

Universal  
LifeStiles

**Universal Language**  
**It's All In How You Say It**  
**by**  
**Thomas E. Pomeranz Ed.D.**



Universal Enhancement

# Words Are Important

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If how we reference people is not important, then call them:

**Morons      Imbeciles**  
**Idiots**

This was the legal and medical terminology used well into the 1950's.

**Words are very important when you are on the receiving end.**



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# Universal Language

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The words and language we use when talking about our friends and that they use when talking about us...

...is  
*Universal  
Language*



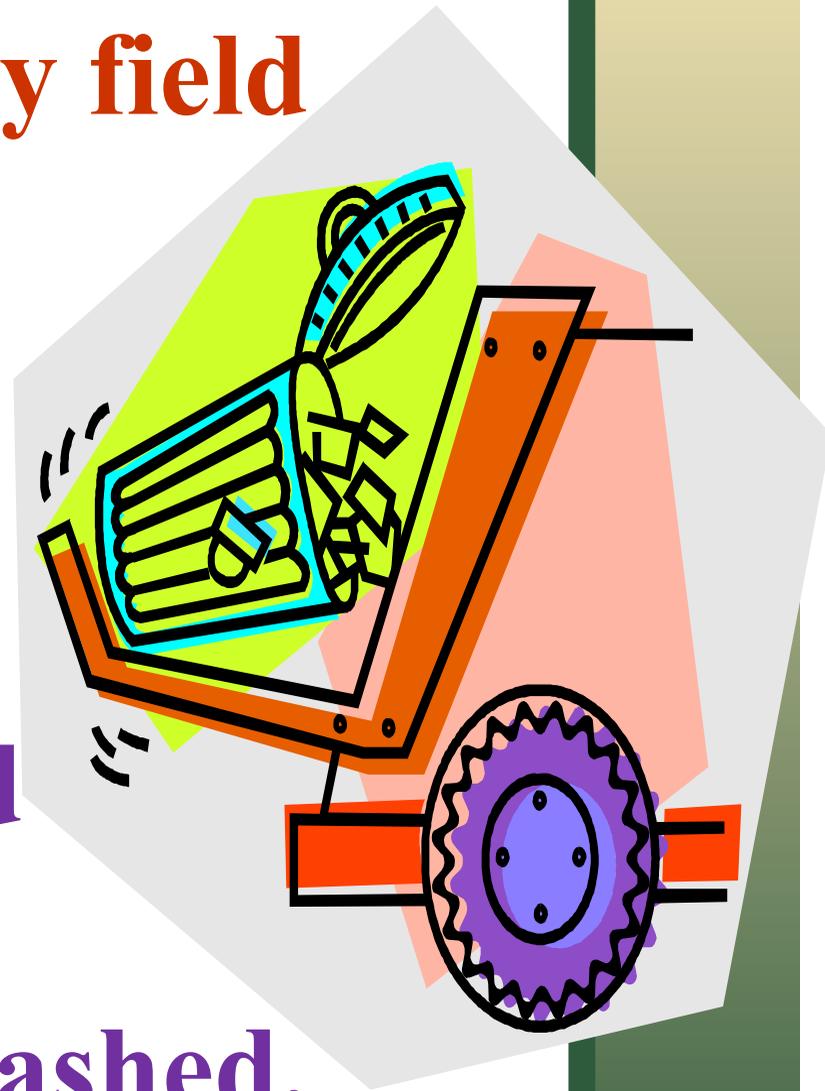
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# **Newbie**

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**Staff with no experience or training in the disability field use pristine language –  
UE Language!**

**When exposed to experienced and professionally educated staff, their language becomes tainted and trashed.**



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# Politically Correct Language

**Wikipedia:** A term which denotes language, policies and behavior seen as seeking to minimize social and institutional offense in occupational, gender, racial, cultural, sexual orientation, certain other religions, beliefs or ideologies, disability and age-related contexts and as purported by the term, doing so to an excessive extent.

Universal Language

is

“Politically Correct”



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# **Test Scores Revealed**

**The UE Language test will be administered immediately following this presentation.**

**All those around you will be assessing the words you speak and write.**

**I hope you pass the test!**

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# Getting It Right

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**To err  
in using  
Universal  
Language is  
forgivable.  
Indifference  
to using  
it is not!**



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# Benign Disparaging Language.....



**Gypped** – To deprive of something by fraud, cheating or swindling American Heritage

**Gypsy** – A member of a people that arrive in Europe migrating from northern India around the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, now also living in North American and Australia. American Heritage

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# They Don't Speak Up

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“People are comfortable using ‘retard’ as a ‘dis’ because in the past no one has stood up and said anything in numbers counting. Most marginalized groups come from places of family pride and tradition. They are able to stand strong together out of their heritage and make a statement. But people with intellectual disabilities, scattered through different families, are not part of a celebrated culture.”

Gail Williamson, Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Assoc. of Los Angeles



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# Limited Feedback

**People who are the focus of insensitive language give feedback in an effort to modify the speaker's language.**

**People with intellectual disabilities tend not to give this feedback, thus may inadvertently perpetuate the insensitivity.**



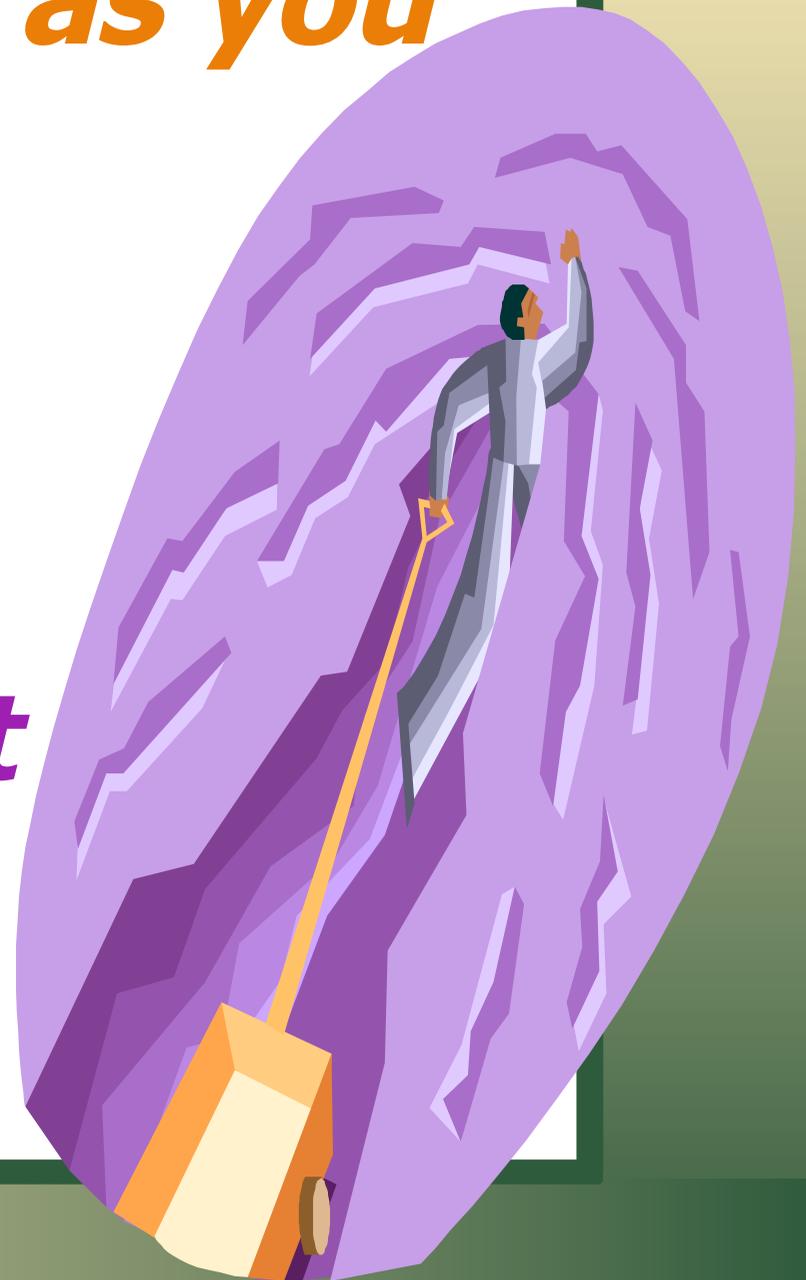
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# **An Alternative Perspective**

***"Treat others, not as you  
would wish to be  
treated..."***

***but rather the way  
you would treat  
yourself in the most  
challenging of  
circumstances.***

***paraphrased from Burton Blatt***



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# Empathy

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***"The intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another."***

- The Random House Dictionary of the English Language

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# No-No Words

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**Walkers**

**Girls/boys**

**Tubers**

**Kids**

**Living Unit**

**Coloring**

**Diapers**

**Eaters**

**Playing**

**Bibs**

**Normals**

**Feeders**

**Toys**

**Droolers**

**What respectful  
words could  
be used  
instead?**



# Mind Your Mouth

---

~~Handicapped~~ Parking

Accessible Parking

~~Birth Defect~~

Congenital  
Disability

~~Normal~~ children

Typically  
developing kids

~~Afflicted~~ with CP

Has Cerebral Palsy



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# Use – Don't Use

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The words emanating from or associated with a service model are not summarily to be discarded as the service model transitions.

The continued use and function of a word are influenced by the connotation and slang that it has attracted through its use.

*institution*      **Diapers**  
*ward*              *facility*  
*Direct care*      *floor*  
*Sheltered workshop*

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# Language Timelines

Our service and professional language evolves from the clinical models that are embraced.

*This is reflective of the timeline for those models:*

Custodial Model

? – Early 1950s

Medical Model

1953 – 1962



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# **Model Driven Language**

**The always evolving “models”  
of service delivery are the  
impetus for and driver of our  
language.**

**Medical**

**For**

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# **Medical/Custodial Model**

***Defines the condition of intellectual disabilities in terms of its etiology.***

***Structures services to provide care and protection from harm.***

***Holds the belief that people with intellectual disabilities cannot grow, develop, and become more independent.***

***Perceives and treats individuals as if they were child-like.***



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# Care For Words

**I DO...**

**Nail care**

**Tooth Brushing**

**ADL's**

**Toileting**

**Hygiene**

**Grooming**

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**So Ken, did you do your ADL's today?**



# Note The Difference

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**Serve:** To work for somebody as a domestic servant

**Support:** To keep from weakening or failing; strengthen; to act in a secondary or subordinate role; active assistance and encouragement to, or an approving and encouraging attitude toward somebody

**These words are not interchangeable!**

Encarta Dictionary; American Heritage Dictionary



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# Medical Model Language

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Patient

Community Outreach

Living Unit

Discharge

Crib Babies

Intra-disciplinary

Dietary Supplement

Admit

Direct Care Staff

Sharps

Active Treatment

Ward

ITP

Custodial Care

Check 'n Change



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<b>Developmental Model</b>	<b>1963 – 1972</b>



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# **Model Driven Language**

**The always evolving “models” of service delivery are the impetus for and driver of our language.**

**Medical**

**For**

**Developmental**

**Fix**

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# **Developmental Model Language**

**Simulated Tasks**

**Readiness**

**Task Analysis**

**Backward Chaining**

**Developmental Data**

**Document**

**Developmental**

**Domains**

**Prevocational**

**Splinter Skills**



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<b>Habilitation Model</b>	<b>1973 – 1991</b>



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# Model Driven Language

The always evolving “models” of service delivery are the impetus for and driver of our language.

**Medical**

**For**

**Developmental**

**Fix**

**Habilitation**

**To**

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# Habilitation Model Language

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**Principle of Normalization**

**Least Restrictive Alternative**

**Hierarchy of Intervention**

**Continuum of Service**

**Inter-Disciplinary**

**Time-out Room**

**Protective Oversight**

**Right to Risk**

**Level of Engagement**

**Programs**

**Restraints**

**QMRRP**

**Maladaptive Behavior**



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<b>Developmental Model</b>	<b>1963 – 1972</b>
<b>Habilitation Model</b>	<b>1973 – 1991</b>
<b>Participatory/Inclusionary Model</b>	<b>1992 – Present</b>

**What is the next model  
and what language will  
we be using?**

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# Model Driven Language

The always evolving “models” of service delivery are the impetus for and driver of our language.

