

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION

The Citizen's Advisory Commission on Disability proposes the following recommendation be sent to the city manager for consideration and adoption.

To: Patrick West, City Manager

From: Citizen's Advisory Commission on Disability (CACoD)

Submitted by: David Gauthier, Chairperson, CACoD

Date: September 14, 2017

Subject: People First Language resource within the City Style Guide

RECOMMENDATION

To update the City's Style Guide to include appropriate terminology and phrases used to describe disabilities and people with disabilities and ensure that all policies and procedures use People First Language (with examples provided) to the greatest extent possible.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal fiscal impact.

IMPACT ON ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHERS

Our words, and the meanings we attach to them, create attitudes, drive social policies and laws, influence our feelings and decisions, and affect people's daily lives and more. How we use them makes a difference. People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Using a diagnosis as a defining characteristic reflects prejudice, and also robs the person of the opportunity to define themselves.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The current Style Guide describes how to use the City logo and other typographical usage in print and online media. The Style Guide has no information or standard phrases and usage to describe disabilities and people with disabilities. Because there is no resource for City staff and volunteers to benefit from, there is a risk of providing misinformation or using derogatory terms inadvertently.

BACKGROUND

Historically, people with disabilities have been regarded as individuals to be pitied, feared or ignored. They have been portrayed as helpless victims, repulsive adversaries, heroic individuals overcoming tragedy, and charity cases who must depend on others for their well-being and care. Media coverage frequently focused on heartwarming features and inspirational stories that reinforced stereotypes, patronized and underestimated individuals' capabilities.

Much has changed lately. New laws, disability activism and expanded coverage of disability issues have altered public awareness and knowledge, eliminating the worst stereotypes and misrepresentations. Still, old attitudes, experiences and stereotypes die hard.

People with disabilities continue to seek accurate portrayals that present a respectful, positive view of individuals as active participants of society, in regular social, work and home environments. Additionally, people with disabilities are focusing attention on tough issues that affect quality of life, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities, and discrimination.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

People-first language is considered by many to be the most respectful and appropriate way to refer to those who were once called disabled, handicapped, or even crippled. Instead of disabled person, say person with a disability. Instead of autistic person, say person with autism. See the person first, not the disability.

By providing a central resource for officials, staff and volunteers to use the city will talk about residents in a respectful and appropriate way.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Providing specific phrases to use.

CONTACT PERSONS

David Gauthier, CACoD Chair

Heather Blackmun, Citywide ADA/Title VI Coordinator