

# Mental Health Policies & Procedures: A Manager's Toolkit

## Mental Health & Disabilities: Preferred Terminology

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Source: <http://www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-disabilities.cfm>

It is important to use language that focuses on people, rather than on disabilities, and to shift our thinking to focus on abilities and what people can do. The following preferred words and phrases will help you choose language that is neither demeaning nor hurtful.

### INSTEAD OF...

Afflicted by a disease or condition  
(e.g. cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.)  
Victim of/suffers from/ stricken with cerebral palsy,  
multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.

Aged (the)  
Elderly (the)

Autistic

Birth defect, congenital defect, deformity

Blind (the), visually impaired (the)

Brain damaged

Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound

Crazy, insane, lunatic, psycho, mental, mental patient, maniac,  
neurotic, psychotic, unsound mind, schizophrenic

Cripple, crippled, lame

### PLEASE USE...

Person who has \_\_\_\_\_  
Person with a disability

Seniors, Older adults

A person with autism  
A person who has autism

A person who has a congenital disability  
A person with a disability since birth

A person who is blind  
A person with a vision disability  
A person with vision loss  
A person with a visual impairment  
A person with low vision

A person with a brain injury  
A person with a head injury

A person who uses a wheelchair

A person with a mental health disability  
A person who has depression  
A person with schizophrenia

A person with a disability  
A person with a mobility impairment  
A person who uses a walker  
A person who uses a mobility aid  
A person with arthritis

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|---|--|
| Deaf (the), hearing impaired (the)                                  | A person who is deaf<br>A person with profound hearing loss who communicates using sign language<br>A person who is hard of hearing (person with hearing loss who communicates primarily by speech.)<br>A person with a hearing loss |
|   | When referring to the deaf community and their culture (whose preferred mode of communication is sign language) it is acceptable to use "the Deaf"   |
| Deaf and dumb, deaf mute  | A person who is deaf without speech  |
| Deaf-Blind (the)  | Person who is deaf-blind (person who has any combination of visual and auditory impairments)   |
| Invalid   | A person with a disability   |
| Disabled (the)<br>Handicapped (the)<br>Physically Challenged (the)  | People with disabilities<br>The term handicapped may be used when referring to an environmental or attitudinal barrier as in "a person who is handicapped by a set of stairs leading to the entrance"                                |
| Fits, spells, attacks   | Seizures   |
| Hidden disability   | Non-visible disability   |
| Learning disabled, learning disordered, the dyslexics               | A person with a learning disability or people with learning disabilities   |
| Mentally retarded, idiot, simple, retarded, feeble minded, imbecile | A person with an intellectual disability<br>A person with a developmental disability   |
| Midget, Dwarf   | A person of short stature<br>A person who has a form of dwarfism<br>A little person  |
| Mongoloid, Mongolism  | A person diagnosed with _____<br>Person with Down Syndrome (One can use this terminology only when it is directly relevant)  |

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|-----------|--|
| Normal    | Person who is not disabled<br>Person who is able bodied<br>Specifically, a person who is sighted, a hearing person, a person who is ambulatory |
| Patient   | Person with a disability<br>(The word patient may be used when referring to a relationship between and medical professional and a client)      |
| Spastic   | Person who has muscle spasms   |
| Stutterer | A person with a speech impairment or impediment  |