**Medical**

**Developmental**

**Habilitation**

**Participatory**

**For**

**Fix**

**To**

**With**

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# Participatory Model Language

**Self-Determination**

**Accessible**

**Quality of Life**

**Outcomes**

**Relationships**

**Futures Planning**

**Wraparound**

**Services**

**Transdisciplinary**

**Work**

**Inclusion**

**Community**

**Advocacy**

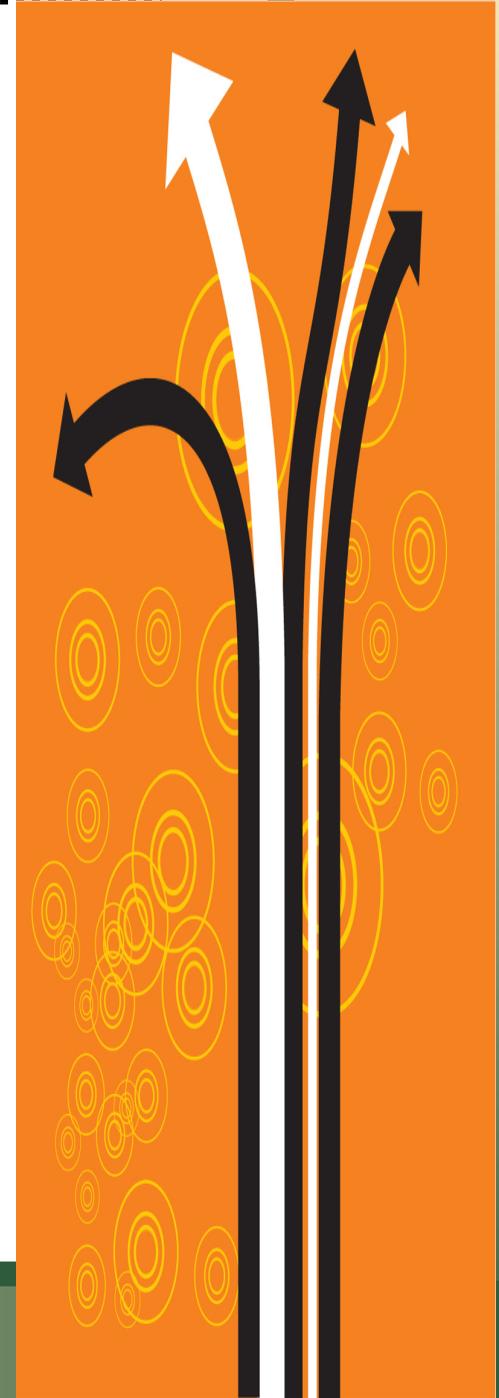
**Support**

**Choice**

**Options**

**Rights**

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# Model Driven Language

The always evolving “models” of service delivery are the impetus for and driver of our language.

**Medical**

**For**

**Developmental**

**Fix**

**Habilitation**

**To**

**Participatory**

**With**

**Our language connotes  
our clinical values.**

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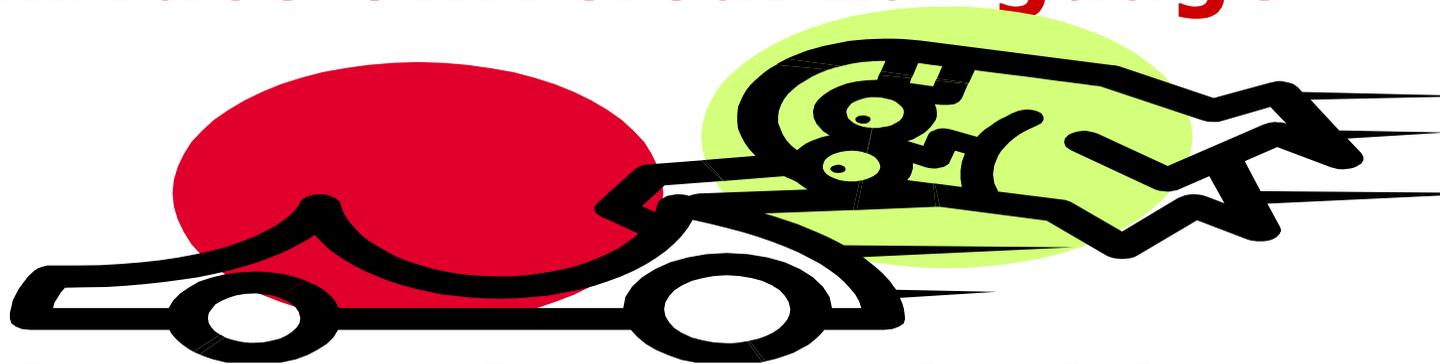
# Violators

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**“But my supervisor doesn’t use  
Universal Language”**

**“The agency Newsletter is not  
written in Universal Language”**

**“Assessments, evaluations don’t  
embrace Universal Language”**



**What’s your point; people drive  
over the speed limit!**

**In With The New**

**Mental  
Retardation  
Intellectual  
Disabilities**



**Adopted in 2006 by the American  
Association on Intellectual &  
Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)  
(formerly the American Association on  
Mental Retardation/AAMR)**

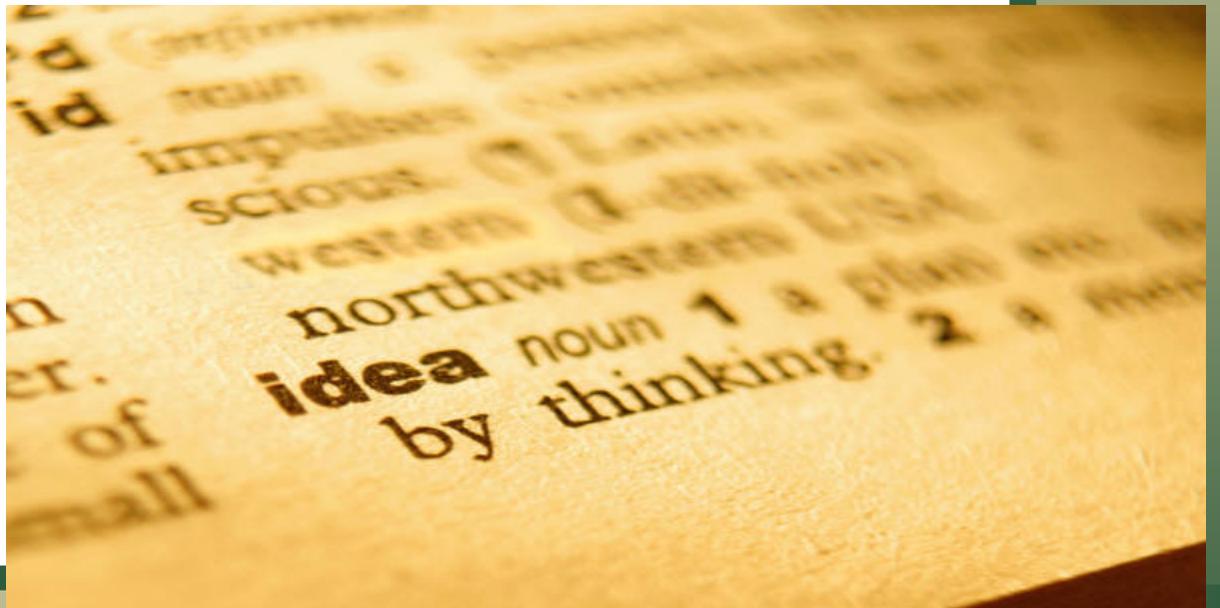
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## Good Words

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**Good words  
are worth  
much and  
cost  
little.**

George Herbert



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## Consider This

**“When were you admitted?”**

**“You sure are high-functioning.”**

**“Oh, you are wheelchair bound.”**

**“Do you like this facility?”**

**“So I heard you are a  
head banger**

**If you are not  
comfortable saying  
it to their face, why  
say it behind their back?**

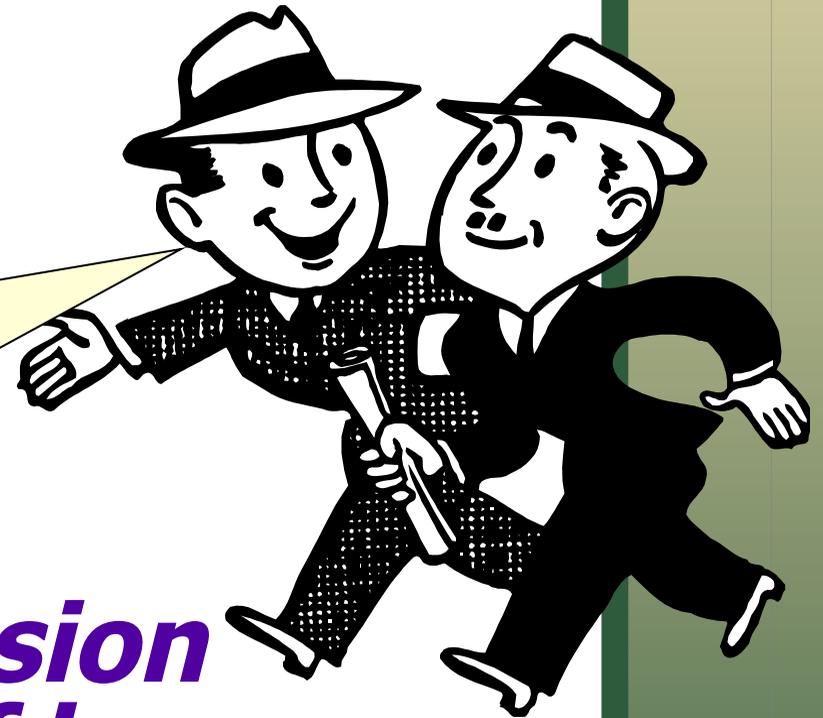


# Just Words

People who say they're just words have never <sup>\*</sup>been on the receiving end of words that strike the heart -



"Who let that guy out of the funny farm!"



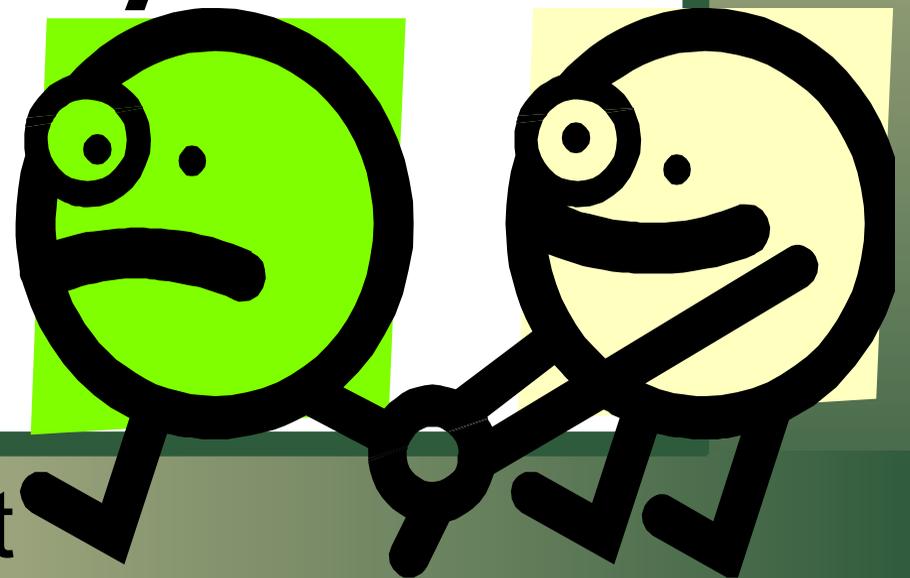
*Words are an expression of one's feelings - of how one is likely to behave.*

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# What's The Difference?

Would you offer employment to a job applicant who:

- uses racial slurs?
- makes sexist comments?
- vilifies a particular culture?
- denigrates a religious group?
- impugns a nationality?
- devalues people with disabilities?



