



Say What?! Communications About Disability that Promote Inclusion & Acceptance

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Mission

**To assist individuals, families,
and the community to include
all people with developmental
disabilities (DD)
in every aspect of life.**

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Identify conceptual models of disability and bias.

Models of Disability

Medical Model (Old)	Interactional/Socio-Political Model (New)
Disability (the person's condition) is an abnormality or deficiency.	Disability is a difference. A natural part of life that should be celebrated as a rich part of our diversity.
Disability is a medical condition that an individual has. Having a disability is considered to be bad.	Disability is a social construct similar to race. Disability is created by interactions between the individual and society. Systems that create barriers and inequitable experiences for people with disabilities are considered to be bad.
The focus is to fix or cure people with disabilities; many times through segregated ways.	The focus is to fix systems and remove barriers. The fix is to create more equitable systems in an inclusive way.
Professionals (the experts) make decisions, lead the work, and control the lives of people with disabilities.	People with disabilities make decisions, lead the work, and control their own lives. People with disabilities are the experts of their own experiences.

- Adapted from the work of Carol J. Gill,
Chicago Institute of Disability Research

Identifying the power of language and how to use inclusive language.

Language is Powerful

- Language can be powerful in creating change.
- Research shows that stigmatizing language can negatively impact how people are treated.
- We want strength-based messaging about people, while framing inequities and problems within systems.
- We need to be intentional with our words.

Terminology

Do Not Use Outdated Terminology

Handicapped

The “R” Word

Special Needs

Consumers

Client

Patient

Euphemisms should not be used

Handicapable

Differently-abled

Physically Challenged

Uniquely-abled

Do Use:

- Accessible
- People
- People with disabilities
- Disability

Messaging

- No pity
- No inspirational messaging
- Stella Young TED Talk Video: [I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much](#)
- No puzzle pieces, [The Problem with the Autism Puzzle Piece](#)
- No exclusion or segregation

Best Practices

- Think about Disability through the lens of the Social Model.
- Consider sub-cultures of disability you may be working with and what terminology they use.
- Never correct someone in how they identify personally.
- Check your language and messaging about Disability. Be sure the messages are not inspirational or invoke pity.
- Include people with disabilities in your work - “Nothing About us Without Us”.
- #SayTheWord - Disability
- Continue to learn about Disability Culture.

**Recognize the use of “Plain Language”
and accessibility features in
communications.**

How MODDC makes communications accessible

- 5th-grade-level language, where possible
- 16pt or larger font on all materials
- Image and video captions (Not AI-generated, not alt text)
- Use color contrast checker
- Offer paper materials and videos when requested

How do these features help?

- Helps both disabled and English as second language
- Easier to read by lower-vision people
- Easy to understand, without further research
- For presentations, allows audience to better focus on speaker

Learn how to implement inclusive, best practices in your communications.

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How to write Plain Language

- **Do:**
- Be concise
- Use active voice
- Identify (and write for) your audience
- Organize your document in a logical reading order
- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Use common words
- Uses culturally appropriate words
- Meets all other accessibility standards
- Use videos when possible.
- Don't
- Write long paragraphs
- Include unnecessary information
- Use complex words
- Use jargon

How to write Plain Language

Plain language campaign :

Did you know the Olmstead Decision is one of the most important civil rights rulings for people with disabilities, but many have never heard of it? MODDC's Olmstead Sub-Committee just released a new white paper that breaks down what Olmstead is, why it matters, and how it still impacts community living today.

Pull up the Facebook post and press!

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Our favorite tools for accessibility

- [Hemingway App for readability](#)
- [WebAim Contrast Checker](#)
- Canva Magic Switch
- [Plain Language - SARTAC](#)



Get Involved with MODDS

- Apply for a grant
- Connect with a project
- Attend a training
- Apply for Partners in Policymaking
- Become a Council member
- Sign for emails at moddcouncil.org