

Disability Language & Facts

LANGUAGE WE USE

General Disability Language

- “Neurodiverse/Neurodivergent” can be used to reference intellectual disabilities
- “Neurotypical” instead of “normal”
- “Intellectual disabilities” or “developmental disabilities” instead of “Special Needs”
- Avoid language on function levels like “high/low functioning” and instead focus on strengths and progress with phrases like “strong/gifted in” and “practicing/working on”
- “IDD” means intellectual and developmental disabilities

Autism-Specific Language

- We prefer to use Identity-first language instead of People-first language when communicating about autism
- “Autistic person” or “autistic” instead of “person with autism” or “person has autism”
- “On the autism spectrum” is generally accepted by all

Rule of Thumb

If you’re unsure which language to use, the best thing to do is ask the individual themselves.

DISABILITY FACTS

- 1 in 4 adults in the US have some disability—about 13% of the population or 45 million people.
- Disability is the third largest minority group in the US.

WHO WE SERVE

At Pathways, we serve adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Below are some facts about the population we serve:

- Developmental disabilities are a group of disabilities that begin during developmental stages of life and impair physical, learning, language, or behavior.
- Intellectual disability is a term used when there are limits to a person’s ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life.
- 6.5 million people in the US have an intellectual disability.
- The most commonly known intellectual and developmental disabilities are Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome, and Autism. Some other intellectual and developmental disabilities are Apert Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Prader-Willi Syndrome, Phenylketonuria, Cerebral Palsy, and Spina Bifida.
- 1 in 44 children are diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum in the US.
- 1 out of 700 children are diagnosed with Down Syndrome in the US.

