

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

People First Language



THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

Federal civil rights law

- Obligates state and local governments to provide effective communications.
- Ensure that communications with individuals with hearing, vision, or speech impairments are as effective as communications with others.
- Examples: providing a sign language interpreter for someone who is deaf, an assistive listening device for someone who is hard of hearing, materials in alternate format for someone who is blind, has low vision, or has a learning disability.
- It is each County department's responsibility to comply.



People with disabilities need a mechanism by which they can request accessible communications or other types of accommodations as well as materials in alternate format. In order to provide this mechanism, all notices of public meetings and publications to be disseminated to the general public shall contain the following statement:


UNIVERSAL ACCESS STATEMENT

County Procedure No. 579:

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any County-sponsored program or meeting, please contact _____ five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service.)

[THE ABOVE BLANK IS TO BE FILLED IN WITH THE NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS, OF THE RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTAL PERSON. IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS A TTY AND WISHES TO CONTINUE USING IT, IT MAY INCLUDE THE TTY NUMBER AS WELL, BUT THE TTY NUMBER MUST BE IN ADDITION TO THE EMAIL ADDRESS, AND NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR IT.]



When meeting notices do not contain the access statement or are not sent out sufficiently in advance of the meeting for addressing accommodations requests, sign language interpreters and materials in accessible format *must be provided* by the department unless the department knows that no persons needing such accommodations will be attending.

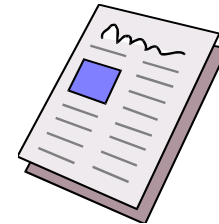
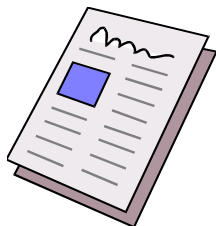
When to use the universal statement

- When having a public meeting-
“who” “what” “where”

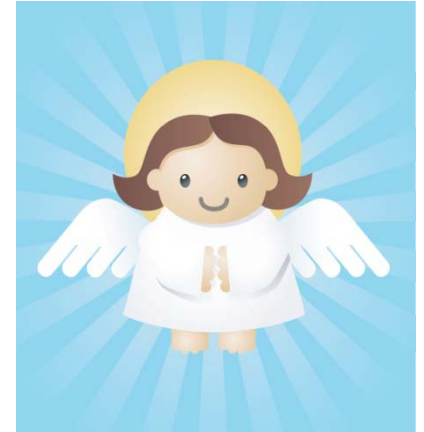


- When giving out general information

- Pamphlets and newsletters



DEPARTMENTAL ADA COORDINATORS



- Get to know your ADA Coordinator.
- He or she will communicate with the person who is making the request to better understand what service is required for effective communication.
- ADA Coordinators are responsible for obtaining a sign language interpreter or materials in alternate format. They may have to speak with the requester to gain further information.

“People First” Language

And Depictions of People with Disabilities



One of the most serious consequences . . . is the dehumanizing negative evaluations we attach to people when they have been plastered with a damning label. Because we have slapped a label on them, we assume we have identified the essence of this person semantically branded . . . Thomas Merton (1948) coined the term "self-fulfilling prophecy" which has become the focus of numerous studies . . . The power of labels to stigmatize, create self-fulfilling prophecies and reduce or enhance self-images is awesome . . . Until we learn to appreciate the power of language and the importance of using it responsibly, we will continue to produce negative social consequences for those victimized by dangerous language habits.

-- J. Dan Rothwell, *Telling It Like It Isn't: Language Misuse and Malpractice/What We Can Do About It*

What is People-First Language?

- People-first language (PFL) is a way of speaking and referring to people with disabilities that respects them as human beings, rather than dehumanizes them.
- It emphasizes the person first and their disability second.
- It also emphasizes the use of language that is objective rather than words that are subjective or have pejorative connotations.

Why is PFL Important?

- The order of the words to describe someone can convey priority or importance.
- PFL represents more respectful, accurate ways of communicating. People with disabilities are not their diagnoses or disabilities; they are people, first.
- And words can be loaded down with a stigma, as with the word “handicapped.” The word’s origin is in the phrase “hand in cap,” which is actually derived from a game of chance but sometimes mistakenly believed to involve the image of a beggar.

First Person Language

- A person who is blind
- A person who uses a wheelchair
- A person with cerebral palsy

Not a person in a wheelchair or wheelchair bound

Not afflicted with, suffers from, victim of, or crippled by



People conversing via American Sign Language.

Since the late 1980s, PFL has gained considerable acceptance amongst people with disabilities as well as professionals working with them or people otherwise interested in the topic.

EXAMPLES

YES

- people with disabilities
- people with AIDS
- Kate has (a diagnosis of) autism.
- Bob has a mobility disability or impairment.
- Nora uses a wheelchair/is a wheelchair user.
- Tom has a mental health condition.
- children without disabilities
- Tonya has a developmental disability.
- Pedro has multiple sclerosis.

NO

- the handicapped or disabled
- AIDS victims/AIDS patients
- Kate is autistic.
- Bob is a quadriplegic/cripple.
- Nora is confined to a wheelchair/is wheelchair bound.
- Tom is emotionally disturbed/mentally ill/crazy.
- normal/healthy/typical children
- Tonya is retarded.
- Pedro is stricken/afflicted with MS; is an MS victim.

