

PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

WHAT IT IS

Person-first language is a way of communicating that places personhood before any additional labels.

WHY WE DO IT

At IDOH, we use person-first language, in general, to respect all. However, we always ask individuals how they prefer to be identified, to respect their autonomy.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Person-first language is vital to use to maintain an environment of dignity, respect and hope. Putting the person first when describing someone can positively influence the images and impressions we form about them.

YOU CAN, TOO!

Ask individuals how they identify themselves, follow their lead and avoid using derogatory terms.

EXAMPLES

What to say

AN INDIVIDUAL WITH
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

MAINTAINED RECOVERY,
SUBSTANCE-FREE

NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE
DRUG SCREEN

AN INDIVIDUAL WHO
DIED BY SUICIDE

A PERSON ARRESTED
FOR A DRUG VIOLATION

A SUICIDE DEATH,
DIED OF SUICIDE

THE DISEASE
IS ACTIVE

What not to say

A JUNKIE, AN ADDICT, A
USER, A DRUGGIE

AN INDIVIDUAL WHO
STAYED CLEAN

CLEAN OR DIRTY DRUG
SCREEN

AN INDIVIDUAL WHO
COMMITTED SUICIDE

A DRUG
OFFENDER

A SUCCESSFUL
ATTEMPT

THE PERSON
RELAPSED