

# National Service Inclusion Project: Fact Sheet

## Use of Proper Language and Basic Disability Etiquette

### Language

Using proper language is not simply being politically correct. There are reasons why we avoid using certain terms. For example:

- Why should we avoid the term "cripple?"
  - Cripple is derived from the old German term 'kripple,' which means "to be without power," which is completely untrue
- Why should we not use the term "handicapped?"

Handicapped implies having an imposed disadvantage.

  - Many individuals with disabilities were not allowed to work in Europe, and they were forced to beg in the streets by holding their 'cap in hand.'
- Why should we avoid the term "Wheelchair-bound?"

A wheelchair is a means of mobility and freedom, not something that restricts anyone.

**The key to language is very basic: Always use person-first language, as people with disabilities are human first and disability second.**

- A person who is blind as opposed a blind person
- An individual with epilepsy instead of an epileptic
- A boy who has Down's syndrome, not a retarded child

### Etiquette

An individual with disability is a human being. It's as simple as that.

**Treat adults as adults:** Treat everyone the way you'd want people to treat you.

**It is ok to offer assistance.** Here are some tips:

- Always ask first
- Understand the clarified assistance
- Realize that different people have different preferences
- Some people don't want or need help... accept "no" to your offer

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**Make a mistake?** Apologize, correct the error, learn and move on.

**RELAX!** It is ok to say to a person who is blind, "I'll see you later," or asking a person in a wheelchair to go for a walk. It's part of our everyday language and not always taken literally.