Disability language guide

At Anabaptist Disabilities Network, we believe that God made each person a unique and wonderful being and that is at the forefront when we write. This guide reflects our values. We strive to express ourselves in a way that always puts the person first. We try to use inclusive and respectful language. Whenever possible, our preference in language reflects the preference of those who are themselves disabled. We understand that language usage is both varied and fluid, and so we respect that individuals or communities may differ in their preference.

Some basic guidelines:

- In general, we prefer person-first language. Person-first language stresses the importance of putting the individual first. For example, "a person who has a disability" instead of "a disabled person."
- There are some exceptions to "person-first" language. In general, Deaf, blind, or autistic people and communities prefer "identity-first" language. For example, "an autistic person" instead of "a person with autism."
- There is no need to include information about impairment or disability unless it pertains to the article or story.
- When in doubt, individuals should be asked how they want to be described. Don't assume!
- Everyone prefers to be called by their name when possible.

Preferred language	Language that is not preferred or offensive
Disabled	Differently-abled, special, gifted
Physically disabled	Handicapped, handicapable, crippled
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Intellectually disabled	Retarded, sick, dumb
Able-bodied/Non-disabled	Normal, person without a disability
Person with a drug/alcohol addiction, drug/alcohol user	Addict, junkie
Person with a brain injury	Brain-damaged, crazy, psychotic
Person with a mental illness	Crazy, psychotic
Legally blind/has low vision/loss of sight	Blind (for those with some sight), visually impaired
Blind person, is blind	Person with vision loss, visually impaired
Person who is hard of hearing, has hearing loss, has hearing impairment (person-first)*	Deaf, deaf, is hearing impaired*
Deaf, is Deaf, Deaf person (identity-first) **	Has hearing loss, is hearing impaired**
Functional needs	Special needs
Non-verbal	Inability to speak
They have/live with …	They suffer/are stricken with …
Little person	Midget, vertically-challenged
Autistic person, is autistic***	Person with autism, person who has autism*

*for people who have hearing loss but use assistive devices to be a part of hearing culture
**for people who have no hearing or moderate to profound hearing loss, identify with Deaf culture, and use Deaf language (ASL) – note the use of capital "D" in "Deaf"
***Some caregivers prefer person-first language, "person with autism, person who has autism."

Sources:

https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj1401/f/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf
http://nwadacenter.org/factsheet/respectful-interactions-disability-language-and-etiquette
https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing
https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/disability