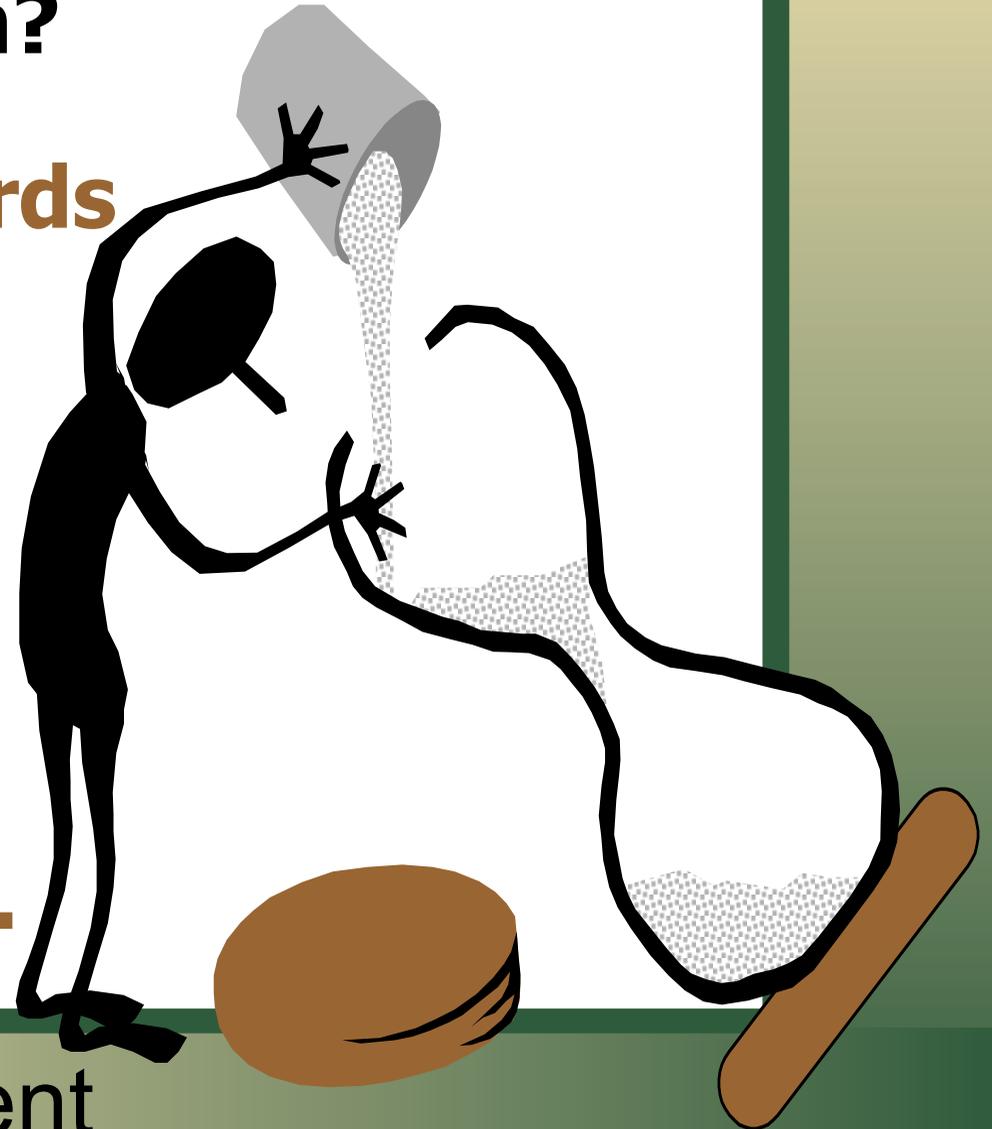
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# Indifference

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**The Nay Sayers proclaim "Why use Universal Language, won't the words just be changed again?"**

**That's correct; the words will change again, and again and again...**



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# Human Descriptors

**Inevitably human descriptors evolve to connote negative or devaluing meaning.** It seems there are always people who hold a prejudice based upon:

- **Nationality**
- Sexual orientation
- **Mental health status**
- Skin color
- **Religion**
- Age
- **Sensory integrity**
- Physical condition
- **Gender**
- Sect
- **Ethnicity**



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# Words Change

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**Mongolian Idiot**

**Down Syndrome**

**Fits**

**Seizures**

**Lunatic**

**Mental Illness**

**Mentally**

**Intellectual**

**Deficient**

**Disability**

**Tactile**

**Tactile**

**Defensiveness**

**Selectiveness**

**What's the next  
change?**

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# Words Transition

The transition of these words reflects our changing expectations of and relationships with the individuals we support.

**Feed**: To give food to; to provide as food or nourishment “Feed the children”

**Eat**: To take into the mouth and swallow for nourishment; to take into the body by the mouth for digestion “Eat your breakfast”

**Dine**: To have dinner; entertain at dinner; provide with dinner “Did he have dinner?”

The Free Dictionary by Farlex



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# It Evolves

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~~Association for  
Retarded Children~~

~~Association for  
Retarded Citizens~~

**The Arc**

  
**The Arc**  
*For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities*

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# Connotation-Denotation

**Denotation:** The most specific or direct meaning of a word, in contrast to its figurative or associated meanings.

**Connotation:** The set of associations implied by a word in addition to its literal meaning. The set of attributes constituting the meaning of a term.

**Slang:** A kind of language occurring chiefly in casual and playful speech. To use angry and abusive language.

## CRIPPLED:

**Denotation:** Unable to walk

**Connotation:** Damaged

**Slang:** Crip

## Slang Evolves

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**Slang develops  
it's vile, not  
unlike the filth  
accumulating  
on a wet mop  
dragged  
across a  
dirty floor.**



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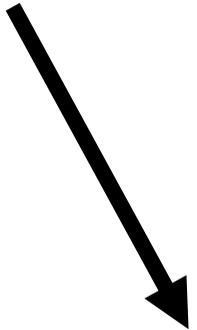
# We Fixed It

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**High Grades**



**High  
Functioning**

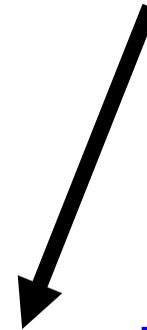


**Competent**

**Low Grades**



**Low  
Functioning**



**Very Dependent**

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# Composure Area



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# **Globally Challenged**

**Globally challenged – suggesting challenges in all aspects of ability – mobility, language, cognitive, social, etc.; a phrase that currently holds a limited negative connotation and stigma**

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# Slang

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**What denotations  
inspire these  
slang terms:**

**Looney Schizy**

**Psycho Retard**

**Spaz Crip**

**Maniac Dumb**



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# Professional Jargon...

...the specialized or technical vocabulary and idioms of those in the same trade, work profession or similar group. American Heritage Dictionary

Hierarchy of intervention

Aversives

Over-correction

Normalization

Work hardening

Continuum of services

Look-behind

Stereotypical behavior

Work enclave

Time study

Inclusion

Restitution

Medicaid Waiver

Fast track

Social role

valorization

Decisional capacity



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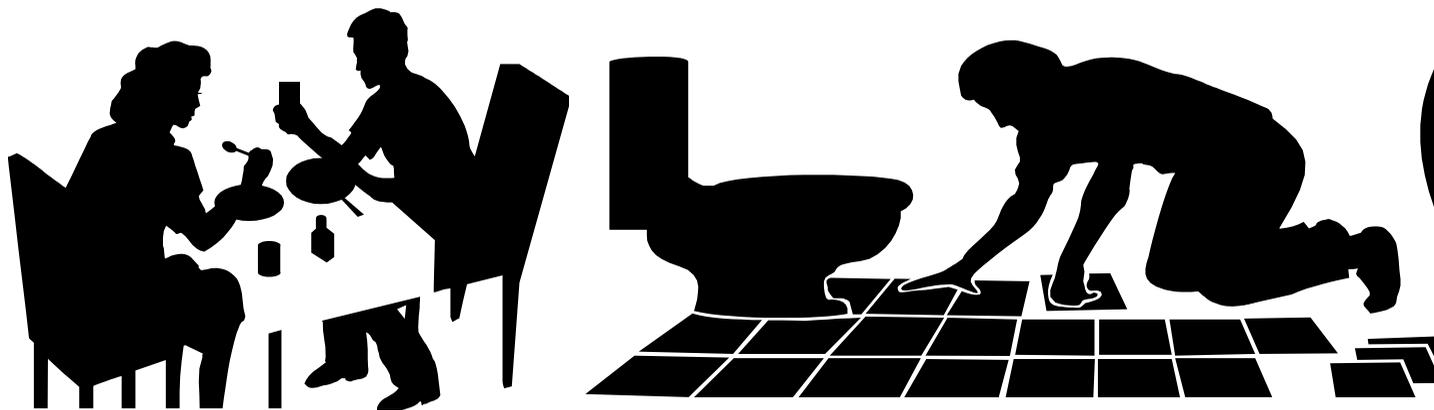
# Speaking "Hibbity Hobby"



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# The “F” Words

**Function - bright, intelligent,  
capable, competent**



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# High Functioning

Referencing an individual as “high or low functioning” is disparaging. Do you tell your child they are high functioning when they Ace a test?  
**Ace a test?**

**High Functioning:**  
**Bright**  
**Competent**  
**Smart**  
**Intelligent**  
**Capable**  
**Knowledgeable**

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Zoe, you are so high functioning to help Daddy with the recycling!

# Abilities and Limitations

**Why would you call someone low-functioning who runs out of their home and you cannot even catch up with them?**

**We all have abilities as well as limitations.**



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# Educationally Speaking

## Trainables:

**Mental Age 5-8; cannot learn academic subjects in school. One who undergoes training; to condition; to guide the mental or physical development of (someone)**



## Educables:

**Mental Age 8-12; may learn to approximately 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. one that can be educated; to give knowledge to (someone)**

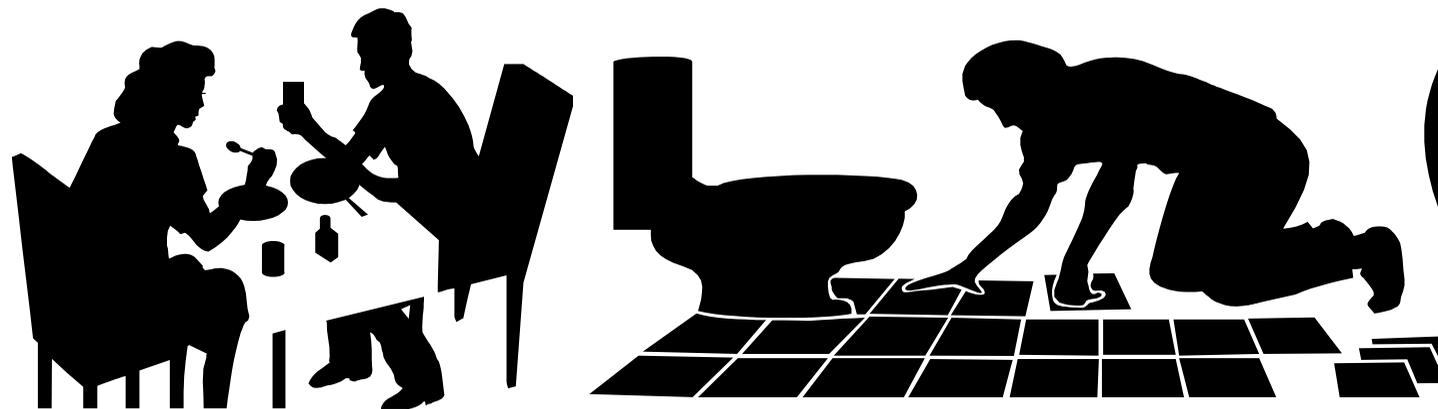


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# The “F” Words

**Function** - bright, intelligent,  
capable, competent

**Feed** - assist in eating



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# Feed the "Clients"

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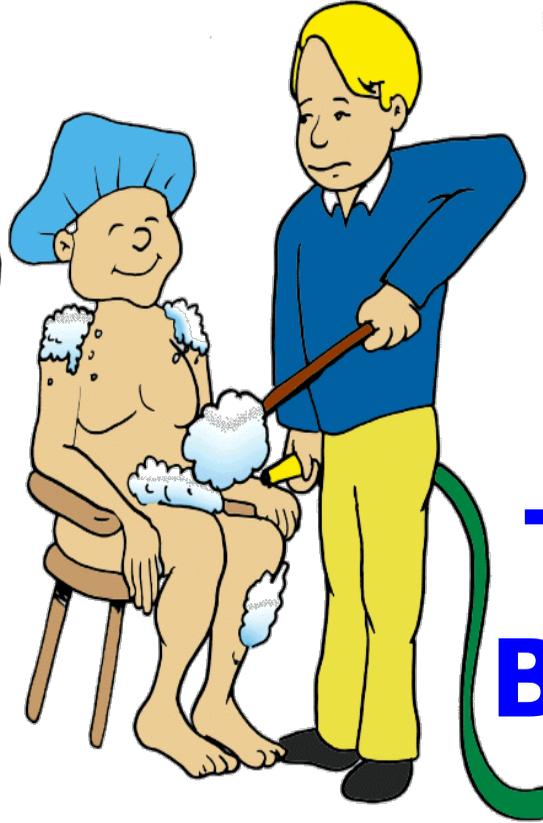
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# Direct Care

