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| **Person First Language:** It’s About Respect |

When you address an individual with a disability, you must refer to the person first and their disability second, if it is even necessary to mention it. A person is not defined by their disability, it is simply a **part** of who they are. You be conscientious about how you refer to the person in relation to the disability. If you are curious about how someone prefers to be referred to, just ask them!

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|  Try This... |  ...Not This |
| Kevin, who uses a wheelchair | Kevin, who is wheelchair bound |
| Juan, who has a cognitive disability | Juan, who is retarded |
| Mila, who has autism | Mila, who is autistic |
| Emily was born with a congenital disability | Emily has birth defects |
| There’s the accessible restroom | There’s the handicapped restroom |
| Chase receives special education services | Chase is a special education student |
| Abby has a learning disability | Abby is learning disabled |
| A person with Down’s Syndrome | A Down’s person |
| They are a little person | They are a midget |
| Ryan’s non-disabled peers | Ryan’s normal/healthy peers |
| Mia uses crutches | Mia is crippled |

Notice that this is not a comprehensive list. Therefore, you need to identify what makes a comment respectful and apply it when referring to people with disabilities. Comments that are respectful always emphasize ability, not limitations and identify the individual as a person, above all other things.

*“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.” – Mark Twain*