

Opportunity Partners

A Language Guide for Employees



In 2016, we underwent an extensive survey of persons served, staff and families to determine what terminology is preferred when referring to the people we serve.

Our results concluded that we should use person-first language with preferred terminology to include:

- » *People served*
- » *Person or persons served*

Note: it is important to talk about “what we do” and consider the context or activity when using language to refer to individuals. Avoid labels – even the label of “people/person served” – if it isn’t necessary. Use respectful language always.

Acceptable use examples:

- *Mary is a person served at Opportunity Partners.*
- *OP helped Chris land a job at Target.*
- *This is John, a participant in the Brain Injury (BI) program.*
- *This is Ashley, my co-worker.*
- *This is Jim, he lives at hoMEbase and participates in classes.*

Person-first language

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, always use person-first language – this puts the person before the disability.

Examples:

- *He has Autism Spectrum Disorder (not “autistic man.”)*
- *She uses a wheelchair (not “the wheelchair-bound woman”)*
- *He has a disability (not “the disabled, or the disabled man”)*