



# A Pledge of Respect for Children with Special Needs

## *Using People First Language*

Inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities begins with adults who are respectful of all children's rights to belong and participate fully in early care and education settings. All children have the right to dignity and respect and not to be judged by their special needs or disability.

To ensure this right of respect, I will use People First Language in my communications. I pledge to:

- Name the person first and the condition second. Specifically:

### I WILL SAY:

A person with disabilities  
Jonah has a cognitive disability.  
Mike has autism.  
JoAnn uses a wheelchair.  
Steve has a physical disability.  
Maria has a mental health condition.  
Tyrone communicates with...  
Accessible Parking

### INSTEAD OF:

A disabled or handicapped person  
Jonah is mentally retarded.  
...that autistic child, Mike.  
JoAnn is wheelchair-bound.  
He's a crippled child.  
...crazy Maria is mentally ill.  
Tyrone is non-verbal.  
Handicapped Parking

- Model back People First Terminology when others do not use it.
  - When someone says "a *challenging kid*..." continue the conversation by modeling back, "Yes, a *child with challenging behaviors*..."
- Inform others about People First Language by sharing this pledge with other individuals or organizations.
- Remember that changing the way we speak is a process and takes time.

I make this pledge on \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_