Real Examples from The Fourth Estate

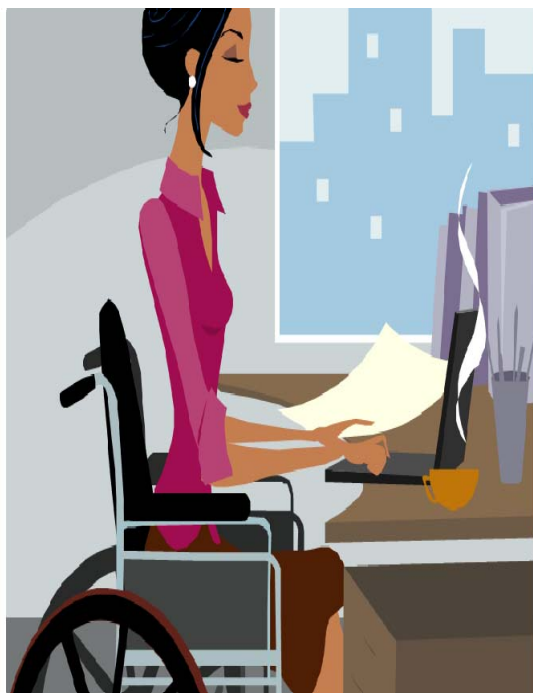
- “Only in the context of such desperate circumstances could salvation assume the form of a **deformed, wheelchair-bound**, almost surely impotent husband 25 years (her) senior.” -- New York Times Sunday Book Review, 9/1/09
- “One company...has developed a white blood-cell therapy that spurs healing of chronic wounds, like those occurring in diabetics, ... and among **the bedridden and wheelchair-bound.**” --NY Times, 5/20/09
- “There are miles of special sidewalk guides for **the blind**, but it's common to see them blocked by parked bikes and carts.” – TIME Magazine on-line, 9/8/08

“...but (her) ailments mirror those of people **suffering from spina bifida.**” – The Chicago Tribune, 12/4/09

“After all, we’ve all been brought up not to mock **the afflicted.**” – The London Times Online, 11/24/09

“A potentially life-saving experience - just two drops can help stop a child being **crippled by polio.**” -- BBC News Online, 11/22/09

“Her husband...works with **emotionally disturbed** children.” Charleston Post and Courier, 11/19/09



Do not focus on a disability unless it is crucial to a story



Focus on the issues that affect the quality of life of people with disabilities: accessible transportation or housing, employment....

Tear – jerking story doesn't always show a positive and competent image



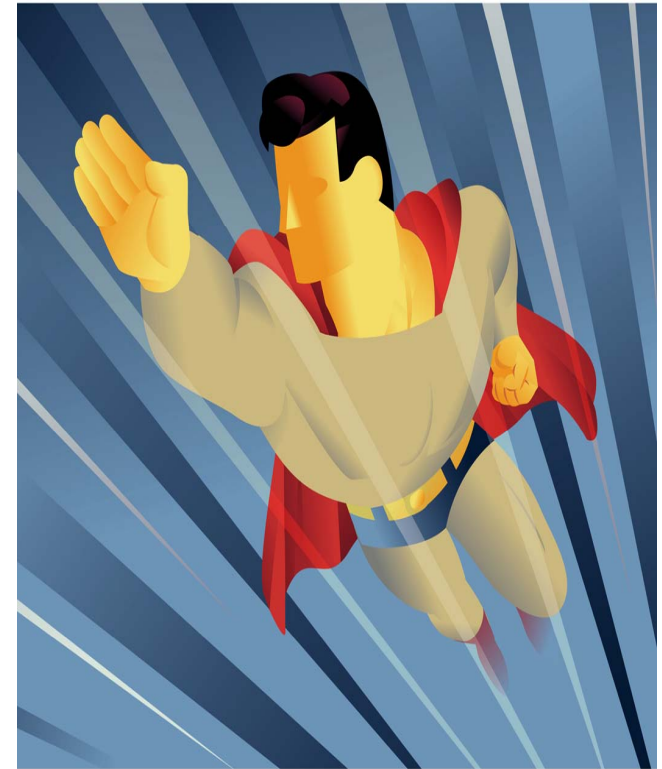
**Bypass condescending
euphemisms.**

**Avoid terms such
handicapable,
differently-abled,
special, and
challenged. They
come off as
cutesy and
trivializing, and
reinforce the idea
that people
cannot deal
honestly with
their disabilities.**

Even though the public might admire super achievers , portraying people with disabilities as superstars raise a false expectation that all people with disabilities should achieve at that level

Being brave or courageous... they are only coping with what they have to

Their disability might have made it more difficult for them to achieve a goal but they are not “special” because they worked hard to overcome any limitations



Disability is a natural part of the human condition.

- Typically, people with disabilities would rather be known for the things that reflect on their character or their essence as human beings.
- They would rather be known as a devoted parent or a successful attorney or an amateur gourmet chef rather than as someone with a brace on their leg or someone who wears hearing aids.
- A person's disability is a part of their life, but it needn't be the predominant thing.
- Would we like to always be known as...the short one, the tall one, the one with one blue and one brown eye?????



Language can be empowering.

When we adopt new ways of thinking and talking about people with disabilities, we'll not only exert a positive influence on *their lives*, but on *our society* as a whole. We've seen the power of language on other groups; it is unacceptable to use ethnic slurs and other harmful descriptors.

-- Kathie Snow

Have a question?

Contact the Office of ADA Coordination:

phone: 305-375-3566

email: adaoffice@miamidade.gov

Sign language contract:

Accessible Communication for the Deaf:

954-578-3081

lisa@acdterps.com

CODA LINK:

954-423-6893

codalink@comcast.net

THANK YOU

