

Appropriate Terminology

Accessible	Any site, building, facility, or portion thereof that is approachable, functional and can be used by people with disabilities independently, safely and with dignity.
ADA	On July 26, 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law. The law prohibits discrimination against the disabled in employment and in the provision of goods and services to the public and requires transportation systems, telecommunication systems, educational facilities and most public buildings to be accessible to a person with a disability.
Auxiliary Aids	Devices or services that compensate for a disabling condition. The term includes qualified Sign language Interpreters or other means of communications for hearing-impaired individuals; qualified readers, taped texts or other devices for sight impaired individuals; adaptive equipment; and other services and actions.
Barrier-free	This refers to an environment that contains no obstacles to accessibility and usability by individuals with disabilities. The ADA, which emphasizes the concept of accessibility, mandates a barrier-free environment in new construction and alterations of public Accommodations and public entities such as the University.
Blind	Describes a condition in which a person has a loss of vision for ordinary life purposes. Visually impaired is the generic term preferred by some individuals to refer to all degrees of vision loss. Use a boy who is blind, a girl who is visually impaired.
Congenital Disability	Describes a disability that has existed since birth but is not necessarily hereditary. The term "birth defect" is inappropriate.
Deaf	Deafness refers to a profound degree of hearing loss that prevents understanding speech through the ear. "Hearing Impaired" is the generic term preferred by some individuals to indicate any degree of hearing loss - from mild to profound. The National Association of the Deaf has adopted the terms "deaf" and "hard of hearing" instead of the term "hearing impaired".

Developmental Disability

The Federal Government and Ohio define a developmental disability as a severe, chronic disability of a person that:

- Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of these two
- Is manifested before the person reaches the age of 22
- Is likely to continue indefinitely
- Results in substantial functional limitations three or more of the following areas of major life activity; self-care; receptive and expressive language; learning; mobility; self direction; capacity for independent living; and economic self sufficiency
- Reflects the person's need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment, or other services that are lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

Disability

General term used for a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, lift, hear, or learn. It may refer to a physical, cognitive or mental condition. Use it as a descriptive noun or adjective, such as a man with a disability. "Impairment" refers to a loss or abnormality of an organ or body mechanism, which may result in a disability.

Down Syndrome

Describes a chromosomal disorder that occurs in one out of every 800-1100 births. Most individuals with Down syndrome show some delays in development. The occurrence of Down syndrome is not related to race, socioeconomic level, or parental intelligence. "Mongol" and "mongoloid" are unacceptable terms.

Handicap

Not a synonym for disability. Describes a condition or barrier imposed by society, the environment, or by one's own self. Handicap can be used when citing laws and situations but should not be used to describe a disability. Say, *the stairs are a handicap for her.*

Head injury

Describes a condition where there is temporary or long-term interruption in brain functioning. Use *persons with head injury, people who have sustained brain damage, woman who has traumatic brain injury, or boy with a closed head injury.*

Learning

Describes a permanent condition that affects individuals with average or above-average intelligence take in, retain, and express information. Some groups prefer *specific*

learning disability, because it emphasizes that only certain learning processes are affected. Do not say "slow learner," "retarded," etc. Use *has a learning disability*.

- Mental Disability** The Federal Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) lists four categories under mental disability: psychiatric disability, retardation, learning disability, and (physical) head trauma. Use these four terms for specific instances; otherwise, *mental disability* or *cognitive impairment* is acceptable.
- Mental Illness** Words such as "crazy," "maniac," "lunatic," "demented," and "psycho" are offensive and should never be applied to people with mental health problems. *Psychotic, schizophrenic*, and other specific terms should be used only in proper context and checked carefully for medical and legal accuracy. Acceptable terms are *people with emotional disorders, psychiatric illness, mental problems, or mental disabilities*.
- Non Disabled** Appropriate term for people without disabilities. "Normal," "able-bodied," "healthy and "whole" are inappropriate. [Many organizations, including AXIS, prefer to use **people without disabilities.**]
- Seizure** Describes an involuntary muscular contraction, a brief impairment or loss of consciousness, etc., resulting from a neurological condition, such as epilepsy. Rather than "epileptic," say **girl with epilepsy** or **boy with a seizure disorder**. The term "convulsion" should be used only for seizures involving contraction of the entire body.
- Small/short in stature** Do not refer to people under 4'10" as "dwarfs" or "midgets." Use *person of small (or short) stature*. Dwarfism is an accepted medical term, but it should not be used as general terminology. Some groups prefer "little people"; however, that term implies a less than full, adult status.
- Spinal cord injury** Describes a condition in which there has been permanent damage to the spinal cord. Quadriplegia denotes substantial or total loss of function in all four extremities. Paraplegia refers to substantial or total loss of function in the lower part of the body only. Say, **man with paraplegia** or **woman who is paralyzed**.

