

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

Policy No: II.A.PO.003
Subject: Respectful Language
Section: General Administration

Issue Date: January 15, 2010
Effective Date: Upon release
Approved: /s/Peter H. O'Meara

A. Policy Statement

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is committed to promoting the respect and dignity of individuals who receive services from the department or its providers. This policy concerns the use of respectful or "person first" language when referring to individuals with disabilities by department employees and all persons licensed, funded or contracted by the Department of Developmental Services. As standards of acceptable conduct have evolved, individuals who receive supports and services from DDS and its provider network have found the use of disrespectful or "non-person first" language to be offensive and a barrier to full integration into the community. DDS encourages its providers to use respectful language when referring to individuals receiving supports and services from the department. DDS staff is expected to use respectful and "person first" language at all times.

As part of the department's efforts to promote respectful language and to honor the wishes of the people we serve, departmental communications will use the term "intellectual disability" to replace the term "mental retardation." However, no changes in terminology should be made that might negatively impact eligibility for services. The use of "intellectual disability" by the Department of Developmental Services does not alter the department's eligibility criteria for supports and services as defined in section 1-1g of the Connecticut General Statutes. The term "mental retardation" may still be used in certain communications when clinically or legally necessary and appropriate to use the term such as when linked to the federal Medicaid program or referring to the specific medical diagnosis.

B. Applicability

This policy shall apply prospectively to all DDS-related written and verbal communications.

All new and revised communications developed and distributed by DDS staff referring to persons with disabilities shall:

1. Refer to individuals with disabilities as a person first; i.e., persons with disabilities, a woman who has developmental disabilities, an individual with autism, a person who has epilepsy or a child with intellectual disabilities.
2. Avoid language that:
 - a. implies the person as a whole is disabled such as "the mentally retarded" or "the learning disabled", or
 - b. equates a person with a medical condition, such as "epileptics", "autistics" or "quadriplegics", or
 - c. refers to adults with disabilities as children such as "kids", "girls" or "boys".

C. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the term “communications” includes, but is not limited to; 1. printed or web-based publications, 2. contracts, 3. training and education materials, 4. official meeting documents, 5. documents sent to the legislature, other state agencies, or the executive or judicial branches, 6. letters and memorandums, 7. department policies and procedures, and 8. verbal conversations.