



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION


People First Language



“Our language shapes our attitude, our attitude shapes our language, they are intertwined. It is our attitudes and language that drive our actions.”



**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION
INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT**



The diagram consists of four colored circles arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left circle is orange and contains text about eliminating generalizations. The top-right circle is yellow and contains text about being an objective way of acknowledging disabilities. The bottom-left circle is blue and contains the title 'People First Language'. The bottom-right circle is green and contains text about emphasizing the person over the disability.

It eliminates
generalizations
and stereotypes
by focusing on
the person rather
than the disability

It is an objective
way of
acknowledging,
communicating and
reporting on
disabilities

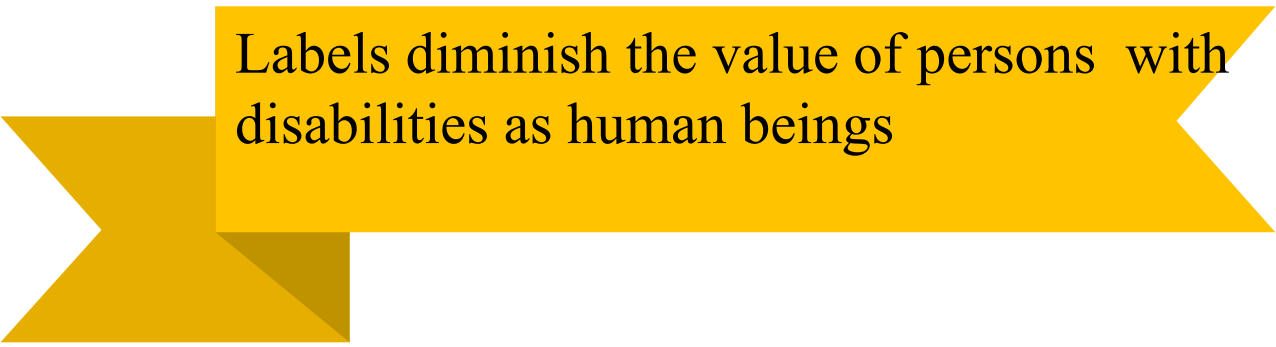
***People
First
Language***

It emphasizes
the person,
not the
disability

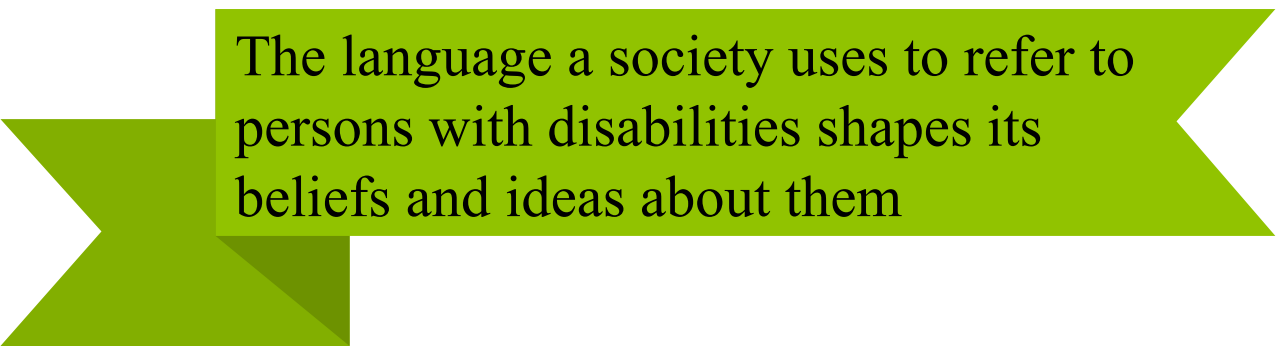
What is people first language?



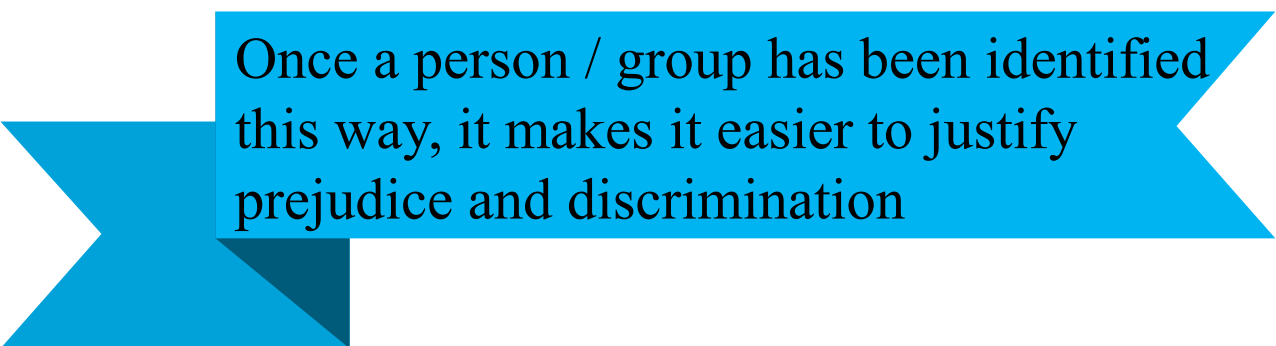
People with disabilities are first and foremost **people**



