

**HB**

**357**

# Alaska State Legislature

Representative Peggy Wilson

House District 2

Putting Alaska's Families First

## MEMORANDUM

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Date: February 24, 2006

To: Senator Dyson, Chair Senate HES

From: Representative Peggy Wilson <sup>W</sup>

Re: HB 357 "Statutory References to Disabilities"

This is a request to have HB 357 "Statutory References to Disabilities" brought up for a hearing before the Senate HES Committee at your earliest convenience.

HB 357 "Statutory References to Disabilities" would change all language in our existing Alaska Statutes that currently use 'handicap' and replace those occurrences with positive and respectable terms such as 'person with a disability' or 'disability'. This change does not substantially affect current and existing law, but is an important change that would be greatly appreciated by the disabled community and the various departments that deal with these existing Alaska Statutes.

I have attached a sponsor statement and sectional of HB 357. Thank you for your consideration.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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**REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON  
HOUSE DISTRICT 2**

## SPONSOR STATEMENT

### HB 357 "Updating the terminology in statutes for persons with disabilities"

After the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, most states modified their statutes to reflect a positive reference- changing the word "handicapped" to "person with a disability". This bill changes all Alaska State Statutes to rid them of this archaic reference that has negative and demoralizing connotations in reference to a person's ability and potential. Using "a person with a disability" reflects language that is in Federal legislation- the Federal Workforce Investment Act, the American's with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1991; The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1992 and 1998.

These changes are being proposed in consultation with the Department of Labor, other state agencies, and along with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. There is support for this bill from numerous other organizations such as the South-East Alaska Independent Living Center, which represent people with disabilities. This bill is not designed to modify any existing requirements or exemptions, nor will it be changing any existing requirements or exemptions with the new terminology. This bill is designed to serve the constituents of everyone across the state that are affected by this existing negative and demeaning terminology.

I ask for your support of HB 357 to update and modernize the language that is in our Alaska Statutes.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Letter of Intent  
House Finance Committee  
CSHB 357 (FIN)  
Adopted February 13, 2006

The legislature intends to modernize the terminology in statutes in recognition of the ability of individuals with disabilities to contribute to society and to the state.

The legislature does not intend to alter in any manner the substantive provisions of the statutes in which the terminology is changed under this Act, including provisions relating to the Alaska Mental Health Trust, provisions defining who is a trust beneficiary arising under the Alaska Mental Health Enabling Act of 1956, or provisions relating to the mental health trust settlement in *Weiss v. State*, 4FA-82-2208 Civil, under ch. 66, SLA 1991; chs. 5 and 6, FSSLA 1994; and chs. 1 and 2, SSSLA 1994.

The Legislature does not intend for the provisions in this Act to alter the effect of any statute pertaining to compliance with federal law or state law relating to access for individuals with disabilities or rights for individuals with disabilities.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Representative Kevin Meyer  
Co-Chairman, House Finance Committee

**Adopted by the House  
February 22, 2006**

Committee Copy

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 1  
 Bill Version: CSHB 357(HES)  
 ( H ) Publish Date: 2/1/06  
 Dept. Affected: Health & Social Services

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction):

Title: UPDATING TERMINOLOGY IN STATUTES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES RDU Senior and Disabilities Svcs  
 Component: Community DD Grants

Sponsor: WILSON  
 Requester: HOUSE (HES)

Component No. 309

**Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
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<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES (0)</b>						
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**FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)**

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other(Specify Type-do not abbreviate)						
Other(Specify Type-do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2006) cost: \_\_\_\_\_

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2007 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The Division of Senior and Disabilities Services does not anticipate any financial impact as a result of HB 357.

Prepared by: Rod Moline, Director  
 Division: Senior & Disabilities Services  
 Approved by: Karleen Jackson, Commissioner  
 Agency: Department of Health and Social Services

Phone 465-3372  
 Date/Time 01/20/2006  
 Date 01/20/2006

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 2  
 Bill Version: CSHB 357(HES)  
 (H) Publish Date: 2/1/06

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Department: Labor and Workforce Development  
 Title: Statutory References to Disabilities RDU: Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Component: Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Sponsor: Representative Wilson Administration  
 Requester: House HES Component Number: 202

**Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
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<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
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**FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)**

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2006) cost: None  
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2007 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

There is no anticipated financial impact to the department as a result of this legislation.

