

## Language Tips

Some people view persons with access needs as individuals to be pitied, feared, or ignored. These attitudes may arise from discomfort with individuals who are perceived to be different or simply from a lack of information. Listed below are some suggestions on how to relate and communicate with and about people with access needs.

Positive language empowers. When writing or speaking about people with access needs, it is important to put the person first. Group designations such as "the blind," "the handicapped" or "the disabled" are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people. There are some examples of positive and negative phrases listed below. Note that the positive phrases put the person first.

+ Positive Phrases

- Negative Phrases

+person who uses a wheelchair

-confined or restricted to a wheelchair

+ person who is blind,

- the blind

+person with a disability

-the disabled, handicapped

+person who has multiple sclerosis

-afflicted by MS

+person with cerebral palsy

-CP victim

+person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder

-epileptic

+person who has muscular dystrophy

-stricken by MD, physically disabled, crippled, lame, deformed

+person without a disability

-normal person (implies that the person with a disability isn't normal)

+unable to speak, uses synthetic speech

-dumb, mute

+seizure

-fit

+successful, productive

-has overcome his/her disability; courageous (when it implies the person has courage because of having a disability)

+person with psychiatric disability

-crazy, nuts

+person who no longer lives in an institution

-the de-institutionalized

+says she/he has a disability

-admits she has a disability