

Terminology with Older Adults

- Be cautious about the language you use.
- Use of language depends on the setting and the individual.
- Use people first language and not refer to someone by their illness or disability
 - *A person with arthritis is a more respectful phrase than “an arthritic.”*
- Ask someone how they would like for you to address them: Mr/Mrs/Ms or by their first name. *Do not assume*
- Some terms could be offensive to some people.
- Everyone does not perceive words the way that you do.

Which of the terms from the list below would *YOU* use when talking with, talking about or writing about people with disabilities or older people?

1. Seniors; older adult; elderly; older people
2. Low income; disadvantaged; poor
3. Incapacitated; incompetent; unable to make decisions for self

Suggested Terminology

<i>Use</i>	<i>Instead of</i>
1. Affected by; has	Afflicted
2. Frail; medically fragile; has multiple medical problems	Chronically ill; invalid
3. In bed much of the time; non-ambulatory;	Bedbound; invalid
4. Long term care facility, assisted living facility, nursing home	Convalescent home, rest home, “home”
5. Pads, briefs, product trade name, i.e., Depends	Adult diapers
6. People with cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsied
7. Person with hearing or speech or visual impairment; hearing, speech or visually impaired	Deaf, dumb, blind
8. Person with (illness or disability	Crippled; handicapped; disabled
9. Person with mental illness; person with depression; or person with (other diagnosed illness)	Mentally ill

10. Pressure ulcer (area); skin breakdown	Bed sore
11. Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound

Never Use These Terms

*How would **you** feel if someone referred to you with these terms?*

1. Afflicted by
2. Childish, children
3. Crazy
4. Deaf
5. Dearie
6. Dumb (*for does not speak*)
7. Geezers
8. Golden agers
9. Home bound
10. Honey
11. Old codger
12. Old lady
13. Old man
14. Oldster
15. Senile
16. Shut-in
17. Suffers from
18. Sweetie
19. Victim of
20. Wheelchair bound