Prepared by: Gale Sinnott, Director Phone: 465-6927  
 Division: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Date/Time: 1/17/06 2:55 PM  
 Approved by: Greg O'Claray, Commissioner Date: 1/17/2006  
 Agency: Department of Labor and Workforce Development

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A VOCABULARY LESSON**

### **Handicap vs. Disability**

The language in Section 504 uses the generic term "handicap," referring in later paragraphs to the conditions rendering a person handicapped; those individuals for whom the regulations were written strongly prefer the term "disability," making a clear distinction between the two words. A **disability** is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working). The disability can be caused by a disease, accident or defective gene, but it is a residual effect, not the disease or injury itself. Only when the disability interacts with a particular set of environmental conditions is the person **handicapped**. A flight of stairs preventing a person in wheelchair from reaching his/her destination on an upper floor of a building renders that person handicapped; the presence of a working, accessible elevator removes the handicap. A print exam renders an individual with a visual impairment handicapped; an oral exam removes that barrier and hence, the handicap. Federal and state regulations, and a strong appreciation of the rights of all individuals, disabled or not, serve to eliminate or reduce handicapping situations.

### **Barriers: Architectural vs. Attitudinal**

No environment is barrier-free. Architectural barriers can for the most part be eliminated, by providing ramps, curb cuts, handicapped parking, appropriate lighting, elevators with lowered panels, electric doors, modified and plentiful bathroom facilities, and a host of other physical changes to an environment. Most modifications, while perhaps made specifically to accommodate a person with a disability, also end up benefiting many others, so the cost is justifiable. Attitudinal barriers are much more difficult to eradicate, and can be found in all areas of academic and social life. They can show up with a condescending pat on the head to a person in a wheelchair, with the impatient completing of a sentence for a person with a speech impairment who is trying to ask or state something, with an unwillingness to take seriously a job applicant who has a disability, with the reticence of an instructor to fail a poor student just because that person has a disability or, conversely, the unwillingness to allow an appropriate accommodation that might just allow that student to earn an A. They surface when a nondisabled person uses a handicapped parking space, saying "I'll only be a minute," and an individual with a disability is therefore unable to find a slot wide enough to allow egress from his/her vehicle. The English language demonstrates an array of patronizing and demeaning attitudes, simply by its use of words like: afflicted, courageous, crippled, deaf-and-dumb, deformed, inspiring, victim, wheelchair-bound/confined to a wheelchair. Unless the term "college-bound" is a description of students who are chained to their seats in freshman composition class (nice idea, perhaps!), "wheelchair-bound" is not a description of students strapped into their wheelchairs; rather than being confined by their chairs, these students use the wheelchairs as a vehicle to give them independence and mobility, getting them out of the classroom and into the gym, discos and, yes, the library as well.

### **Visible vs. Invisible Disabilities**

Ironically, individuals with rather obvious physical disabilities are often more easily recognized as having particular needs, and therefore meet with more success in negotiating with faculty, staff and other students. They fit the stereotype. Individuals with invisible disabilities can be handicapped by societal attitudes precisely because others expect them to be "normal" (whatever that term means). A student with a hearing loss who chooses not to wear an obvious hearing aid may be regarded as aloof or antisocial. A person with arthritis may have trouble convincing a faculty member that the pain in her fingers means she needs more time to complete her exams.

Someone with Tourette syndrome may be ostracized by his classmates because of uncontrollable tics and vocalizations. Most learning disabled students have, to the untrained eye, no outward manifestations of their disability, until they attempt to put pen to paper or take an oral exam. The moral of the story: never assume. You can ask that documentation be submitted to the PHED or PALS office (as appropriate) if you have a healthy skepticism, but recognize that different learning styles and physical needs come in widely differing packages.

#### **Accommodation vs. Independence**

Section 504 provides guidelines about certain appropriate accommodations to make a disability less of a handicap. Making an accommodation is the crucial first step, but barrier-removal alone is insufficient. It is not enough to say, "Well, we put in a ramp. The door at the top may be heavy, but another student will usually be around to open it." Or push a high elevator button. Or make a call from a too-high pay phone. Or help with a transfer into a narrow toilet. Or go inside to tell the store guard that someone in a wheelchair is waiting outside in the rain to be let into the service entrance or between the pillars that are placed to prevent shopping cart theft. In all of these situations, well-meaning businesses are only removing half of the barrier, because they are assuming that someone nondisabled will always be accompanying the individual with a disability. The person in the wheelchair is not given the choice of when to enter or exit a building, or when to study or take care of human needs, and is, instead, dependent on the charity of others. By contrast, providing the means for a person with a disability to do his/her own writing and eating and moving around campus independently without having to use a separate entrance or push a doorbell is not an issue of convenience. Rather, it is a matter of human dignity.

