

SCIO Language Guidelines

Let's keep communications inclusive

We view language and communication as one important component within the complete picture of an equitable and inclusive Ontario. We use accurate and unbiased language among our staff, clients, families and the greater community. Disrespectful language makes people feel excluded and creates barriers to full participation in society.

As a general principle, we encourage the use of language that does not present a spinal cord injury or a disability as the defining characteristic of a person. Our terminology is warm, inviting and idiomatic. For example, it is perfectly fine to ask a person who uses a wheelchair to "go for a walk." The idea isn't to be hyper-conscious or remove common language from our vocabulary, but rather to use people-first phrasing that avoids value judgments.

Use People-First or Neutral Language	Avoid Identity-First or Value-Laden Language
✓ Person/people with a disability	✗ Disabled, impaired or handicapped person
✓ Person/people with a spinal cord injury	✗ A cripple or crippled person
✓ A person who has a disability or SCI	✗ Physically challenged or differently abled
✓ A person living with a disability or SCI	✗ Victim or sufferer of a spinal cord injury
✓ A person who uses a mobility device	✗ Special needs person
✓ A person who has paraplegia	✗ A paraplegic/paraplegic person
✓ A person who has quadriplegia	✗ A quadriplegic/quadruplegic person
✓ Person without a disability	✗ Abled, able-bodied or normal person
✓ Loss of mobility or muscle function	✗ Immobile or immobilized
✓ Limited mobility or muscle function	✗ Non-functional or not functional
✓ Wheelchair user	✗ Confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair-bound
✓ Attendant services	✗ Attendant care
✓ Caregiver – a person who gives support	✗ Caretaker – a person who takes care of things
✓ Accessible living or accessibility	✗ Disabled or handicapped entrance/parking/etc
✓ A person – plain and simple!	✗ A courageous, brave or special person

Questions? More to add? Connect with communications@sciontario.org