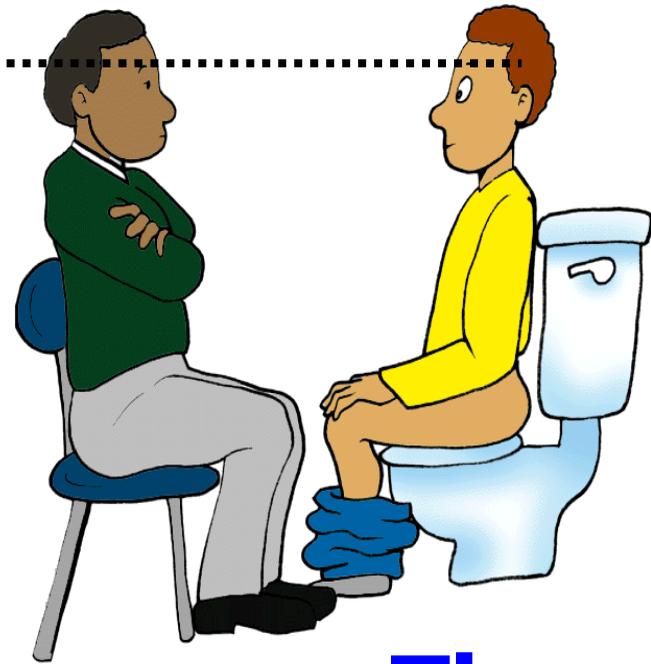
## The Toileter



## The Feeder



## The Bather



## The Dresser



**Don't nurture learned helplessness  
– support self-determination!**

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## The To's

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**To Do For=To Care For=**

**Sympathy**

**To Do To=To Program=**

**Manage**

**To Do With=To Care About =**

**Empathy**

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# The “F” Words

---

**Function** - bright, intelligent,  
capable, competent

**Feed** - assist in eating

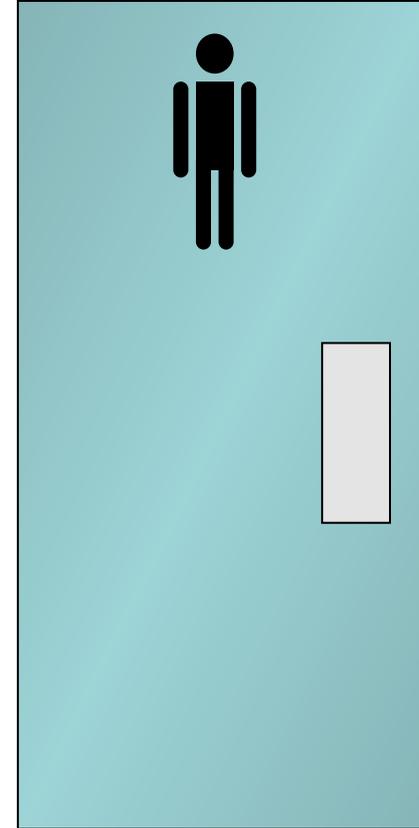
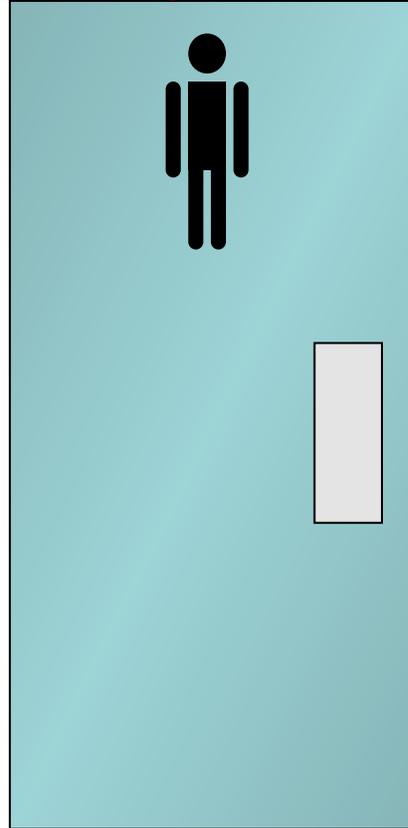
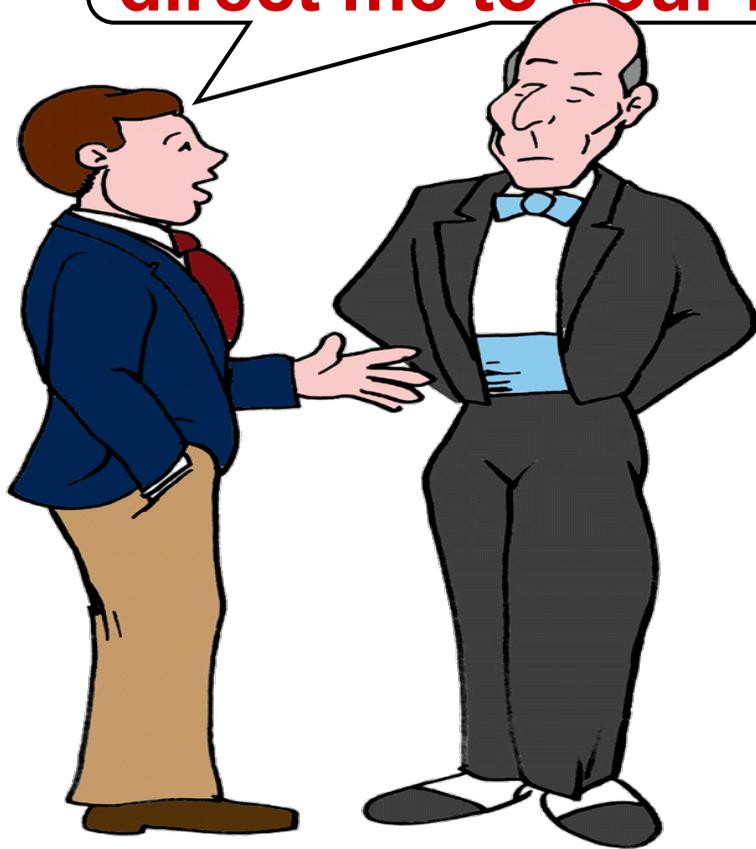
**Facility** - home, apartment,  
condo



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# Facility

Sir could you please direct me to your facility?



***Facilities are meant to be flushed, not lived in.***

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# Street Signs

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# Say Hello

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**If I don't  
name the  
home, how will  
the caller know  
where they are  
calling?**



**Oak Street  
Group Home.  
May I help  
you?**

**Universal Enhancement**

# The “F” Words

---

**Function** - bright, intelligent,  
capable, competent

**Feed** - assist in eating

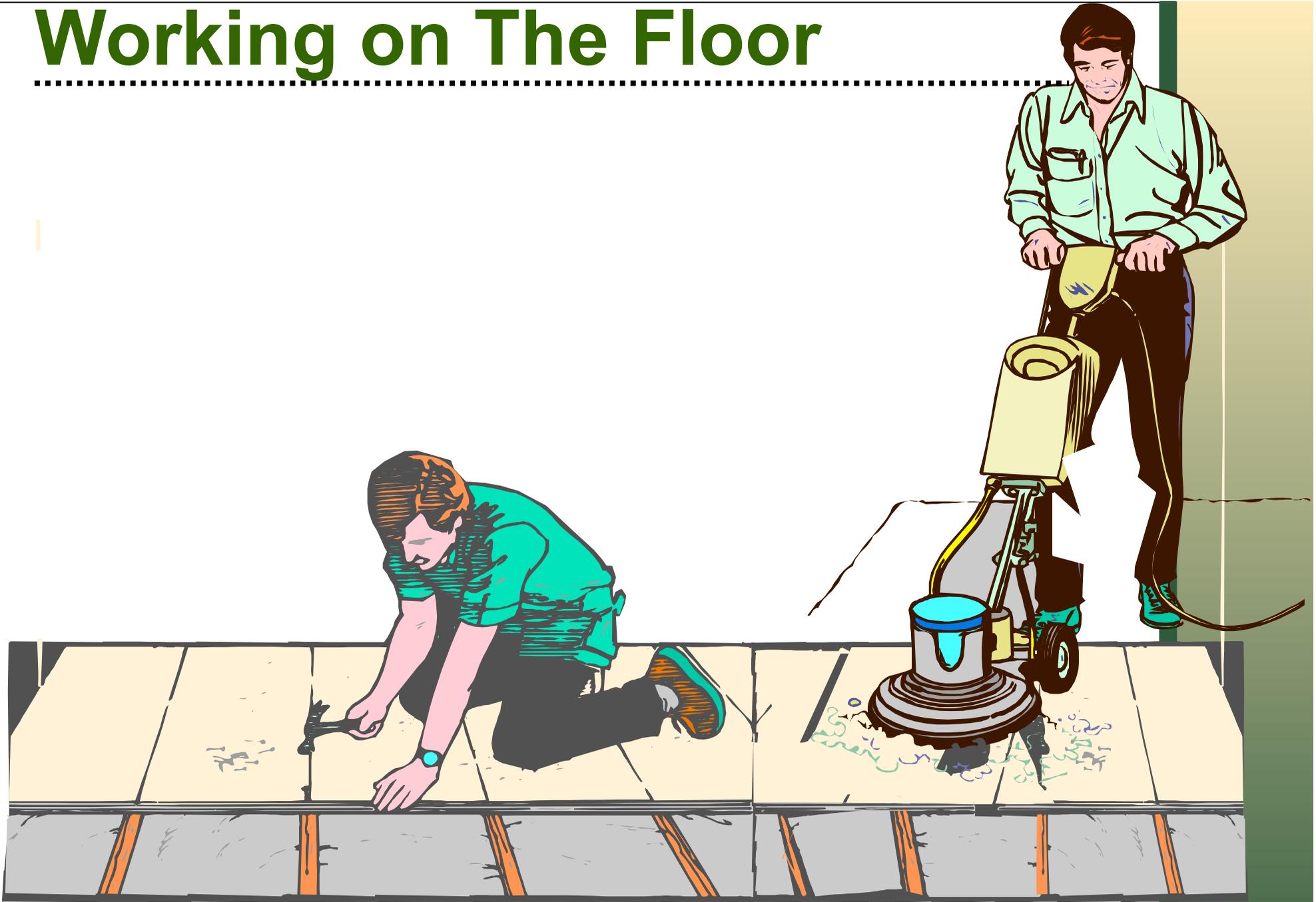
**Facility** - home, apartment,  
condo

**Floor** – bathroom, kitchen



# Working on The Floor

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# It's All In The Name

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Angels Unaware  
We Care  
Forest Haven  
Friendship Village  
Sunrise Community  
Over the Rainbow  
Sunshine, Inc.  
Angels Sitting On High-  
House of Joy  
Hope Haven  
New Horizons  
Open Arms Care  
Helping Hands & Hearts, Inc.  
Green Acres Rehab  
Sunny Oaks, Inc.  
Heavenly Care Remember Me  
Happiness House  
Sunny Hill Farms  
Care Cab

**Do these names evoke  
images of inclusion and  
self-determination?**

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# It's All In The Name (cont'd)

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Accessible Communities, Inc.

Career Development Center

Community Advantage

Community Alternatives

Community Partners

Community Living, Inc.

Community Ventures in Living

Choices for Community Living

Pride, Inc.

Pathfinders

Opportunity Enterprise

Assets, Inc.

Enable

Opportunity Living

Creative Living, Inc.

Modern Support  
Services



**What visions are evoked  
by these agency  
names?**

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# Oxymorons

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Group Home

Volunteer Friend

Positive Punishment

Therapeutic Hold

Day Activity Room

Independent Supported Living

Required Relaxation

THE LANGUAGE OF  
"HIBBITY HOBBITY"

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# Group Home

**Oxymoron – Groups do not live in homes, families and individuals do.**



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# Group Home

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**Group:** 1) a number of individuals assembled together; 2) an assemblage of related organisms-- often used to avoid taxonomic connotations when the kind or degree of relationship is not clearly defined.

**Home:** 1) a: one's place of residence, b: house; 2) the social unit formed by a family living together; 3) a: a familiar or usual setting: congenial environment, b: habitat; 4) an establishment providing residence and care for people with special needs.