#### **Fair vs. Same**

Evaluations of student progress in a class take many forms. Some faculty members, especially those constrained by heavy course loads and large classes, use multiple-choice/true-false objective tests; others have more subjective and comprehensive essay examination formats. Class participation may possibly be a factor in grading, as is a level of understanding and scholarship demonstrated in term papers. While students with disabilities should never be held to lower standards than those by which their classmates are judged, they may on occasion need different avenues to show what they have learned. As an obvious example, a legally blind student asked to take a written exam without the aid of special equipment, a reader, extended time, enlarged print, or other appropriate accommodation may fail that test, not showing a lack of understanding of the material, but merely proving that (s)he has a visual impairment. A student with a communication disorder should never be discouraged from asking questions in class, but, depending upon the nature and intelligibility of his/her speech, perhaps should have the class participation grade reflect only the quality of the questions, not the frequency. In both of these situations, provision of a substitute testing form or alternate ways of demonstrating daily classroom comprehension and vitality are appropriate. If the instructor keeps in mind that the goal of student evaluation is to give the student an opportunity to demonstrate what (s)he knows, then being fair to all students does not necessarily mean treating all students exactly the same.

[http://www.hofstra.edu/studentserv/advise/adv\\_phedvac.cfm](http://www.hofstra.edu/studentserv/advise/adv_phedvac.cfm)

## Defending Your Rights

### Disability Rights:

#### Manual Of Style For Depicting People With Disabilities

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This brochure is one response to a need identified by people with disabilities. The way we portray people with disabilities and our attitudes toward them are critical to their future...and to ours.

#### Disability vs. Handicap

A disability is a condition caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function. Some people have one or more disabilities.

A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines the handicap as "to put at a disadvantage."

People with disabilities prefer to be called just that: people with disabilities. They are not conditions or diseases. For example, an individual is not "an epileptic," but rather "a person with epilepsy."

When writing a story or advertisement, the writer should use the term "people with disabilities" exclusively or, at a minimum, as the initial reference. Subsequent references can use terms like "person with a disability" or "individuals with disabilities."

In certain circumstances, the terms "persons with disabilities" or "individuals with disabilities" may, for grammatical or narrative reasons, be more appropriate than "people with disabilities." Generally, however, "people with disabilities" is the preferred initial reference.

#### Written Communications

Copywriters should portray people with disabilities as they would anyone else - with all human strengths and weaknesses. In all advertising, writers should depict people with disabilities in an appropriate manner and non-judgmental manner. Never refer to people with disabilities as "disabled" simply to fill space or to accommodate design layouts.

#### Interviewing Techniques

When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or interpreter. Conduct interviews in a manner that emphasizes abilities, achievements and individual qualities.

Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when calling everyone present by their first name.

If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted before acting. Then listen to or ask for instructions.

**Disability: related terms and their meanings**

**Blind/Visual Impairment.** Blind refers to a total loss of vision. Visual impairment indicates partial vision, also referred to as partial sight.

**Cerebral Palsy.** A group of conditions resulting from damage to the central nervous system. Do not assume that a person with cerebral palsy also has mental retardation; the two do not necessarily or typically occur together.

**Congenital Disability.** A physical impairment existing since birth.

**Deaf/Hard of Hearing.** Deaf refers to a total loss of hearing. Hard of hearing refers to partial hearing loss ranging from slight to severe.

**Developmental Disability.** Any mental or physical disability manifested by the age of 22 that may continue indefinitely and result in substantial limitation in three or more of the following: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living or economic sufficiency.

**Epilepsy.** Term for various disorders marked by electrical disturbances of the central nervous system and typically manifested by seizures, which are involuntary muscular contractions.

**Learning Disability.** Condition affecting the understanding or use of spoken or written language.

**Mental Illness/Mental Impairment.** A psychiatric disability caused by numerous factors including a biological, physiological or psychological disorder or a chemical disorder of the brain.

**Mental Retardation.** Condition causing significantly below-average intellectual functioning.

**Paraplegia/Hemiplegia/Quadriplegia.** Paraplegia: paralysis of lower half of body. Involves partial or total loss of function of both legs. Hemiplegia: full or partial paralysis of one side of body caused by brain damage due to disease, trauma or stroke. Quadriplegia: paralysis of body involving partial or total loss of function in both arms and legs.

**Service Animals.** Any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability.

**Speech Impairment.** Limited or difficult-to-understand speech patterns.



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## Learn More

### How to Assist Someone Who is Blind Speaking & Writing About Individuals Who are Blind Vision Simulations

#### Speaking & Writing About Individuals Who are Blind

"What should I say?"  
 "How do I not offend them?"

These are just some of the questions that may run through your head when you approach people who are disabled. You feel apprehensive because you don't want to say something that will offend them, especially in this politically correct world.

Here are few tips and language changes that can assist you the next time you meet someone who is disabled:

- Handicap vs. Disabled  
 Handicap is defined as a barrier caused by society or the environment.

Disabled is defined as an impairment in physical functioning.

The correct word to use is disabled when describing someone who is impaired in some physical function. The word "disabled" comes after the individual. Don't say or write the blind man or the disabled people. It should be written as the man who is blind or the people who are disabled.

