



# **WHAT IS PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE?**

(Graphic of meeting between a man in a manual wheelchair and a man standing next to a desk overlooking a cityscape not available in alternative formats.)

## **Words are VERY POWERFUL!**

People First Language is a respectful way of discussing disability. This respect will help to eliminate the use of labeling, stereotyping, victimization, and discrimination towards people with disabilities.

We say, for example, “She has a learning disability,” instead of saying, “She is learning disabled.” The vast majority of Americans say, for example, “He has cancer.” We wouldn’t think of saying, “He is cancerous.”

## **Why did that happen with disability terms?**

It is because of our “common disability history.” So the Disability Community has adopted People First Language as one way to collectively and actively combat old prejudices (“handicapism” or “ableism”), disparities, and inequities.

## **Is it important to use People First Language?**

**YES!!** People First Language recognizes that someone with a disability is a PERSON – FIRST, and that their disability is one part of who they are, but NOT ALL OF WHO THEY ARE. People with disabilities are also friends, spouses, students, grandparents, voters, homeowners, shoppers, care givers, readers, employees, business owners, bowlers, and TV watchers and ....

We are NOT people with handicaps (“caps-in-hand” or beggars) – “disability” strongly suggests that we also have abilities.

People First Language asks that everyone respect the “DISABILITY COMMUNITY.” As a “community of people” – of all ages with all types of disabilities, and abilities, we say we are “PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES” with PRIDE because we are PEOPLE FIRST!!