

TUSCARAWAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

APPENDIX 9 -  
COMMUNICATING WITH  
AND ABOUT INDIVIDUALS  
WITH ACCESS AND  
FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION

This appendix includes provides guidelines for communicating with and about individuals with access and functional needs.

## ODH PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE PLAN

People-first language is the practice of literally putting “people” ahead of their needs. When communicating in plans about a person/people with access and functional needs:

1. Begin with a word that affirms human dignity, e.g. person, individual, population, etc.;
2. Follow with a brief statement that respectfully captures the access and functional need (CMIST<sup>1</sup>).
  - a. Current terms for selected access and functional needs are listed in the “SAY THIS...” column; they are contrasted with terms that are no longer recommended for use in plans.

SAY THIS...	NOT THAT...
Access and functional needs	Special needs
Access and functional need, Disability	Handicap
Accessible	Handicap accessible
Accessible parking/bathroom	Handicap parking/bathroom
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, Wheelchair-bound
Disability placard	Handicap sticker
Person with a disability	Disabled person, The disabled
Person without a disability	Normal person, Healthy person
Individual who is deaf, Individuals with hearing loss	Deaf person, The deaf
Person with a visual impairment, People who are blind	Blind person, The blind
Person with a congenital disability	Person with a birth defect
Intellectual/Cognitive/Developmental disability <sup>2</sup>	Mentally retarded, Mentally disabled
Person with an intellectual/cognitive/developmental disability <sup>2</sup>	Mentally retarded person, Mentally disabled person
Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, Person with a mental health or a psychiatric disability	Mentally ill person, The mentally ill
Person who has a communication disorder, is unable/unwilling to speak, or uses a device to speak	Mute, Dumb
Person with limited English fluency/comprehension	Non(native)-English speaker
Person with limited/low literacy	Illiterate person, The illiterate
Person experiencing homelessness	Homeless person, The homeless

<sup>1</sup> CMIST: Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support/Services/Self-Determination, and Transportation

<sup>2</sup> The developmental disability definition requires substantial functional limitations in three or more areas of major life activity. The intellectual disability definition requires significant limitations in one area of adaptive behavior. Definitions of cognitive disability vary but are generally broad and include difficulties with mental tasks or processing.

Person living in poverty	Poor person, The poor
Person with a drug addiction	Drug addict
Person who is incarcerated	Prisoner
Person with [DISEASE/CONDITION]	Afflicted by [DISEASE], Victim of [CONDITION], Adjective based on [DISEASE/CONDITION], e.g. Autistic
Person who is successful, productive	Has overcome his/her disability, is courageous

## REFERENCES

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