- Patronizing Language

Eliminate the following from your vocabulary when writing and speaking about people with disabilities:

- CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS
- CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE INDUSTRIES
- EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
- ILLINOIS INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER
- INDEPENDENT LIVING
- LOW VISION REHABILITATION SERVICE
- SENIORS INITIATIVE
- STRIKFADEN ASSISTIVE DEVICES STORE
- VA BLIND/LOW VISION PRODUCTS
- YOUNG PHILANTHROPISTS BOARD
- HELP DESK
- LIGHTHOUSE STORIES
- LEARN MORE

- 1. Physically challenged
- 2. Special
- 3. Differently-abled

- People who are not disabled should not be called "normal" but people who are non-disabled.
- Use the following alternatives for outdated expressions.

**Objectionable**

<b>Afflicted</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
Blind person	
Cerebral palsied has	Has
	Person who is blind
Confined to a wheelchair	Cerebral Palsy
	Uses a wheelchair
Deaf	Hard of Hearing
Emotionally disturbed	Behavior disorder
Epileptic	Has epilepsy
Handicapped	Disabled
Handicapped accessible	Accessible to people with disabilities
Insane	Mentally Impaired
Lame Uses crutches;	Walks with a limp
Midget, Dwarf	Short-statured
Mongoloid	Downs Syndrome
Normal	Non-disabled
Paralytic	Paralyzed
Retarded	Developmentally delayed
Wheelchair bound	Uses a wheelchair
Victim of	Has

By making these subtle changes in your language when speaking or writing about people with disabilities, you can stop stereotypes and misconceptions of people who are blind, visually impaired, developmentally delayed, and etc.

**CHANGE TEXT SIZE AND COLOR**





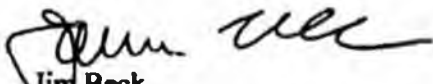
Representative Peggy Wilson  
State Capitol, Room 108  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

January 23, 2006

Dear Representative Wilson,

I am writing you in strong support of HB357. As you know, the language we use says a lot about the value we place on people and things. As times change, so must language. As a person with a disability, and having worked in disability services in Alaska for over 20 years, I have seen Alaska take great strides ensure people with disabilities have access to homes and jobs in their communities. We are a progressive state in that area, and so it makes sense that the language in our laws reflects that. Some of the old statutes use language to refer to people with disabilities that is offensive and unacceptable in any use. Access Alaska and the thousands of Alaskans with disabilities, whom we have the privilege to serve each year, applaud and support your efforts, and appreciate its significance.

Sincerely,

  
Jim Beck  
Executive Director  
Access Alaska, Inc.

Cc: Gale Sinnott, Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Opening Doors to Independence  
[www.accessalaska.org](http://www.accessalaska.org)  
[info@accessalaska.org](mailto:info@accessalaska.org)

SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.



3225 HOSPITAL DRIVE SUITE 300 • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
907-586-4920 VOICE/TDD • FAX 907-586-4980 • ALASKA 800-478-7245

January 23, 2006

Re: HB 357

Dear Representatives,

During this legislative session, you have the opportunity to endorse a bill updating the language describing disability in the statutes of Alaska. We at Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) fully support this legislation sponsored by Wrangell Representative Peggy Wilson in hope that it will bring about discussion and positive viewpoints of disability.

We strongly urge the removal of the word "handicap" from the legal vocabulary, noting it as a slur and reference to begging for food (cap in hand) as our people had to do less than 100 years ago. Other terms such as "mental disabilities" and "emotionally disturbed" can be described differently and positively as "cognitive disabilities" and "emotional disabilities."

American culture consistently redefines itself through language and sub-cultures often use language to redefine themselves. Negroes became blacks then African-Americans. Homosexuals chose the term "gay" for themselves. People with disabilities have done the same during the years, attempting to fight stereotypes and negative imagery.

Through all the changes, person-first language has become the most effective and descriptive of all choices. As the House Bill 357 passes from committee to committee, please keep in mind that we are all people first. Some people have red hair, some blue eyes; some are persons with developmental disabilities and some are persons who experience low vision. Yet underneath it all, we are simply human beings. It is in this vein we urge your support of House Bill 357.

Thank you for your time and commitment to all citizens of the great State of Alaska, those without disabilities and those with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joan O'Keefe', written in black ink.

Joan O'Keefe  
Executive Director

ALASKA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING  
COUNCIL, INC.



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January 24, 2006

Representative Peggy Wilson  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

FAX: 907-465-3175

Dear Representative Wilson:

The Alaska Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) enthusiastically supports HB 357, changing the word "handicapped" in state statute to "persons with disabilities". The SILC supports "people first" language such as is proposed in this bill. As you are aware, the term "handicap" or "handicapped" is derogatory. We certainly appreciate your effort to remove it from the official lexicon of state government. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to support your legislation.

