

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES**



POLICY	
Department on Disability Services	Subject: People First Respectful Language
Responsible Program or Office: Department on Disability Services	Policy Number: 2014-DDS-POL004
Date of Approval by the Director: August 27, 2014	Number of Pages: 3
Effective Date: August 27, 2014	Expiration Date, if Any: N/A
Supersedes Policy (Dated): N/A	
Cross References, Related Policies and Procedures, and Related Documents: Put People First – Words Matter!; Imposition of Sanctions policy and procedures.	

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish People First Respectful Language as the means of all written and oral communication when working with and referring to people with disabilities who receive services from the Department on Disability Services (“DDS” or “Agency”), consistent with the District of Columbia People First Respectful Language Modernization Amendment Act of 2012 which “remove[s] offensive, dated language referring to persons with disabilities and replace[s] it with respectful language that puts people first.”

2. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all DDS employees, subcontractors, providers/vendors, consultants, volunteers, and governmental agencies that provide services and supports on behalf of people with disabilities receiving services and/or supports as part of the Developmental Disabilities Administration (“DDA”) or District of Columbia Rehabilitation Services Administration (“DCRSA”) service delivery system, funded by DDS or the Department of Health Care Finance (“DHCF”).

3. AUTHORITY

The authority for this policy is established in DDS as set forth in D.C. Law 16-264, the “Department on Disability Services Establishment Act of 2006,” effective March 14, 2007 (D.C. Code § 7-761.01 *et seq.*).

4. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of DDS to comply with the Person First Respectful Language Modernization Amendment Act of 2012.
- B. It is the policy of DDS to require that all DDS employees, subcontractors, providers/vendors, consultants, volunteers, and governmental agencies that provide services and supports on behalf of people with disabilities receiving services and/or supports as part of the DDA or DCRSA service delivery system, funded by DDS or DHCF, use People First Respectful language in all official written and verbal communications.

5. RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for this policy is vested in the Director, Department on Disability Services. Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the DDS Deputy Director for DDA and the DDS Deputy Director for DCRSA.

6. STANDARDS

- A. Effective immediately; all new, revised, or republished forms, documents, rules, policies, procedures, publications, internet publications, and signage as well as all official verbal communication shall:
 - i. Avoid the use of the “R” word, except where specifically required by law. Instead use the term intellectual disability. As examples:
 - John has an intellectual disability;
 - Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional or QIDP; and
 - Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or ICF/IID.
 - ii. Use People First language, putting the person before his or her disability, e.g., “person with a disability” rather than “disabled” or “handicapped.”

- B. Within 60 days of the effective date of this policy; all current policies, procedures, documents, forms, publications, and signage shall avoid the use of the R word and use People First language. (See the standards at 6A (i) and (ii), above.)
- C. To fully embrace the spirit of People First Respectful Language, DDS recommends following the guidance issued by Project ACTION! and Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities, *Put People First – Words Matter!* (attached).
- D. DDS may sanction providers who do not comply with this policy and related guidance in accordance with the DDS Imposition of Sanctions policy and related procedures.



Laura L. Nuss, Director



Approval Date

Attachments

Put People First – Words Matter!