

## Words with Dignity and Wheelchair Etiquette

- As taken from the *Bridging the Gap Getting Physically Active Program Manual*

When speaking about or to people, consider the following inclusive language practices. Words that exclude some people are unfair and are usually inaccurate. When producing or approving print materials, interacting with colleagues, staff or students, or speaking to community members and participants, consider the following word choices:

<b>Instead of:</b>	<b>Use:</b>
Disabled, handicapped, crippled	Person with a disability
Crippled by, afflicted with, suffering from, victim of, deformed	Person who has...or Person with...
Lame	Person who is mobility impaired
Confined, bound, restricted to or dependant on a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Physically challenged	Person with a physical disability
Spastic	Person with cerebral palsy

### Wheelchair Etiquette:

- Focus on the person, not the disability
- Always ask if assistance is needed before you give it – it may or may not be needed.
- Do not hang or lean on a person's wheelchair. It is part of his or hers body space.
- Speak directly to the person in the wheelchair, not to someone nearby.
- If a conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down or kneeling.
- When a person sitting in a wheelchair transfers to a chair, make sure the wheelchair stays within reach.
- When choosing an activity, choose an area with a flat, hard surface
- Be aware of the person's capabilities. Some individuals who use a wheelchair can walk with an aid and chose to use a wheelchair to save energy and move more quickly.
- Do not discourage individuals from asking questions about the wheelchair.
- Do not assume that using a wheelchair is in itself a tragedy. Rather, it is a means of freedom that allows the person to move about independently.