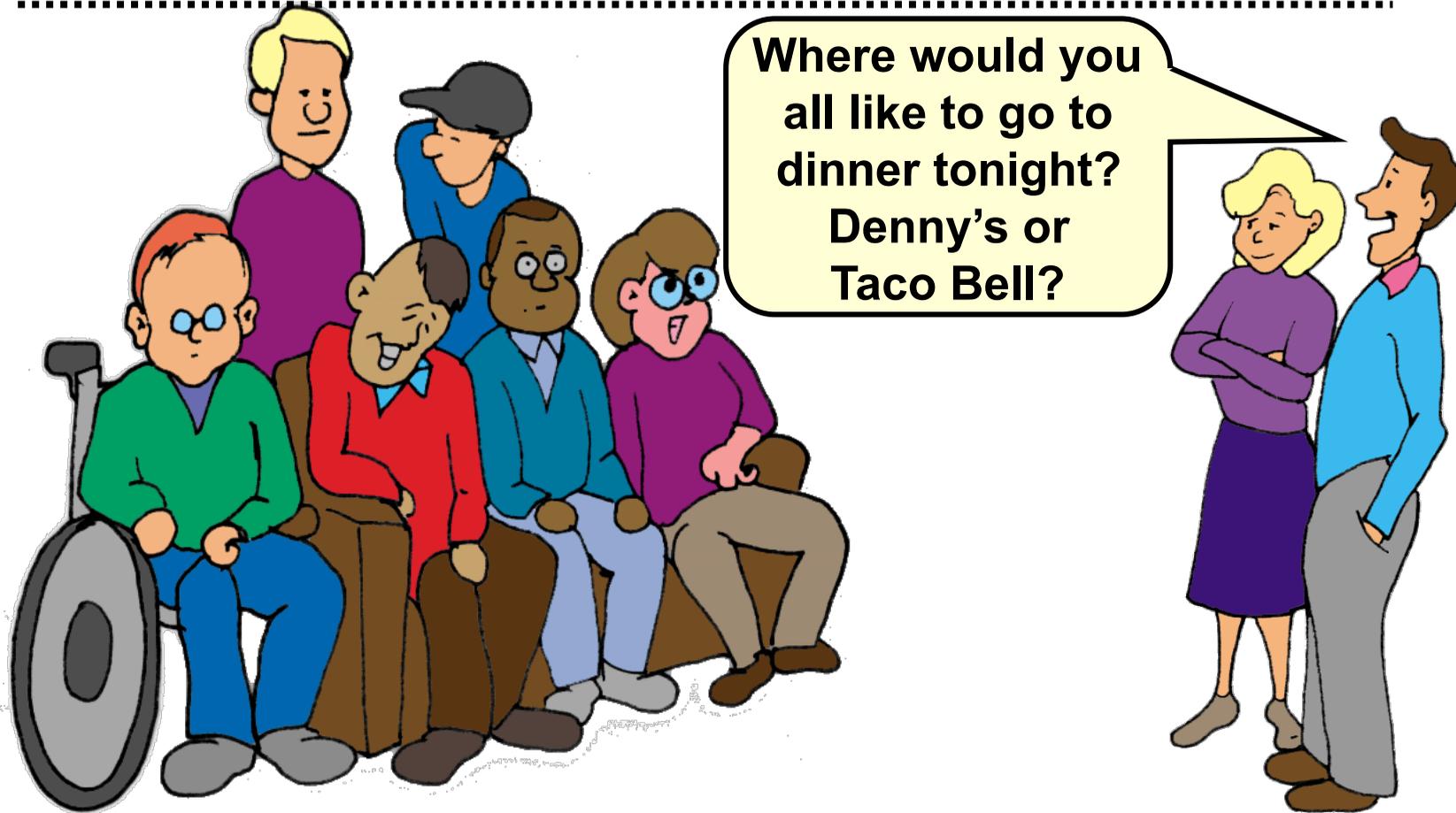


Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster,

Inc., Publishers

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# The Imposition of Sharing Lives



***Group homes were never intended as places where people have to share their lives - they were intended as places where people share space.***

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# Self Injurious Behavior

**Avoid the terms....**

**Self Abuse:** an old Elizabethan term describing what happens to young men who engage in excessive masturbation.

**Self Destructive:** you will never see someone destroying themselves!



# Beds

I work in an 8-bed home.

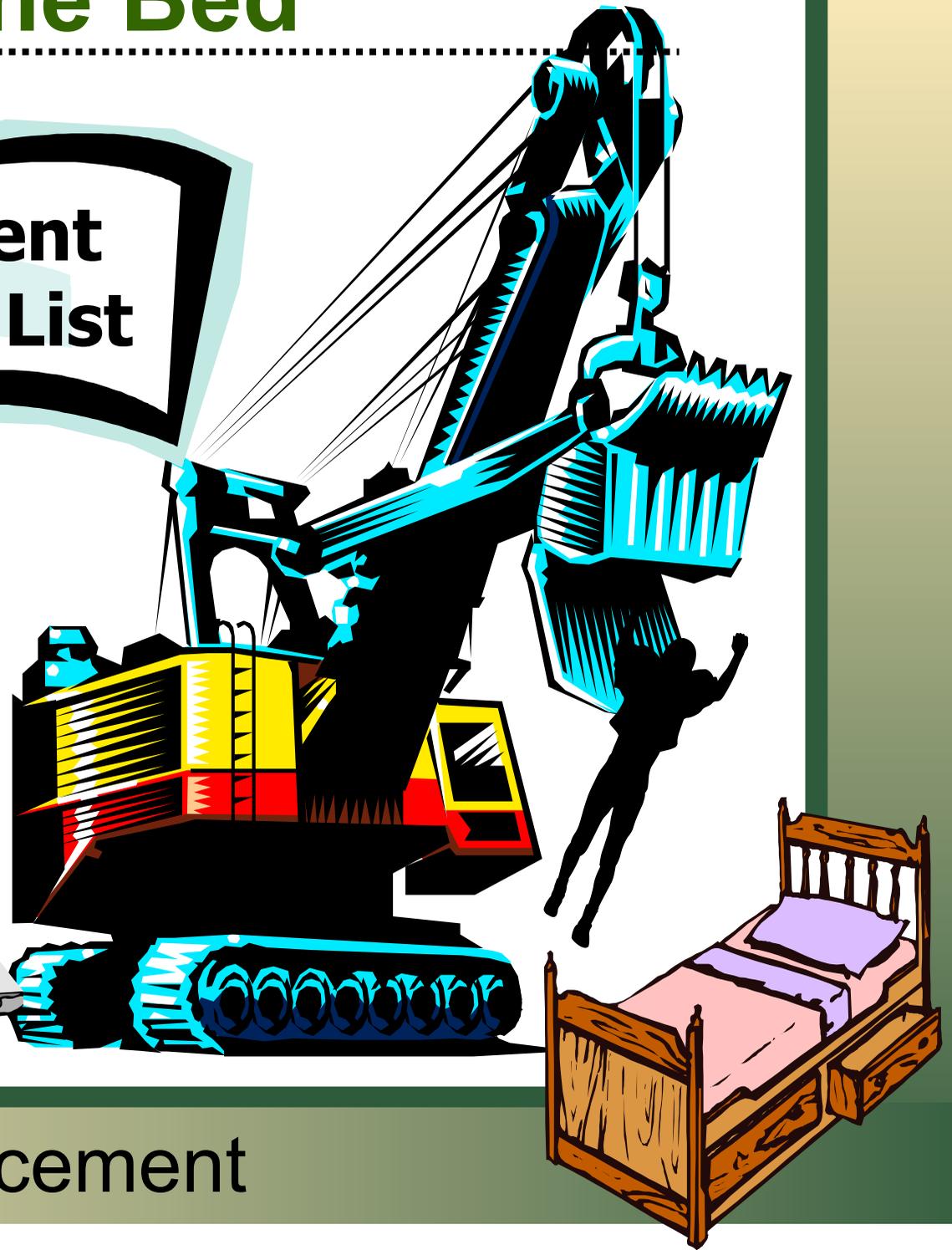
What kind of beds? Double, bunk, hideaway, rollaway, or Murphy?



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# Back-Filling the Bed

Placement  
Waiting List



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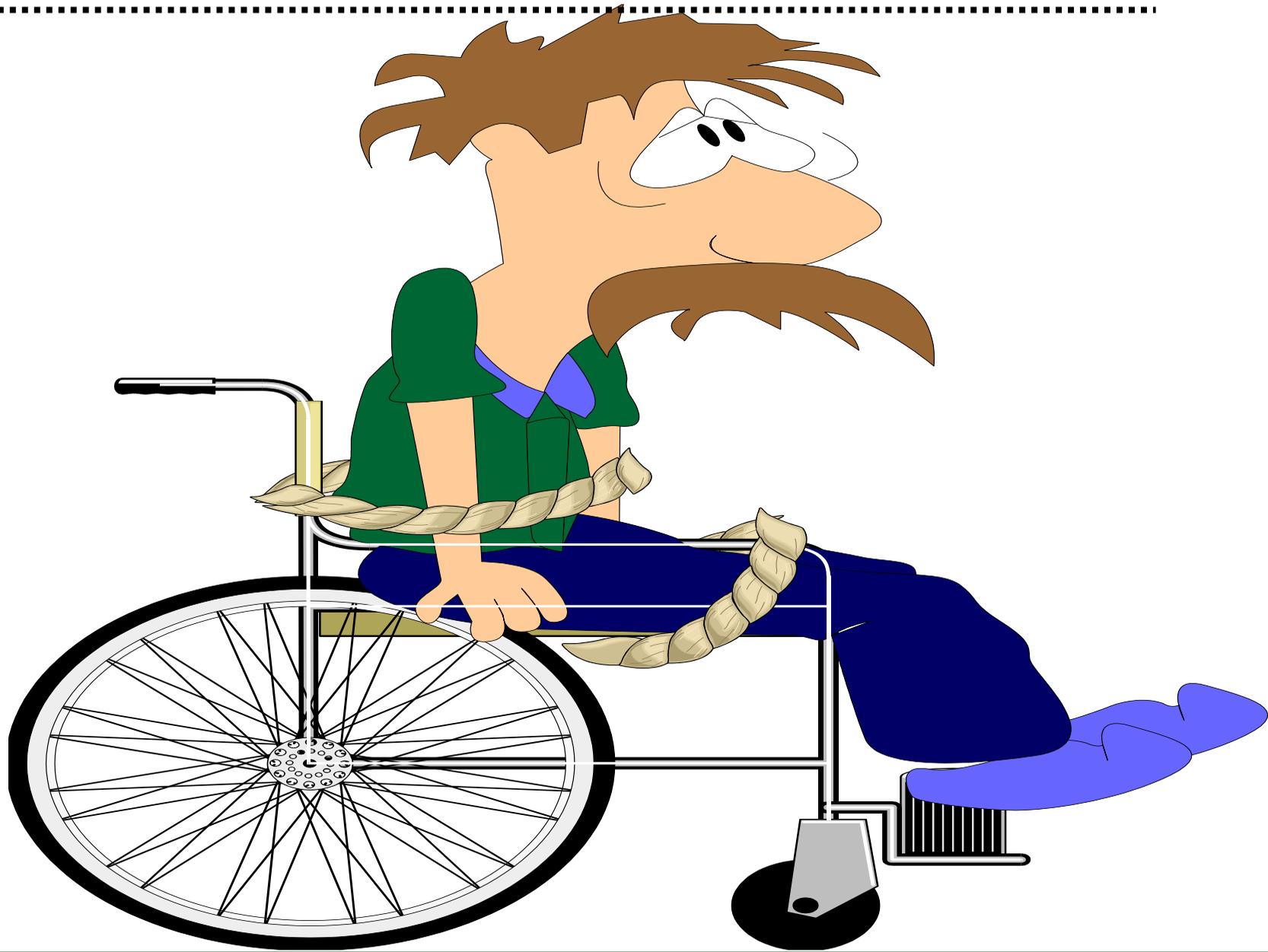
# Discharge Planning



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# Wheelchair-Bound

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# Down Right Wrong

Oh, I just love working with the Downs. They're so sweet!

