



2.7 LANGUAGE- PEOPLE FIRST

Person Centered

People who have disabilities have long been labeled and referred to in demeaning ways. Language, therefore, is a very important part of LADD's approach to changing this belittling pattern. In every interaction we have with the people we support or in regard to them, employees must always remember to use language supporting our values of treating everyone with dignity and respect and seeing people as **'people first'**.

Employees must meet the following expectations:

1. **Do not label people.** This includes the use of someone's particular diagnosis or disability to name them, as in "He's MR", "she's in a wheelchair", and "he's ambulatory". If necessary, we would say, "He has mental retardation", "she uses a wheelchair", and "he can walk". This supports the view that each of us is a person first, with our respective disabilities and abilities as only a part of the whole picture.
2. **Do not create new language.** Use actual words and phrases with and about the people we support as people would about other adults. For example, we do not say that we are "toileting" someone or "transporting" them somewhere. We say that we are "helping someone in the bathroom" and "driving" them somewhere.

While it may seem cumbersome or wordy to use this type of language, doing so is a very important part of supporting LADD's Mission, Vision, and Values. All employees are here to "Make the Difference" with the people we support. How employees speak and interact with the people we support must have a positive intent and be done with kindness and compassion, showing **C.A.R.E.** – Compassion, Affirmations, Relationships, and Empathy.

This also applies to all on the job communication and interactions. This means that interacting and communicating with co-workers, management, guardians, professionals, and those in the community as well as with the people-supported must be done with C.A.R.E., honesty, integrity, positive intent, and kindness. Using the S.O.U.L. process (reviewed below) and reviewing the corporate values before moving forward with positive words/language and actions will help guide employees in providing the highest quality of care to the people receiving supports.

"Programs" – this word is used to generalize all the different types of services and/or service locations such as Community Living Supports, Licensed Residential, Supported Independent Housing, Respite, etc. Employees must keep in mind that they are often providing services in a person's home and must remember it is a **'home' first and a worksite second**.

"Behaviors" – this word is often used to describe a patterned response that some people with disabilities have learned to do when they are angry or upset. Again, employees must always remember that the people we support are a person first and foremost. That means that they get angry and upset just like we do. If we can use the words 'angry' or 'upset' as much as possible instead of 'behavior'; it reminds us that we are all people first and have an array of emotions. We are also responsible for helping the person emotionally as well as physically and intellectually (mind, body, spirit); you are -supporting the whole person.

"Community Outings/Activities/Integration" – these words are often used in documentation. Again, we want to remember that the people we support, just like ourselves, are community members and live in their community. We all need to be an active participant in our community and a contributing citizen. We do this through volunteering, shopping locally, attending festivals, etc. We do not say we are going on a 'community outing' when we go shopping with our friends, so we need to be conscientious about not using this language with the people we support. They are a person FIRST; just like us!