



MUNICIPALITY *of the*  
COUNTY *of* KINGS

## Everyday Accessibility: The Language We Use to Talk About Disabilities

### Using Inclusive Language

The language used to discuss or speak with a person with disabilities is important. It is a way of showing respect for the whole person. For many years, disabilities were approached from a medical model – that disabilities were the realm of medical practitioners to treat or cure. More recently, that is beginning to change to a social model of understanding disabilities. A shift in thinking about the environment that we live in, and how we interact with it, has an impact on how we understand disabilities and create inclusive spaces.

This shift in thinking from a medical model that emphasizes a person’s disability, to a more social model that emphasizes the person, has led to a person-centered approach in language too. However, it is important to remember that persons with disabilities are diverse, and individuals may have their own preferences around language, so listening and mirroring back the language a person uses to describe themselves is the best way to respect an individual’s identity.

### Person-first Language and Identity First Language

Person-first language refers to a person’s disability as one part of who they are, and puts the person at the center. For example, a person with a disability, a person with a vision impairment, person who uses a wheelchair.

Identity-first language may be used when people identify with their disability or understand it to be an important part of who they are. For example, Deaf person, or Autistic person.

### Links

The links below can help you understand more about language:

[Maple Community Services – Guide to Inclusive Language](#)

[Government of Canada – A Way with Words and Images](#)

[UN – Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)

For more information on accessibility in Kings County contact

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