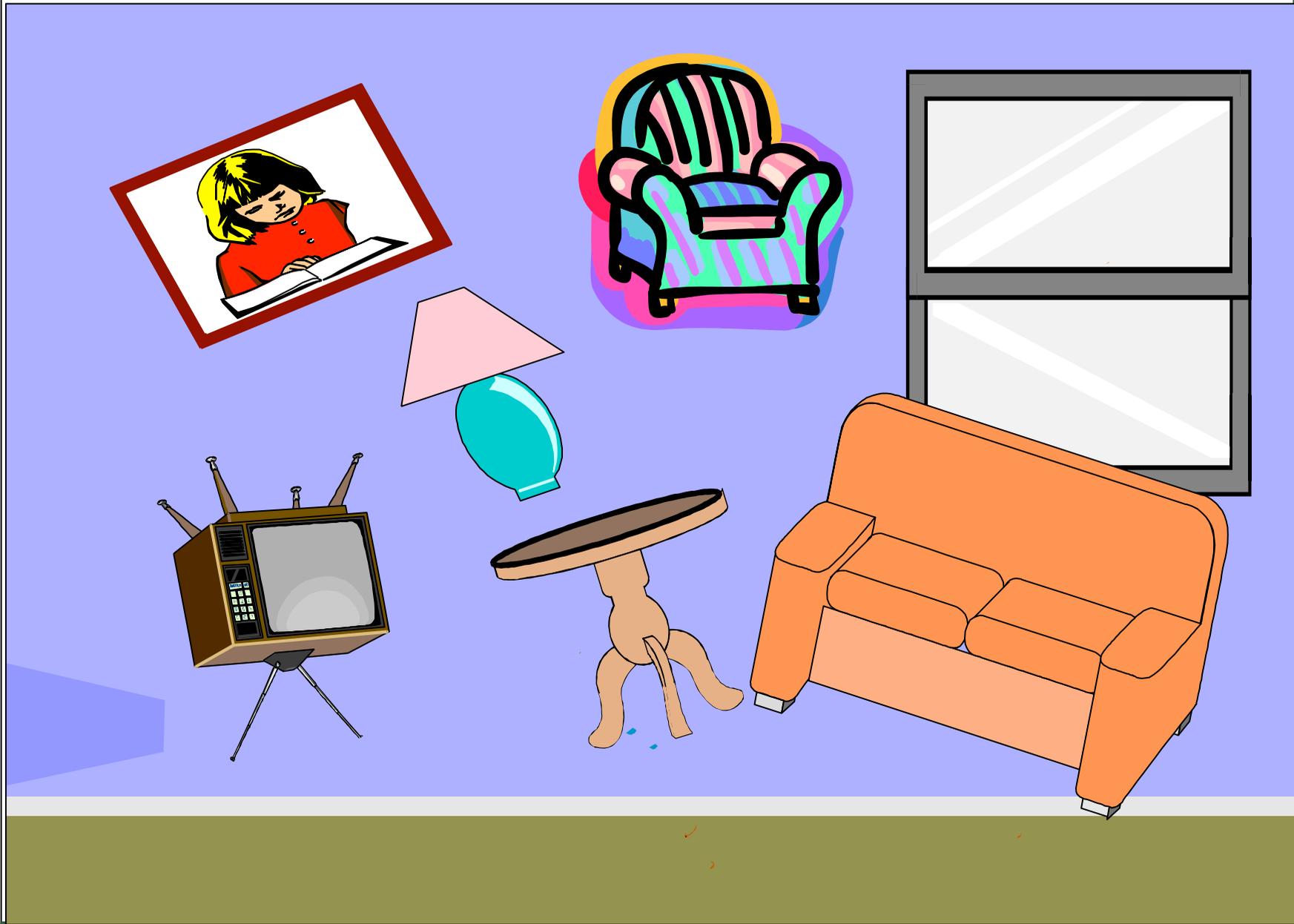


The downs? The downs?  
Downpayment?  
Churchill Downs? Down hill? Down shift? Downpour? Downstream? downstairs? Downtown? Downsize?...

DeNellda Jones  
Gene Jones

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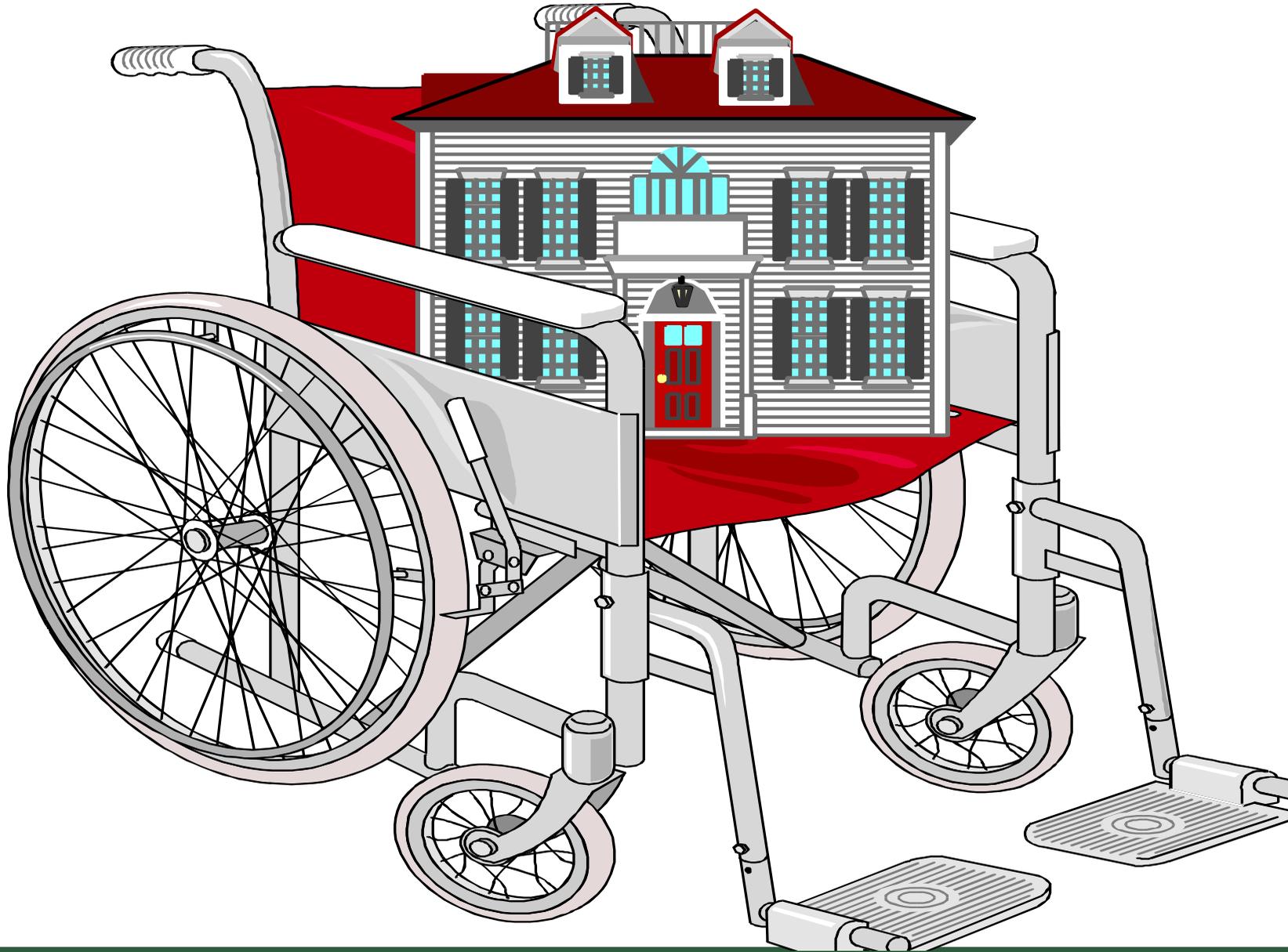
# Behavior Home



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# The Wheelchair Group Home

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# Chairs Eat First

OK, Slow walkers  
and Chairs eat first!

No thanks,  
I'm stuffed.

Did she  
say walkers  
or rockers?

Race you there!

DeNellda Jones  
Gene Jones

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# All In How You Say It

He can't go, He's a chair!  
There's no lift on the van.

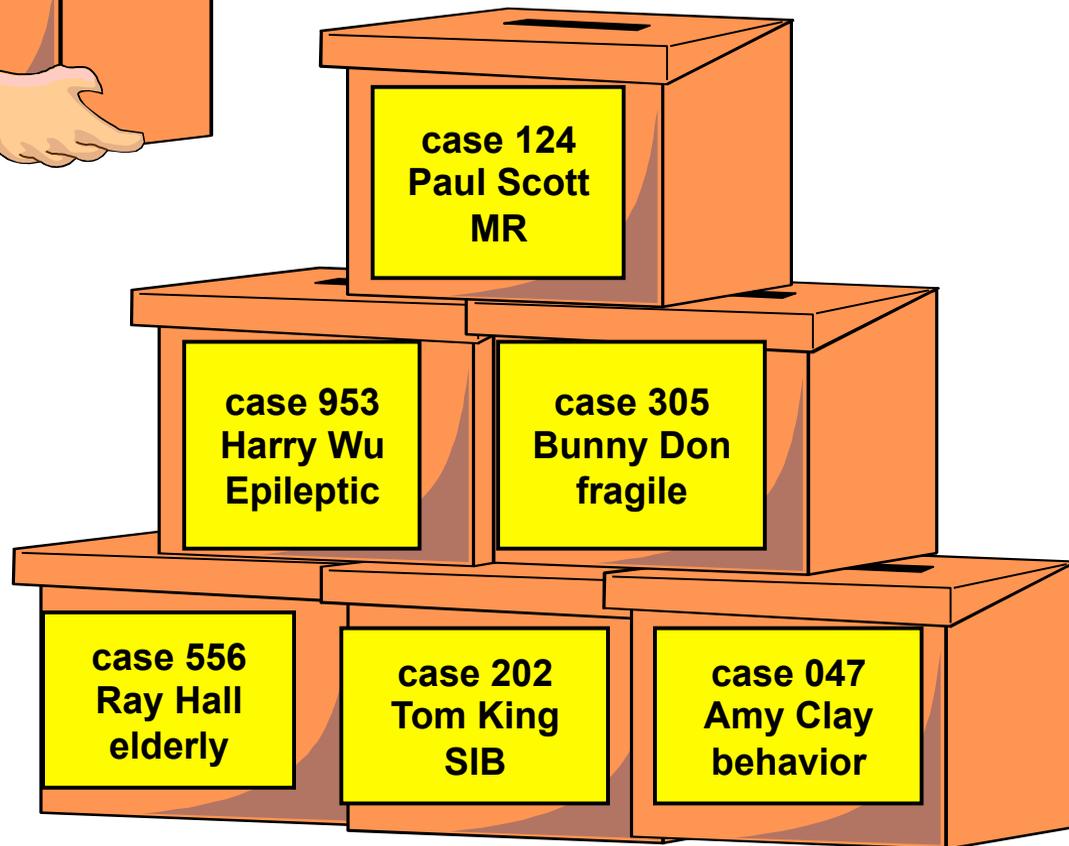
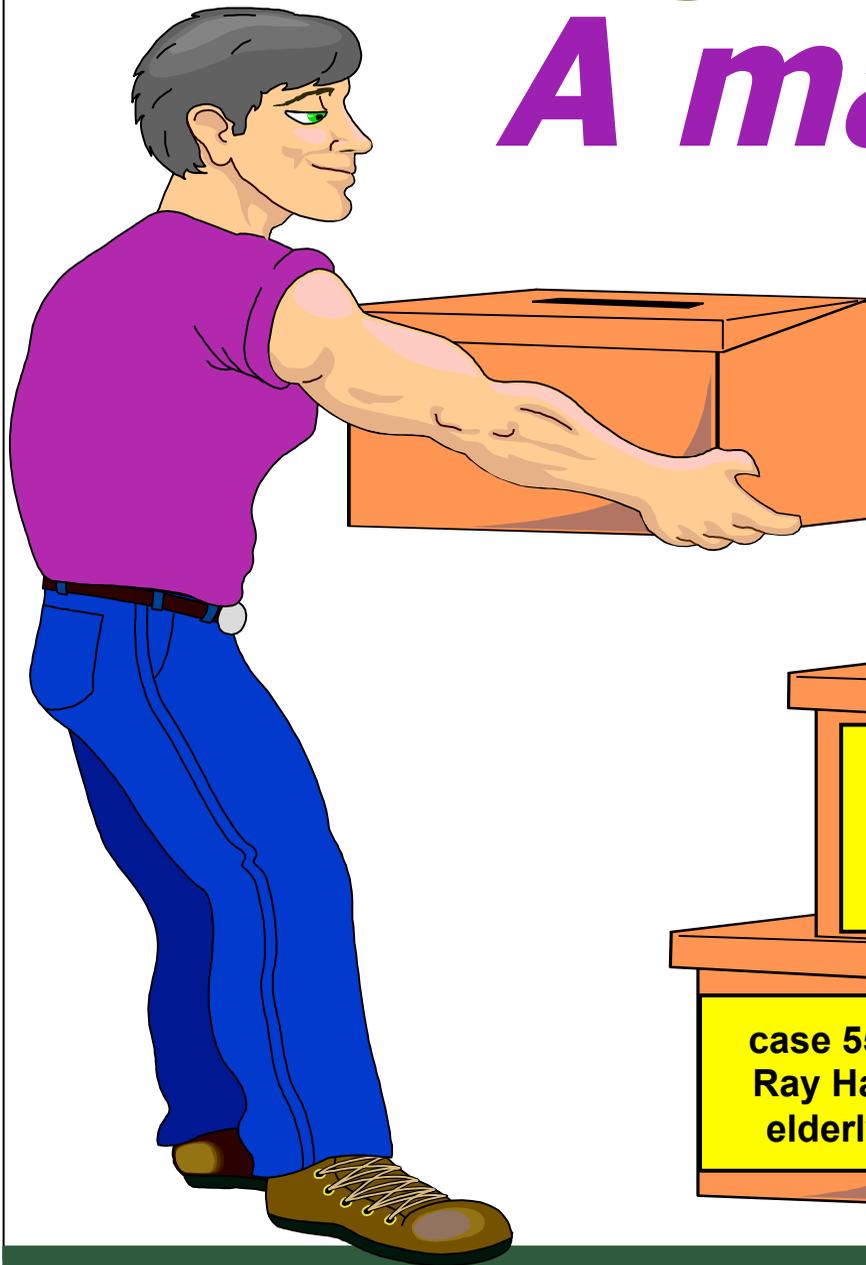
And I got all  
dressed up