Sincerely,

Patrick Reinhart  
Executive Director

Independent  
Living Center

P.O. Box 2474  
Homer, Alaska 99603  
(907) 235-7911 (T/T/V)  
(907) 235-6236 (FAX)

Joyanna Geisler  
Director

Representative Peggy Wilson  
State Capitol, Room 108  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

January 23, 2006

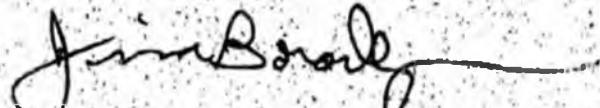
Honorable Representative Wilson:

I am writing in support of House Bill 357, "An Act Updating the Terminology in Statutes for Persons with Disabilities; and providing for an Effective Date".

The terms that are used to reference groups of people are always weighted with the stereotypes those terms bring to mind. Whether consciously or not those stereotypes affect the way members of groups are viewed by others.

It is time for the Great State of Alaska to place people first in statutes that reference disability. By removing the stereotypical terms handicapped and handicap, we acknowledge that people with disabilities are first of all people.

Sincerely, Jim Brady



Independent Living Center, Homer, Alaska.  
CC. Gale Sinnott



[www.alphaonenow.org](http://www.alphaonenow.org)

## **DISABILITY FACTS**

Disability is fundamental in the human experience. People can become disabled at any point in their lives. Disability may be present from birth, or result from an accident, a work-related injury, a disease or medical condition, or the natural aging process.

[more about Disability Facts](#)

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY**

Since the 1960s, people with disabilities in the US have created a civil rights movement to change the country and break down the barriers to their living independently in the community. The physical barriers are coming down but significant attitudinal barriers persist. The way we speak and the words that we use to describe people who have disabilities is a critical element in eliminating prejudice, fear, insensitivity, stereotyping and discrimination.

This glossary serves as a guideline for terminology that best portrays people with disabilities.

- [Access and Accessibility](#)
- [Assistive Services](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Disabled vs Handicapped](#)
- [Handicapped Parking/Seating](#)
- [Independent Living](#)
- [Normal](#)
- [Person with a Disability](#)
- [Victim of...Suffers from...](#)
- [Wheelchair-bound](#)

**Access and Accessibility** refer to physical structures, products and equipment, communication systems, services, organizations and other social networks. When something is accessible, it is open or available to all. For example, a building that is accessible may have wide doors with easy-to-operate levers. It may have ramps, non slip floors and good lighting. An accessible film has closed captioning or video description. An accessible school play may offer a sign language interpreter.

**Assistive Services** assistance with daily living activities such as getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing and cooking which make it possible for people with disabilities to live independently.

**Disability** a condition that interferes with a person's ability to do something independently.

**Disabled vs Handicapped** not synonyms. A disabling condition may or may not be handicapping. This person is handicapped when faced with a set of stairs where there is no ramp available. The word handicapped says The Associated Press Stylebook, "should be avoided in describing a disability".

**Handicapped Parking, Handicapped Seating** is incorrect wording, if what is meant is parking for people with disabilities, or seating for patrons who use wheelchairs.

**Independent Living** services focusing on goals including self determination, de-institutionalization and universal access to all opportunities in the community.

**Normal** is what most people, including people with disabilities, consider themselves.

**Person with a Disability** is a more accurate term than "disabled person" because it does not suggest that the person is defined or labeled by the disability. The emphasis is on the "person" first and foremost.

**Victim of...Suffers from...**inaccurate and inappropriate to describe a person with a disability. These terms should not be used.

**Wheelchair-bound** should not be used since a person may use a wheelchair only occasionally. Using the wheelchair for independent mobility is liberating for people with disabilities -providing them with mobility and freedom rather than restricting or "binding" them.

**DON'T SAY... > SAY...**

Able bodied > nondisabled  
Aids Victim > person with Aids  
Brain damaged > person with brain injury

For more information about guidelines for reporting & writing about people with disabilities contact [marketing@alphaonenow.com](mailto:marketing@alphaonenow.com)

[more about Don't Say... > Say...](#)

### **MILESTONES**

Disability is a significant aspect of our lives and communities. Given the numbers of people with disabilities in the population, it is one of the most significant public health issues. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, awareness around disability issues has been rapidly growing.

### **ABOUT THIS WEB SITE**

Alpha One's website has been built to give people up to date and accurate information about issues of concern to people with disabilities. We believe that information empowers and that access to this vital information is essential to living independently.

Our goal is to employ the latest technology to provide understandable information easily accessible to everyone. Your ideas and input can help keep this site up to date and useful. Let us know what you think - we welcome your ideas.

