## **Procedure No:** I.F.PR.010 **Issue Date:** January 15, 2010

#### **Subject: Respectful and Person-First Language** **Effective Date:** Upon release

# Section: Human Rights and Legal Responsibilities Revised: December 7, 2017

#  Approved:/s/Jordan A. Scheff/LT

### Policy Statement

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is committed to promoting the respect and dignity of all persons who have an intellectual disability. The department has worked to promote the use of respectful and person-first language in all its communications and has encouraged other state agencies, DDS providers, the news media, and individuals and their families to use respectful language in all their communications. Specifically, this procedure concerns the use of respectful and person-first language by department employees and by all persons licensed, funded or contracted by the Department of Developmental Services. DDS expects its employees and its qualified providers’ employees to use respectful and person-first language in all communications when referring to individuals eligible for, or receiving funding or services from, the department.

The department’s ongoing efforts to promote respectful and person-first language, which began prior to the department’s name change in 2007, have focused on what the individuals DDS supports wish to be called and what terms they prefer to be used in department communications. DDS encourages everyone to have conversations with persons who have a disability so as to understand the importance of the use of appropriate, the respectful language in all forms of communication. As standards of respectful language evolve, the department, in collaboration with the individuals DDS supports and DDS self-advocates, will continue to monitor and update its use of respectful terms to promote equality, inclusion and full integration of persons who have a disability into the community.

1. **Purpose**

### The purpose of this procedure is to establish standards and expectations for the use of respectful and person-first language in all department and qualified provider communications. It also is expected that all DDS employees and qualified provider staff use respectful language in their workday conversations when referring to persons who have a disability.

# B. Applicability

All DDS employees and all employees of DDS qualified providers shall use respectful and person-first language when referring to persons who have intellectual disability in all new and revised DDS-related written communications and all verbal communications.

# C. Definitions

For the purpose of this procedure, 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.

##### Implementation

All new and revised DDS-related written and verbal communications developed and distributed by DDS or qualified provider staff that refer to persons who have intellectual disability shall:

1. Reference a disability only when it is relevant to the matter at hand and only when necessary. If in doubt, call a person who has a disability by his or her given name.
2. Refer to the individual’s disability only when it is related or relevant to what is being discussed.
3. Refer to individuals with an intellectual disability as a person first; (i.e., a person with intellectual disability, the person who has a disability).
4. Avoid language that:
5. refers to individuals with intellectual disability as “consumers” or “clients”;
6. implies the person as a whole is disabled such as “the intellectually disabled”;
7. equates a person with a medical condition, such as “epileptics”; or
8. refers to adults with a disability as children such as “kids”, “girls” or “boys”.
9. Use the term “accessible” rather than “disabled” or “handicapped” when referring to parking or building accessibility.

###### References

None

1. **Attachments**

I.F.PR.010 Attachment A [DDS Self Advocate Coordinator’s Disability Awareness/People First Language Pledge](http://www.dds.ct.gov/advocatescorner/cwp/view.asp?a=4033&Q=561448)