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# Case Manager

## *A manager of cases*



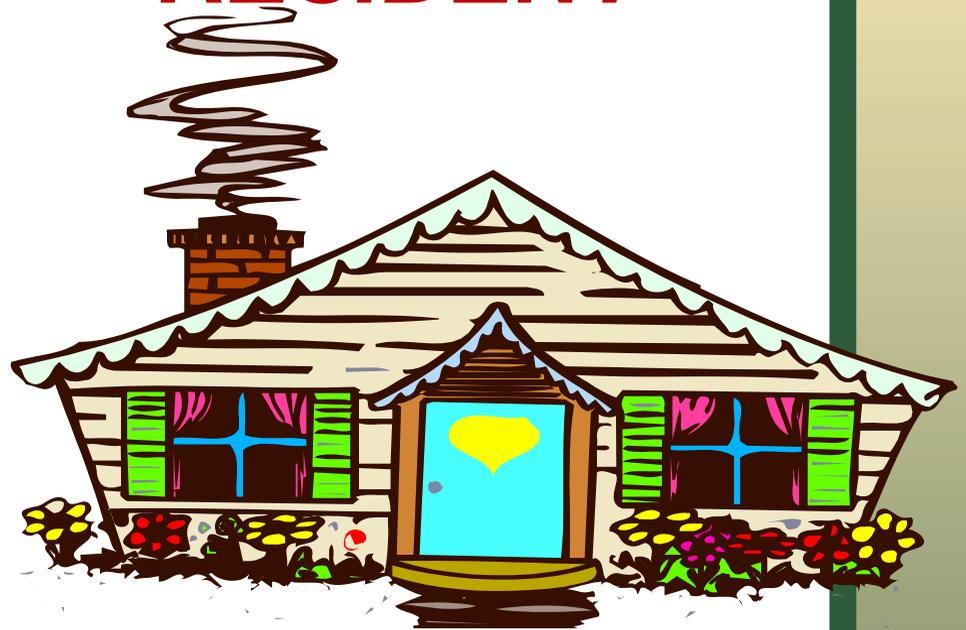
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# What Do You Call Them?

**PATIENT**



**RESIDENT**



**CLIENT**



**CONSUMER**



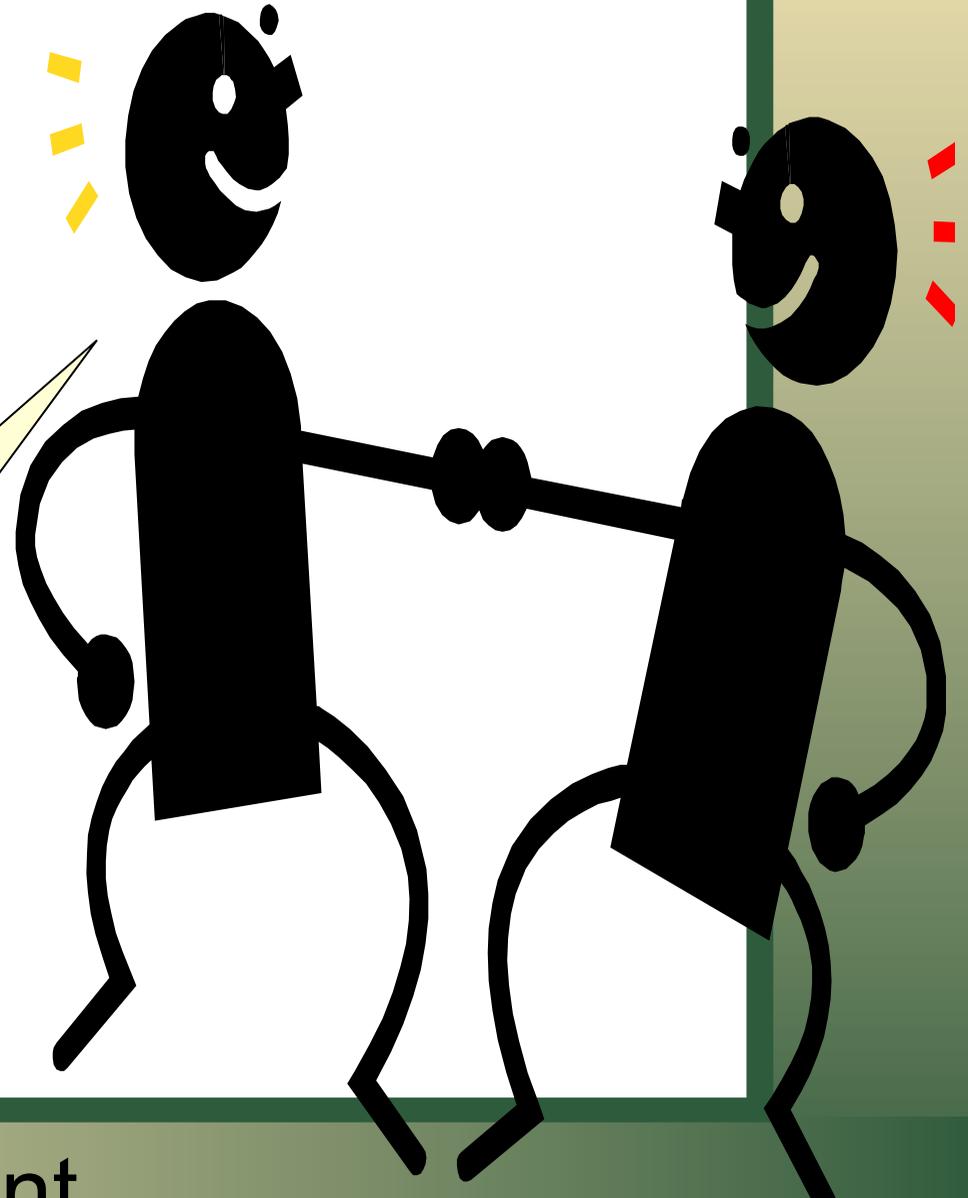
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**Call 'em What?**

**How do we reference  
the people  
we support?**

**That's  
how!**

Hey, how are  
those people you  
support doing?



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# Just Call Me...



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THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS  
USUALLY THE ONE PEOPLE'S PARENTS  
HAVE GIVEN THEM.

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# Banish Labels



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# Banish Labels (cont'd)

There you go -  
now you don't have to  
worry about losing  
your ID card!

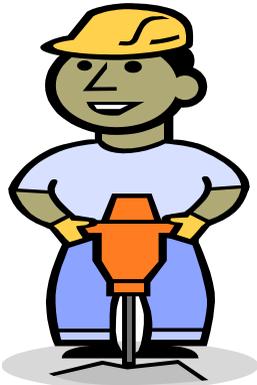


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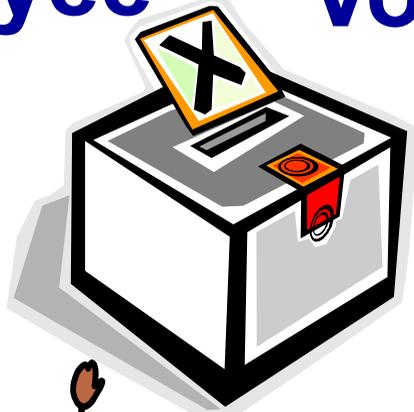
# Role

*We move freely from one role to another without permission—holding many roles at one time.*

Employee



Voter



Patient



Student

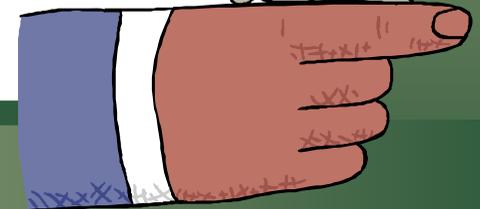


Mentor



Parishioner

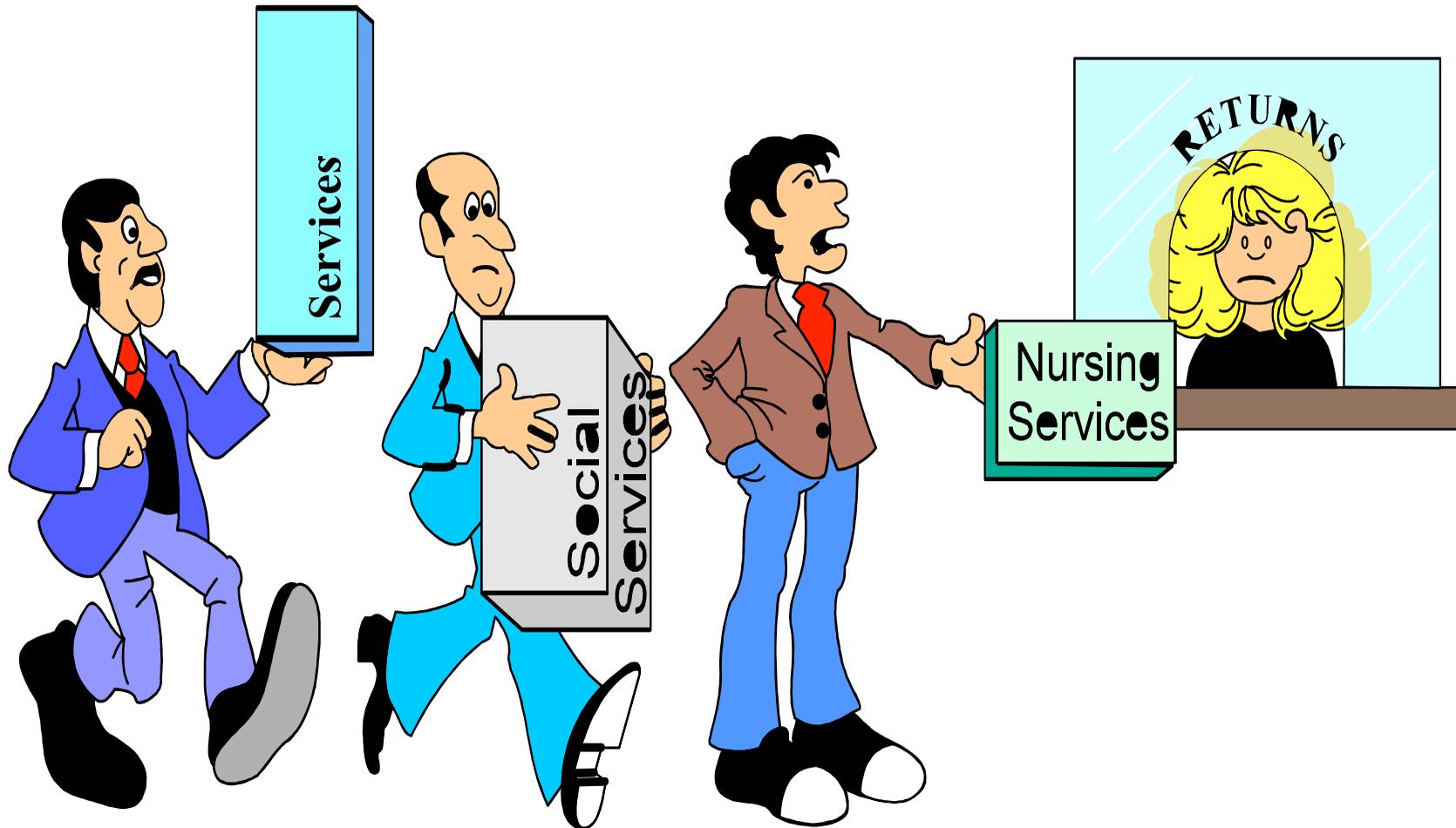
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# Consumers

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*If they are consumers,  
where is the return window?*



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# Consumer

## FLASHBACKS



Two consumers shown here from A. F. Tredgold's *Text-Book of Mental Deficiency (Amentia)*. This was the primary textbook in cognitive impairment from its first publication in 1908 through its eighth edition published in 1952. Its dedication reads: "To all those persons of sound mind who are interested in the welfare of their less fortunate fellow creatures."

