

# PEOPLE MATTER, WORDS MATTER

## ARE YOU USING **PEOPLE-FIRST** LANGUAGE?

Language matters in compassionate care, especially in behavioral health care, and that doesn't mean just what you say in front of a patient. What you say behind closed doors with coworkers can be the seed for stigma and perpetuate discrimination against a person based on a physical or mental disorder.

Using people-first language means speaking in a way that primarily acknowledges the person, rather than the illness or disability. In other words, individuals with mental illness and disabilities are first and foremost ... **people!**

### TRY SAYING THIS...

- ▶ People with a mental illness...
- ▶ He has schizophrenia.
- ▶ They are a person with addiction.
- ▶ She has borderline personality disorder.
- ▶ He has an intellectual disability.
- ▶ A person who has autism...
- ▶ She is a person who uses a wheelchair.

[ THESE WORDS INDICATE WHAT A PERSON HAS,  
NOT WHAT A PERSON IS ]

### INSTEAD OF THIS

- The mentally ill...
- He's schizophrenic.
- They're an addict.
- She's borderline.
- He is retarded.
- Autistic people...
- She's wheelchair bound.

[ THESE WORDS LIMIT AN  
INDIVIDUAL'S FULL POTENTIAL ]

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