

Over the last decade, the way in which we refer to people with disabilities has changed. Many words and phrases that were traditionally used are now considered offensive to people with disabilities. Applications to the Quality of Life Grants program should use “disability-friendly” or “people-first language.” Here are some tips for how to refer to disability in your application, adapted from the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at University of Kansas *Guidelines for Reporting and Writing About People With Disabilities*.

Put People First, Not Their Disability

- Use phrases such as *woman with a spinal cord injury*, *a child who has a physical disability*, or *person with a disability*. This puts the focus on the individual, not the condition or cause of their disability.
- Don't label people as a disability. For example, don't use the phrase *Maria is a quad*. Write *Maria is a young woman with quadriplegia*.
- Don't refer to groups as a disability. Use *people with cystic fibrosis* or *people who have cancer*.
- Use the word *accessible* to refer to accommodations for people who have a disability. For example, replace *disabled* or *handicapped parking space* or *playground* with *accessible parking space* or *playground*.

Avoid Negative Labeling and Condescending Euphemisms

- Saying *afflicted with*, *crippled with*, *victim of* or *suffers from* devalues individuals with disabilities by portraying them as helpless objects of pity and charity. These types of words or phrases should not be used in grant applications.
- Don't use emotional descriptors such as *unfortunate* or *pitiful*. Use phrases such as *individual with AIDS* instead of *a person who suffers from AIDS*.
- Don't use euphemisms to describe disabilities. Terms such as *handicapable*, *differently-abled*, *special*, and *challenged* reinforce the idea that people cannot deal honestly with their disabilities.

Don't Imply Disease When Discussing Disabilities

- Don't refer to individuals with disabilities as *patients* or *cases* unless their relationship with their doctor is under discussion, or if they are referenced in the context of a hospital or clinical setting.

Emphasize Abilities, Not Limitations

For example, say *our clients use a wheelchair* instead of *are confined to wheelchairs* or *wheelchair-bound*.

You can access the document from which this Guide was adapted, as well as other valuable resources regarding disability, at the web site of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas. <http://www.rtcil.org/products> (see “Bestsellers” or “Media”)