

*We believe that...*

**With opportunities, people grow and share their dreams and talents.**

**Communities are stronger when all people have a voice and are heard with respect.**

**The humanity we share is more important than the differences in our abilities.**

VTDDC is a proud member of the



and is funded by



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# **VERMONT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL**

**The Mission of VTDDC is to help build connections and supports that bring people with developmental disabilities and their families into the heart of Vermont communities.**

## **Choosing Words with Dignity**

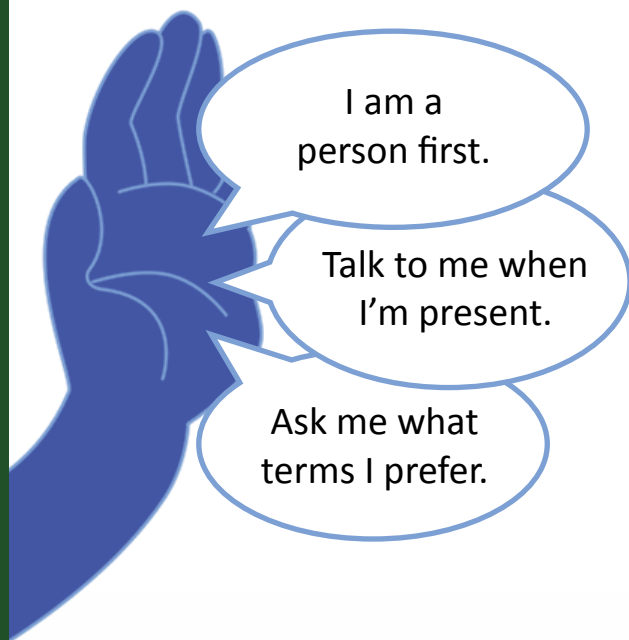
## How do I talk to and about people with disabilities?

People with disabilities want to be heard, included, and respected.

What you write, say, and do has the power to enhance the dignity of people with disabilities. Your words and actions could have a lasting impact on others, even if it's a brief encounter.

Language is always changing and **it's as much about what you say as it is how you say it.**

It's okay to make a mistake. Keep trying.



## Positive language lifts and empowers people. Negative language degrades and disrespects them.

**The following phrases are suggestions.** Ultimately, it's up to the person to decide how they prefer to be spoken to and about.

- **Do say, "... people with disabilities."**  
Do not say, "... the handicapped," "the disabled," "retarded," or "slow."
- **Do say, "... people who are blind" or "people who are visually impaired."**  
Do not say, "... the blind."
- **Do say, "... people who are deaf" or "people who are hard of hearing."**  
Do not say, "... suffers from a hearing impairment" or "hearing impaired."
- **Do say, "... unable to speak" or "non-verbal."**  
Do not say, "... dumb" or "mute."
- **Do say, "... people who use a wheelchair" or "wheelchair user."**  
Do not say, "... wheelchair bound."
- **Do say, "... people with mobility impairments."**  
Do not say, "... cripple" or "lame."
- **Do say, "... people with mental illness."**  
Do not say, "... mental," "crazy," or "psycho."
- **Do say, "... people who have multiple sclerosis."**  
Do not say "... afflicted by MS."
- **Do say, "... people with cerebral palsy."**  
Do not say, "... CP victim."

**There is no such thing as "normal".**  
Refer to "non-disabled people" as "people without disabilities".



Practice makes perfect. Remember to **take the R-word out** of your vocabulary. Calling someone a "retard" or referring to something as "retarded" is hurtful and derogatory.