### 1848: THE TERM 'CONSUMER' COMES ON THE SCENE

Ralph Nader's grandparents weren't yet alive when people with disabilities were first called "consumers" by human services systems.

Samuel Gridley Howe, progressive leader of America's institutional movement, had this to say to the Massachusetts state legislature in 1848: "There are at least a thousand persons of this class who not only contribute nothing to the common stock, but who are ravenous consumers; who are idle and often mischievous, and who are dead weights upon the material prosperity of the State."

The term caught on and became a buzzword in human services which persists even today. In 1858, Henry Knight cut the ribbon on the first institution for undesirables in Connecticut, saying, "Being consumers and not producers they are a great pecuniary burden to the state."

*Mouth* May – June 2001

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# People-first Language

People-first language is a form of linguistic prescriptivism in English, aiming to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities, as such forming an aspect of disability etiquette.

The basic idea is to impose a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second, such as “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people”, in order to emphasize that they are “people first”.



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# People-first Language (cont'd)

The speaker is thus expected to internalize the idea of a disability as a second attribute, not a characteristic of a person's identity. Critics of this rationale point out that separating the "person" from the "trait" implies that the "trait" is inherently bad or "less than", and thus dehumanizes people with disabilities.

The term people-first language first appears in 1988 as recommended by advocacy groups in the United States. Wikipedia



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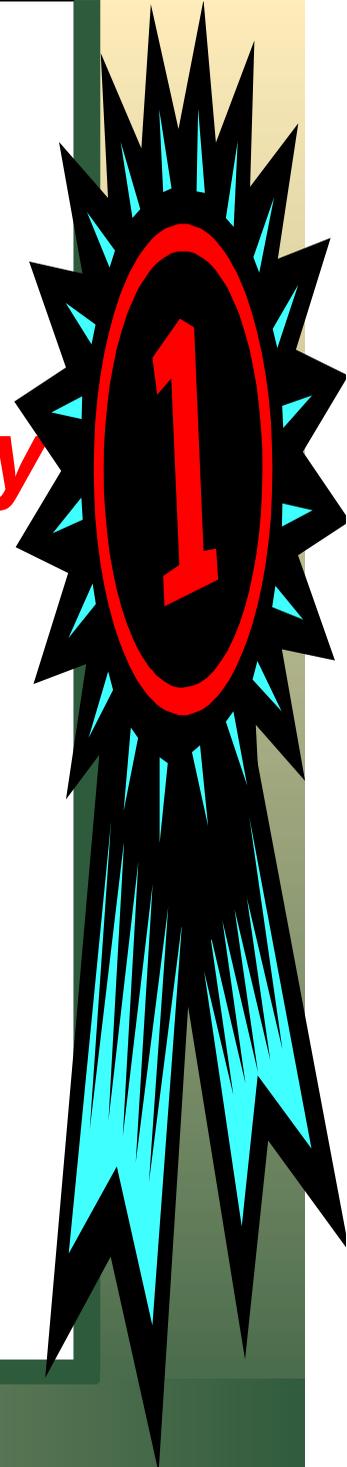
# People - first Language (cont'd)

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- ⊗ *People with Developmental Disabilities*
- ⊗ *People with Intellectual Disability*
- ⊗ *People with Cerebral Palsy*
- ⊗ *People with Epilepsy*

***The disability is secondary, it is but a characteristic of the person. It is not who they are!!***

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# The Deaf

The term hearing impaired is rejected by the majority of deaf people where the terms hard-of-hearing, deaf are preferred. Wikipedia

**Deaf culture is not about contemplating what deaf people cannot do and how to fix the problems – deaf people celebrate what they can do.**

**If given the opportunity to become hearing most “deaf” people would remain deaf.** Dr. Bill Visccars, ASL University



# Did You Ever Say...

or heard others say...

*-He's a body rocker*

*-She's a head banger*

*-She's a runner*



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# AWOL/Elope

**AWOL** : absent from a post, especially a military position assigned, without official permission

**Elope**: leave secretly to get married; to go away suddenly especially in order to marry or cohabit with a lover without the knowledge or consent of parents or guardian

**Universal Language:**

- left without permission
- left without staff knowledge
- left without supervision
- left without support



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# Did You Ever Say...

or heard others say...

- He's a body rocker
- She's a head banger
- She's a runner
- He's a food grabber
- She's a hair puller
- He's a "hoarder"
- He's a feces smearer



**This is not WHO they are.**

**Never define a Person by characteristics which erode the quality of their life.**

# That's Not Who They Are

As a consultant I review thousands of pages of Progress Notes, Shift Notes, Incident Committee meeting minutes and Anecdotal Notes. Unfortunately I find that all too frequently we are still using descriptors to document our observations about individuals with developmental disabilities.

Head banger

Agitator

Fabricator

Self abuser

Rectal digger

Pack Leader

These descriptors are stigmatizing, devaluing and insensitive and will follow people all of their lives.

How would we feel if others identified us by our most unfortunate habits and behavioral issues?



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# Labels

Jars  
have  
labels....  
people  
don't!



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# More Labels



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# Explain The Difference

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He/she is...

Schizophrenic

Psychotic

Sociopathic

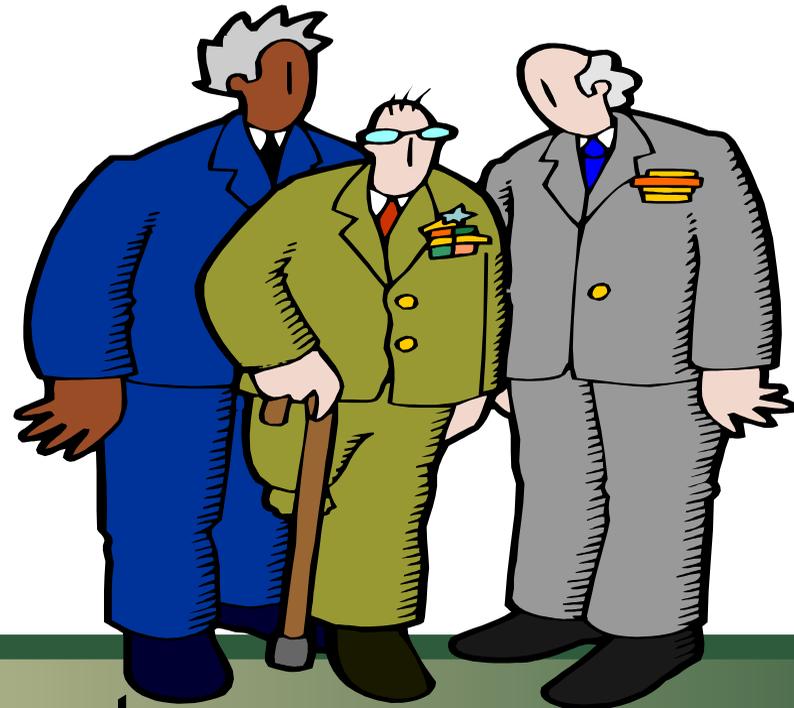
Manic

An amputee

A diabetic

An albino

An alcoholic



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# Words - What 'ya Say?

The image cannot be displayed. Your computer may not have enough memory to open the image, or the image may have been corrupted. Restart your computer, and then open the file again. If the red x still appears, you may have to delete the image and then insert it again.

**\*“We have 45 independents”**

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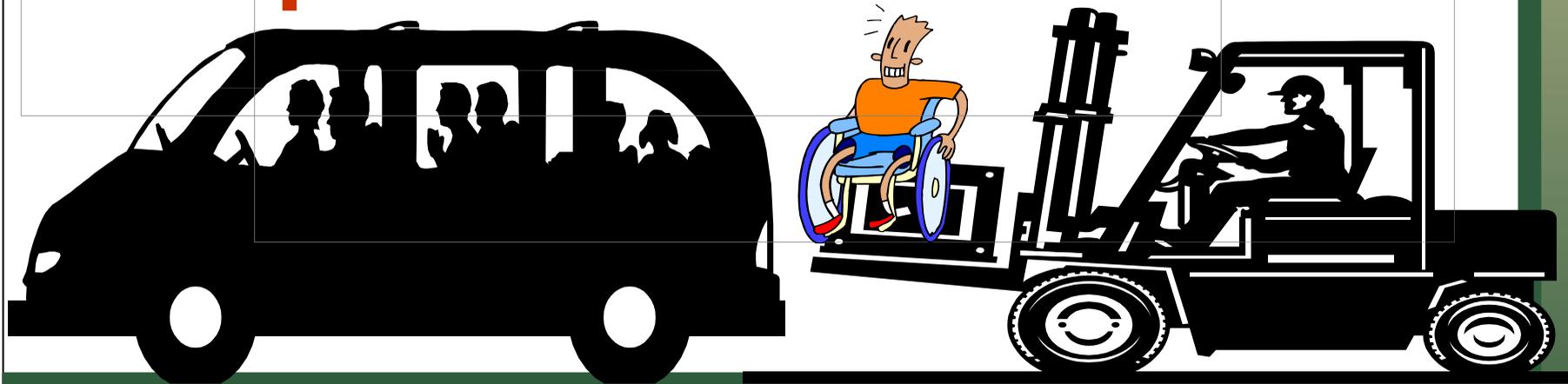
**\*“I just made a van run”**

**“We support 10 apartment people”**

**“The staff are loading the van”**

**“She completed the med pass”**

**“We operate a behavior home”**



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# Biological References

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**Are adults with developmental disabilities who require pervasive supports referenced as ladies and gentlemen?**

**or**

**Do we default to biological references; females and males?**

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# Demonizing

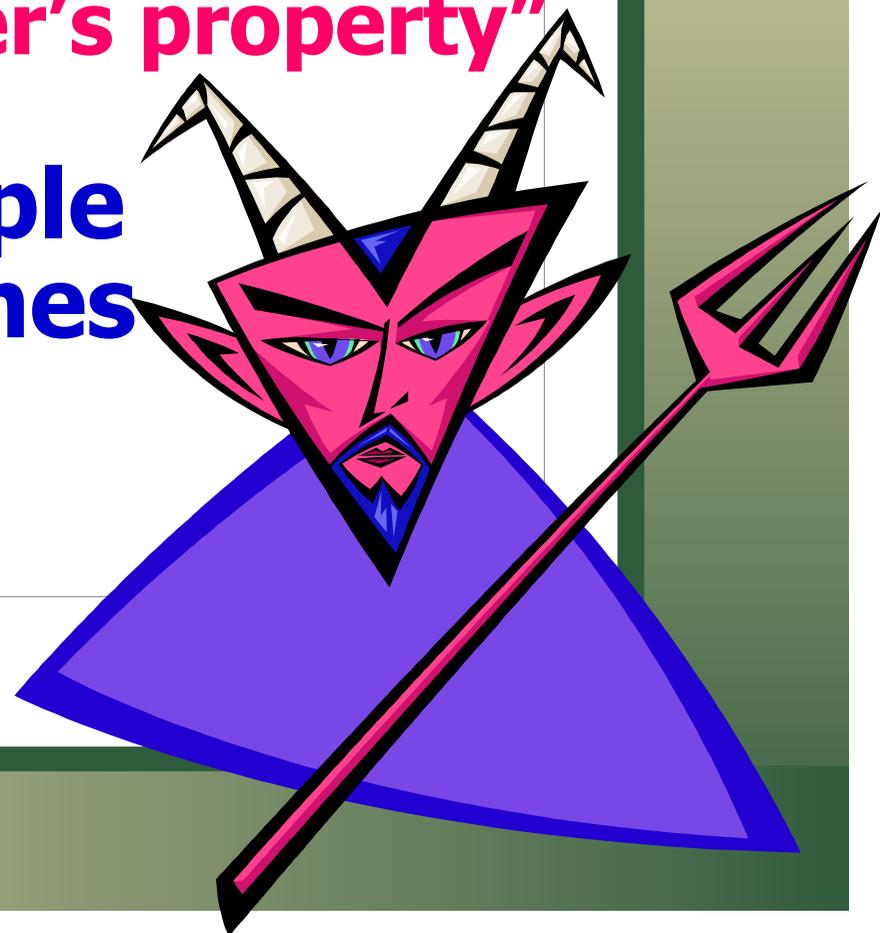
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- “He likes to hurt people”
- “He enjoys threatening others”
- “She makes attacking others a game”
- “He thinks it’s funny to make others cry”
- “She loves to break other’s property”

**When referencing people in evil ways, it tarnishes their reputations.**

**What are their unmet needs?**

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# Don't Correct

---

**We are admitting 2 high-functioning males to the Oak Street house, our 6-bed facility.**

**Don't correct; affirm using Universal Language:**

**Oh, 2 capable men are moving into a home on Oak Street to share a residence with 4 other people.**

**Universal Enhancement**