

# **INTEGRATING DISABILITY JUSTICE INTO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE COUNSELING AND ADVOCACY**



Society for  
Maternal•Fetal  
Medicine



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## Disability Justice 101

Learning Objective: Orient patient and provider advocates to disability justice and its core principles. Answer:

What is “Disability”?

What is stigmatizing and affirming language on disability?

What is Disability Justice and how is it different from disability rights and inclusion?

# What is Disability?

## Disability is a legal, medical, and social term

Disability is the “umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors.”

- World Report on Disability 2011

A person with a disability is "a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities." -- According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



# 1 in 4 Adults in the US are Disabled

**Disability is diverse and can be seen and unseen**



VISION



COMMUNICATING



MOVEMENT



LEARNING



RELATIONSHIPS



HEARING



MEMORY



MENTAL HEALTH



THINKING

# Distinguishing Between Affirming and Stigmatizing Language on Disability

Words matter and stigmatizing language can be part of our language without even realizing it. The best source on what language is stigmatizing is always disabled people themselves.

**Here are some tips to recognize stigmatizing patterns in our language around disability...**



# Use Neutral Language

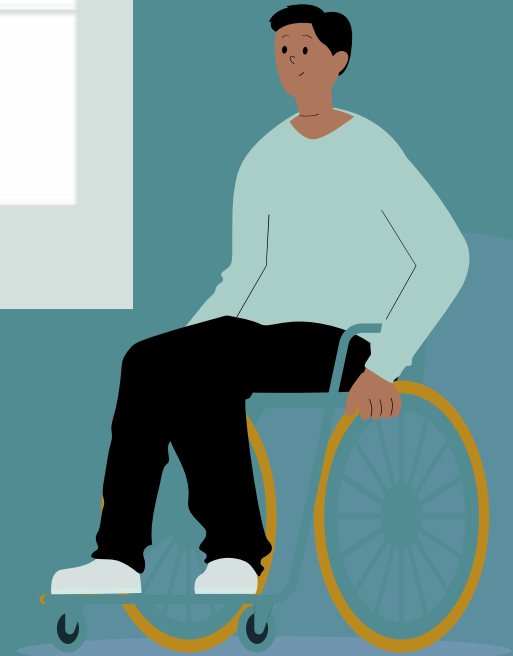
Don't use language that portrays the person as passive or suggests a lack of something (ex. victim, invalid, defective).



SAY THIS	NOT THIS
Person who has had a stroke	× Stroke victim
Congenital disability	× Birth defect
Person with epilepsy	× Person afflicted with epilepsy × Epileptic
Burn survivor	× Burn victim
Person with a brain injury	× Brain damaged × Brain injury sufferer

# Emphasize abilities, not limitations

SAY THIS	NOT THIS
Person who uses a wheelchair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>× Wheelchair-bound</li><li>× Confined to a wheelchair</li></ul>
Person who uses a communication device; uses an alternative method of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>× Is non-verbal</li><li>× Can't talk</li></ul>



# Don't Use Language that Perpetuates Negative Stereotypes about Psychiatric Disabilities

<b>SAY THIS</b>	<b>NOT THIS</b>
Is receiving mental health services	x Mental health patient/case
Attempted suicide	x Unsuccessful suicide
He has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder; He is living with bipolar disorder	x He is (a) bipolar x He is (a) manic-depressive
Died by suicide	x Committed suicide
Person with schizophrenia	x Schizophrenic x Schizo
Person with substance use disorder; Person experiencing alcohol/drug problem	x Addict x Abuser x Junkie
She has a mental health condition or psychiatric disability	x She's mentally ill x She is insane x Emotionally disturbed



# Always ask to find out an individual's language preferences

Increasingly, many people prefer to be identified with their disability first – this is called **Identity-First Language**. Examples of Identity-First Language include identifying someone as a deaf person instead of a person who is deaf, or an autistic person instead of a person with autism. People with this preference often say that they cannot separate their disability from who they are, much like their race or ethnicity.

However, other people still prefer **Person-First Language**, often stating they want to be seen as a person before their disability. **Ultimately, it is always best to ask someone about their language preferences.**



# Emphasize the need for accessibility

SAY THIS	NOT THIS
Accessible parking	x Handicapped Parking
Accessible restroom	x Disabled restroom



# Don't use condescending euphemisms

Terms like “differently-abled”, “challenged”, “handi-capable” or “special” are often considered condescending.



# What is DISABILITY JUSTICE, RIGHTS, & INCLUSION?

## **Disability Justice**

Rectifying injustices, coalition building, centering the most marginalized/ historically excluded, intersectionality.

## **Disability Rights**

Lawsuits, political organizing, advocacy, lobbying for legal expansion of civil rights.

## **Disability Inclusion**

Expand opportunity by opening more services and care, training, and education.

# Disability Justice

“Disability Justice is the cross-disability (sensory, intellectual, mental health/psychiatric, neurodiversity, physical/mobility, learning, etc.) framework that **values access, self-determination and an expectation of difference**. An expectation of difference means that we expect difference in disability, identity and culture. To be included and part of society is about being able to be our “whole self” (all of our identities together). Disability Justice includes space for self-care, reflection and hard discussions.”– Naomi Ortiz, Writer and Poet



# 10 Principles of Disability Justice

Intersectionality

Leadership of the most impacted

Anti-Capitalist Politics

Commitment to cross-movement organizing

Recognizing wholeness

Sustainability

Collective Access

Collective Liberation