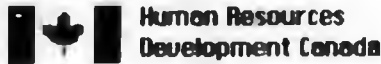
Contact the Editorial Staff [webmaster@alphaonenow.com](mailto:webmaster@alphaonenow.com)

View Our [internet Policy](#)

### **GUIDE TO DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS**



There have been many responses to the needs of people with disabilities from governments at all levels, as well as from private sources including faith-based institutions, educational institutions, and the broader independent sector. Given the size of the population of people with disabilities, it is not surprising that the private sector has developed and offers for sale many useful



Canada

# *A WAY WITH WORDS*

## **Guidelines and Appropriate Terminology For the Portrayal of Persons With Disabilities**

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Produced By:  
*Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat*  
Department of the Secretary of State of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0M5  
(819) 997-2412 (VOICE and TDD)

### Terminology Guide Concerning Persons With Disabilities



#### **Introduction**

**L**anguage is a powerful and important tool in shaping ideas, perceptions, and ultimately, public attitudes.

Words are a mirror of society's attitudes and perceptions. Attitudes can be the most difficult barrier persons with disabilities must face in gaining full integration, acceptance and participation in society.

Careful presentation of information about persons with disabilities can help overcome negative attitudes and shape positive ones. The standing Committee on the Status of Disabled Persons found in its report *No News is Bad News* that vocabulary can create perception. Demeaning, belittling or negative words are a barrier to greater understanding and can trivialize genuine support given by a community to persons with disabilities.

Language use is changing as persons with disabilities claim their individual and collective right to participate fully in society.

Dated and disparaging words are being replaced with precise, descriptive terms which have specific meanings that are not interchangeable.

Persons with disabilities are asking, just as women and minority groups are asking, that the media use respectful terms in writing about them or issues that affect their lives.

Individuals with disabilities are working to achieve equality, independence and full participation in our society. The ways in which issues are reported and the use of proper terminology can help persons with disabilities reach the goals.

**T**his booklet suggests current and appropriate terminology to reflect the increased participation by Canadians with disabilities in our society.



This booklet is intended to encourage and promote fair and accurate portrayal of persons with disabilities. It is primarily designed for print and broadcast media professionals writing and reporting about issues of concern to persons with disabilities.



**T**his booklet has two sections and a removable insert. **GENERAL GUIDELINES** has information on terminology and portrayal of persons with disabilities.

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** deals with reporting on issues of concern to persons with disabilities. The removable insert suggests appropriate terminology.

1. ***I*t** is important to remember that each word in today's terminology has a precise meaning and that the words are not interchangeable.
2. "Disabled" and "handicapped" are not the same thing. A disability is a functional limitation or restriction of an individual's ability to perform an activity. A "handicap" is an environmental or attitudinal barrier that limits the opportunity for a person to participate fully. Negative attitudes or inaccessible entrances to buildings are examples of handicaps.
3. The word "disables" is an adjective, not a noun. People are not conditions. Do not use "the disabled; use "persons with disabilities".
4. Focus on the issue rather than the disability. If the disability is not relevant to the story, it is not necessary to report it.
5. Try to avoid categorizing persons with disabilities as either super-achievers or tragic figures. Choose words that are non-judgemental, non-emotional and are accurate descriptions. Avoid using "brave", "courageous", "inspirational" or other similar words that are routinely used to describe a person with a disability. Remember that the majority of persons with disabilities are average and typical of the rest of the population. Similarly, references which cause discomfort, guilt, pity, or insult, should be avoided. Words like "suffers from", stricken with", "afflicted by", "patient", "disease", or "sick" suggest constant pain and a sense of hopelessness. While this may be the case for some individuals, a disability is a condition that does not necessarily cause pain or require medical attention.
6. Avoid the use of words such as "burden", "incompetent", "defective", "special", etc. which suggest that persons with disabilities should be treated differently or be excluded from activities generally available in the community.
7. Be particularly careful with terminology used in headlines. Remember that headlines make the first impression.
8. Refer to technical aids in factual, non-emotional terms. Avoid prolonged focus on support equipment.
9. Persons with disabilities are comfortable with the terminology used to describe daily living activities. Persons who use wheelchairs go for "walks", people with visual impairments "see" what you mean, etc. A disability may just mean that some things are done in a different manner; however, that does not mean the words used to describe the activity must be different.
10. Remember that although some disabilities are not visible, it does not mean they are less real. Individuals with invisible disabilities such as epilepsy, hemophilia, mental health, learning,



or developmental disabilities also encounter negative attitudes and barriers.



## *Researching, Writing and Reporting*

1. **T**oo often, when a person with a disability is featured in a story that has several possible angles, the human interest story line dominates, e.g. how the individual has overcome great goals.
2. There are few examples of in-depth coverage of issues of particular importance to persons with disabilities (e.g., lack of physical access to facilities, employment, poverty, etc.).
3. Persons with disabilities are seldom asked for their views on stories dealing with transportation, the environment, child care, etc.

The media can help create and reinforce positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Progress had been made in recent years and media professionals are asking advice on how to report on, discuss, and write about disability.

## *Bridging the Communications Gap*

Here are some suggestions to improve communications with persons with disabilities.

