

Best Buddies Jobs Disability Etiquette

People-First Language

When choosing words to use about people with disabilities, refer to the person first, not the disability. A person with an intellectual or developmental disability should never be described as a “disabled person,” rather “a person with an intellectual or developmental disability.” By doing this, we place the emphasis on the person, not the disability. By using people first language, we are helping to eliminate the negative stereotypes and limitations that others often ascribe to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

You Should Say

- People with disabilities
- He has a disability
- She has autism (or an autism diagnosis)
- She uses a wheelchair/mobility chair

You Should Not Say

- The disabled
- He’s mentally retarded
- She’s autistic
- She’s confined/wheelchair bound



Communication Tips

- Smile, shake hands and make eye-contact
- Speak to the individual directly, rather than the job coach
- Be patient when in conversation, some people need extra time to process and formulate a response
- Treat adults like adults, excessive praise isn't necessary

Training and Support Tips

- Introduce the new employee to coworkers and supervisors to make them feel welcome
- Give clear instructions and demonstrate tasks when possible
- Provide assistance when asked, don't assume help is needed