



Person First Language

Labels or incorrect word choices can hurt, offend and limit. Therefore, the Down Syndrome Association of the Valley strongly believes in the importance of ensuring that correct language is used when talking or writing about individuals with Down syndrome.



A baby born with Down syndrome is not a "Down's child" or a "baby with Downs." A person with Down syndrome is not a "Downs". When describing an individual with Down syndrome, it is preferred that you say, he/she has Down syndrome. Just as people with chicken pox or cancer are not referred to as "a chicken pox kid or cancer child"; people with Down syndrome deserve the same respect. By placing the person before the disability you emphasize the person first and the disability second.

When referring to peers, the correct term is "typical" peers as opposed to "normal."

It is also important to use correct terminology. A person does not "suffer" from Down syndrome, nor are they "afflicted". It is not a disease and we are not researching a cure. Down syndrome is a chromosomal condition which results in an extra copy of the 21st chromosome. It was discovered by Dr. John Langdon Down. Since Dr. Down did not have this syndrome, nor did he own it, the possessive form is not used. In addition, the 's' in syndrome is not capitalized.



Person First language emphasizes respect for the individual. A child is much more than a label. Please help to educate family, friends and physicians about the preferred way to refer to those with Down syndrome.