Labels diminish the value of persons with disabilities as human beings



The language a society uses to refer to persons with disabilities shapes its beliefs and ideas about them



Once a person / group has been identified this way, it makes it easier to justify prejudice and discrimination

Why use People First Language?



Say this:	Do not say this:
<i>Person with a disability</i>	<i>The handicapped, the disabled</i>
<i>People without disabilities</i>	<i>Normal, healthy, whole people</i>
<i>Person who has a congenital disability</i>	<i>Person with a birth defect</i>
<i>Person who has / has been diagnosed with</i>	<i>Person affected by, suffering from, a victim of</i>
<i>Person who has Down Syndrome</i>	<i>Downs person, mongoloid, mongol</i>
<i>Person with quadriplegia, paraplegia</i>	<i>A quadriplegic, a paraplegic</i>
<i>Person with a physical disability</i>	<i>A cripple</i>



See the person first!



Say this:	Do not say this:
<i>Person who uses a wheel chair / wheel chair user</i>	<i>Wheel chair bound / confined to a wheel chair</i>
<i>Person who is blind / visually impaired</i>	<i>The blind</i>
<i>Person with mental illness</i>	<i>Mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, insane, crazy</i>
<i>Person with cerebral palsy</i>	<i>CP victim</i>
<i>Person with intellectual / cognitive disabilities</i>	<i>Retarded , mentally retarded</i>
<i>Person with short stature</i>	<i>Dwarf / midget</i>
<i>Has a brain injury</i>	<i>Brain damaged</i>



Avoid labelling persons!



Say this:	Do not say this:
<i>Person who has a communication disorder / is unable to speak / uses a device to speak</i>	<i>Mute / Dumb</i>
<i>Person with a learning disability / ADHD</i>	<i>Learning disabled person / ADHD person</i>
<i>Person with epilepsy / seizure disorder</i>	<i>Epileptic</i>
<i>Person with multiple sclerosis</i>	<i>Afflicted by MS</i>
<i>Accessible bathroom</i>	<i>Handicapped bathroom</i>
<i>Accessible bus / parking spot</i>	<i>Handicapped bus, handicapped parking</i>



See the person, not the disability!



Identify First Language



Autistic



**Autistic
Community**

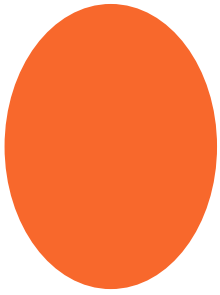


Deaf

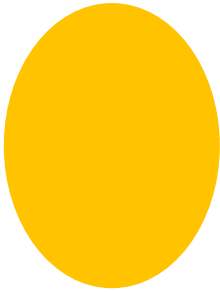


**Deaf
Community**

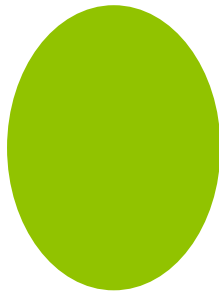
Many people with disabilities embrace identity first language which positions disability as an identity category. It is known as identity-first language because the identifying word comes first and highlights the person's embrace of their identity.



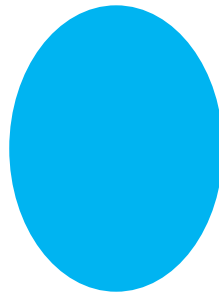
Ask before you help. Just because someone has a disability does not mean he/she needs help..



Do not take offence if a person with a disability refuses your assistance. He/she would have developed ways of doing it himself/herself over time.




Use People First Language as a way of treating persons with disabilities with dignity and respect.




Persons with disabilities are **equal** and should be treated as such.

Follow these golden rules when interacting with persons with disabilities.



The language used to describe people with disabilities is important as it is about fundamental respect for the integrity and dignity of people with disabilities ([Al Ju'beh, 2015, p. 24](#)).

The use of 'people/persons with disabilities' is known as 'people first' language. It is based on the need 'to affirm and define the person first, before the impairment or disability' ([Al Ju'beh, 2015, p. 25](#)).



It is the preference in many developing countries and the language used by the UNCRPD ([Al Ju'beh, 2015, p. 25](#)).

When in doubt, observe and listen to the language used by a person with a disability or difference, and take your cues from what is said.