1. When talking with a person with a disability speak directly to him/her rather than through a companion who may be there.
2. Avoid putting persons with disabilities on a pedestal and using patronizing terms. Interview a person with a disability as you would any other person.
3. Do not unnecessarily emphasize differences. Having a "one of them" versus a "one of us" attitude only serves to reinforce barriers.
4. In visual treatments (e.g., television, photographs), do not dwell on technical aids or adaptive devices unless, of course, the purpose is to introduce or discuss a particular aid or device.

Following an interview, ask yourself:

1. Am I writing this piece because it involves a person with a disability or because the issue and related circumstances are relevant to the general population? If it did not involve a person with a disability, would I still want to write it?
2. Is a reference to a disability necessary to the story? If it is, am I using the correct terminology (e.g., "uses a wheelchair", and not "confined to a wheelchair")?
3. Is this piece accurate and unbiased? Have I avoided sensationalism?

**J**ournalists can contribute to a more positive and accurate image of persons with disabilities. The information provided to the general public,



and the ways in which this information is presented, often create a framework for the attitudes people have and the ways in which they interact with individuals with disabilities. If the coverage of disability-related issues is done in a non-emotional, factual and integrative manner, the public will no doubt begin to question the prejudices and stereotypes that still exist.



- *Editing Canadian English*. Prepared for the Freelance Editors Association of Canada
- *Guidelines for Reporting and Writing About People with Disabilities*. Archalert, Volume 4, No. 7.
- *No News is Bad News*. Standing Committee on the Status of Disabled Persons, House of Commons.
- *Portraying People with Disabilities*. National Easter Seal Society (Chicago, Illinois).
- *"Watch Your Language. Words Shape Attitudes"*. Francis Strong (appeared in the Rehabilitation Digest, winter, 1989).
- *Word Choices. A lexicon of preferred terms for disability issues*. Office for Disabled Persons, Government of Ontario.
- *Words of Dignity*. Ontario March of Dimes.
- *Worthless or Wonderful: The Social Stereotyping of Persons with Disabilities*. Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

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M3J 1P3  
(416) 661-9611

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2435 Holly Lane Suite 205  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1V 7P2  
(613)526-4785

**Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)**  
2435 Holly Lane Suite 205  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1V 7P2  
VOICE (613) 526-1584  
TDD (613)526-2692

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**Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)**  
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K2P 2H7  
(613) 567-0311

**Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**  
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Toronto, Ontario  
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(416) 484-7750

**Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA)**  
520 Sutherland Drive  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4G 3V9





FEB 23 2006

*Advisory Board on Alcoholism  
and Drug Abuse*

**Alaska Mental Health Board  
Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**

**Joint Advocacy Plan Mission and Goals**

***The Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) are the state agencies charged with planning and coordinating behavioral health services funded by the State of Alaska. The joint mission of AMHB and ABADA is to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans.***

**Advocacy Goals:**

- Alaskans will have access to a broad range of comprehensive, integrated mental health and substance abuse services aimed at prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.
- The State of Alaska will provide quality, recovery-focused services based on best practices, informed by comprehensive program evaluation and in step with personal, cultural and community needs.
- The State of Alaska will pass laws and promulgate regulations that protect the rights and dignity of citizens while promoting respectful service provision.
- Adequate, equitable and consistently funded support programs that meet the basic needs of beneficiaries as they transition to independence will be available in Alaska.
- Alaska will have an educated citizenry that recognizes drug addiction and mental illness as diseases that are preventable and treatable.
- Partnerships between communities, public and private organizations, families and individuals will advance education, prevention, recovery, and the well-being of current and future generations.

**SB 210 – Alcohol: Transport, Manufacture; Forfeiture (Therriault)** Currently in (S) Finance.

In local option communities, this bill reduces the quantity of distilled spirits an individual may possess that gives rise to the presumption of intent to sell, and makes barter of alcohol equivalent to a sale. The bill also gives law enforcement access to a civil process to seize and dispose of goods and property used to manufacture, transport or sell liquor illegally or goods and property purchased with proceeds from this illegal activity.

- This measure was recommended by the federally-appointed *Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission* charged with investigating various aspects of rural justice services.
- The significantly shorter civil forfeiture process (60 days compared to the criminal process of 6 months to a year) provides a further disincentive to bootlegging.

**Companion: HB 373 – Alcohol: Transport, Manufacture; Forfeiture (Meyer)**  
Currently in (H) Rules.

**SB 207 – Eligibility for Denali Kid Care (Elton).** No hearing scheduled

This bill restores DKC eligibility to 200% of the poverty level and removes the fixed dollar amount so that eligibility can keep up with inflation.

- The DKC program serves children and pregnant women, for whom consistent medical care is crucial to healthy growth and positive birth outcomes.
- Program eligibility cuts made in 2003 caused more than 2200 children and 200 pregnant women to lose health coverage, saving the state about \$500,000.
- The cost to Alaska's health care system was far greater, as the state also loses the DCK federal matching funds of approximately \$3 to every \$1 of state funding.

