

The Most Respectful Way of Referring to People is as People

Current	Alternative	Reasoning
Clients / Patients / Consumers	The people in our program The folks we work with The people we serve	More inclusive, less stigmatizing
Alex is an addict	Alex is addicted to alcohol Alex is a person with a substance use disorder Alex is in recovery from drug addiction	Put the person first Avoid defining the person by their disease
The terms listed below, along with others, are often people's ineffective attempts to reclaim some shred of power while being treated in a system that often tries to control them. The person is trying to get their needs met, or has a perception different from the staff, or has an opinion of self not shared by others. And these efforts are not effectively bringing them to the result they want.		
Mathew is manipulative	Mathew is trying really hard to get his needs met Mathew may need to work on more effective ways of getting his needs met	Take the blame out of the statement Recognize that the person is trying to get a need met the best way they know how
Kyle is non-compliant	Kyle is choosing not to... Kyle would rather... Kyle is looking for other options	Describe what it looks like uniquely to that individual—that information is more useful than a generalization
Mary is resistant to treatment	Mary chooses not to... Mary prefers not to... Mary is unsure about...	Avoid defining the person by the behavior. Remove the blame from the statement
Jennifer is in denial	Jennifer is ambivalent about..... Jennifer hasn't internalized the seriousness of... Jennifer doesn't understand.....	Remove the blame and the stigma from the statement



Southeast (HHS Region 4)

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