

Language

Use of language and terminology often reflects society's view and values. It is the same in the evolution of language in relation to people with disabilities.

Words and phrases that were socially acceptable in the 1960's to 1990's have in many cases become unacceptable and often offensive. Even in the last decade, language has changed as society has changed. Language that seems to define people by their disability is no longer considered acceptable. Language that refers to the person first, non-limiting words and phrases and language that stresses ability has replaced old terms which infer that people with disabilities are less capable.

Below are some examples of changes to language in relation to people who have disabilities.

Instead of	Try this:
A handicapped person	A person with a disability
The disabled, the handicapped	People with disabilities
The blind The visually impaired	People who are blind People who are partially sighted
Coping with a disability	Has a disability
Confined to a wheelchair	Uses a wheelchair
Afflicted Cripple/crippled Suffers a disability	Has a disability
Retarded	A person who has a developmental disability
The deaf accountant spotted the error	The accountant spotted the error
Suffers from... Afflicted by... Stricken with...	A person with a disability

SBSA endorses language which acknowledges the humanity and equality of all, and which empowers people to be fully participating citizens in society.