**CSHB 312 – Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention (Weyhrauch).**

This bill requires that DHSS to develop an FAS informational campaign and distribute information to schools and hospitals. It also requires that licensing boards for doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners develop standards for FASD education and require FASD training as a condition of licensure. In addition, FASD would be added as a condition reported to the current Birth Defects Registry.

- This bill builds on eight years of work done in the State of Alaska to address the epidemic of FASD.
- These measures will promote prevention of FASD through requirements for education of health care professionals.

**CSHB 357 – Statutory References to Disabilities (Wilson).**

This bill was heard and passed out of (H) Finance. It updates the statutes by modifying the terminology used to describe people with disabilities "in recognition of the ability of individuals to the society and to the state." The CS makes additional terminology changes. The bill is now in (H) Rules.

- These changes bring the language of the Alaska statutes into conformity with widely accepted terms.
- Language is powerful and the proposed revisions strengthen the state's commitment to dignity for people with disabilities.

# **Senate Committee Announcements**

**Alaska State Legislature  
Twenty-Fourth Legislature  
Second Session**



**Americans with Disabilities Act Notice** - Persons with disabilities who require special accommodation or alternative communication formats to access committee meetings may contact the appropriate committee office or the Legislative Information Office in their community. Reasonable advance notice is needed to accommodate the request. For further information, call the ADA Coordinator at 465-3854 Voice/465-4980 TDD.

Published by the  
Senate Secretary's Office - 465-3701

February 22, 2006

# House Committee Announcements

## Twenty-Fourth Alaska State Legislature

### Second Session

Published by the Chief Clerk's Office - 465-3725  
February 23, 2006

Committee announcements are published daily, with updates posted throughout the day. Please Check BASIS or the committee schedule display on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor for the most current schedule.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Notice** - Persons with disabilities who require special accommodation or alternative communication formats to access committee meetings may contact the appropriate committee office or the Legislative Information Office in their community. Reasonable advance notice is needed to accommodate the request. For further information, call the ADA Coordinator at 465-3854 Voice/465-4980 TDD.

\* first hearing in first committee of referral  
+ teleconferenced  
= bill was previously heard/scheduled

#### STANDING COMMITTEES

##### FINANCE

Feb 23	Thursday	Senate Finance 532	9:00 AM
		Joint with Senate Finance	
		Presentation by Callan Associates -	
		Re: PFD Five-Year Forecast	
Feb 23	Thursday	House Finance 519	1:30 PM
		-- Meeting Canceled --	
		Bills Previously Heard/Scheduled	

# Examples of People First Language

Excerpted from Kathie Snow's booklet People First Language.

<b>People with disabilities</b>	the handicapped or disabled
<b>he has a cognitive disability</b>	he's mentally retarded
<b>she has autism</b>	she's autistic
<b>he has Down syndrome</b>	he's Downs
<b>she has a learning disability</b>	she's learning disabled
<b>he has a physical disability</b>	he's a quadriplegic/crippled
<b>she's short of stature</b>	she's a dwarf or midget
<b>he has an emotional disability</b>	he's emotionally disturbed
<b>she uses a wheelchair or mobility chair</b>	she's wheelchair bound she's confined to a wheelchair
<b>he receives special ed services</b>	he's in special ed
<b>typical kids kids without disabilities</b>	normal or healthy kids
<b>congenital disability</b>	birth defect
<b>brain injury</b>	brain damaged
<b>accessible parking</b>	handicapped parking
<b>she needs or she uses</b>	she has a problem with

## SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 2/23/06

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: 2.27.06

Health, Education and Social Services Committee considered CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 357(FIN)

### HB 357 STATUTORY REFERENCES TO DISABILITIES

"An Act updating the terminology in statutes for persons with disabilities; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

- be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)
- adopt previous \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by HFIN \_\_\_\_\_ Committee
- further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

**CS Senate Bill:**

- Same Title
- New Title

**SCS House Bill:**

- Same Title
- Technical Title Change
- New Title w/ SCR # \_\_\_\_\_

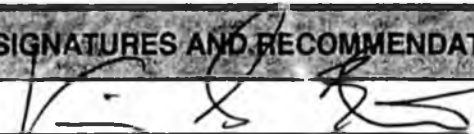
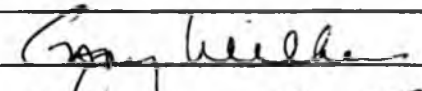
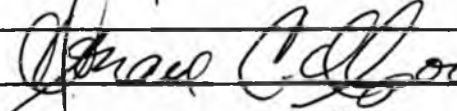

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#

**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#
HSS	1/20			x	1
LWD	1/17			x	2

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
			✓	
	✓			
			✓	
CHAIR: 	✓			