has stated that the correct terms to use when referring to the community are Disabled or Disability. Other terms were created by those without disabilities and these terms perpetuate ableism.
Terms for younger participants at Triangle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Young Adults Teens Students Transition-Aged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kids Children 	Triangle, Inc. does not currently provide services for children or kids. Triangle provides services for teenagers and older. It is important that we do not refer to the young people served as children/kids due to a long history of ableism that infantilizes people with disabilities.
Physical Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Disability Physically Disabled Specific Disability (ie. Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida) Wheelchair user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheelchair bound Crippled Handicapped 	Many terms are rooted in an oppressive history. It is important that you are using terms that do not perpetuate negative undertones of disability.
People without Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People without disabilities Nondisabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal Able-bodied Typical 	These terms can imply that there is only one way to be “normal” or “able-bodied,” and that anyone who deviates from this norm is somehow inferior, and can be hurtful and alienating to people with disabilities
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intellectual Disability Developmental Disability Specific Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentally challenged Special needs Mentally retarded 	These terms are seen as derogatory and outdated. They are associated with infantilizing and paternalistic of people with disabilities.
Slang words that are rooted in ableism	You should replace the words listed with a term that better states what you are trying to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crazy Lame Manic 	These words have demoralizing historical associations for people physically disabled, or neurodivergent.
Referring to an individual’s abilities or support needs	Share specific support needs, learning styles, accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High functioning Low functioning 	These terms are seen as stigmatizing, inaccurate and subjective. They are not used by the Autistic Community.