

# WORDS WITH DIGNITY

*When you use Words with Dignity, you encourage equality for everyone. If you're in doubt, use people first language (e.g., "a person with a disability"; not "a disabled person").*

USE: Person with a disability, disabled

NOT: Cripple, handicapped, handicap, invalid (literally means "not valid")

USE: Person who has, person with (e.g., person who has cerebral palsy)

NOT: Victim, afflicted with (e.g., victim of cerebral palsy)

USE: Uses a wheelchair

NOT: Restricted or confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound

USE: Nondisabled or able-bodied

NOT: Normal (referring to nondisabled persons as "normal" insinuates that people with disabilities are abnormal)

USE: Deaf, Hard of Hearing

NOT: Deaf-mute, Deaf and dumb

USE: Disabled since birth, born with

NOT: Birth defect

USE: Psychiatric history, psychiatric disability, emotional disorder, mental illness, consumer of mental health services

NOT: Crazy, insane, mental patient, wacko, a lunatic, a psychotic, a schizophrenic

USE: Epilepsy, seizures

NOT: Fits

USE: Learning disability, intellectual disability, developmental disability, cognitive disability, ADD/ADHD

NOT: Mental retardation, slow, retarded, lazy, stupid, underachiever

*Other terms that should be avoided because they have negative connotations and tend to evoke pity and fear:*

abnormal

burden

condition

deformed

differently abled

disfigured

handicapable

incapacitated

imbecile

manic

maimed

madman

moron

palsied

pathetic

physically challenged

pitiful

retard

spastic

stricken with

suffer

tragedy

unfortunate

victim

## Preferred terms to use when discussing disabilities

**Blind** (no visual capability)

**Legally blind, low vision** (some visual capability)

**Hearing loss, Hard of Hearing** (some hearing capability)

**Hemiplegia** (paralysis of one side of the body)

**Paraplegia** (loss of function in the lower body only)

**Quadriplegia** (paralysis of both arms and legs)

**Residual limb** (post-amputation of a limb)

*To learn more about disability awareness or to schedule a guest speaker, visit [www.paraquad.org](http://www.paraquad.org).*

**Paraquad**  
THE DISABILITY EXPERTS

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