

**Person first Language:** Using language that recognizes a person as an individual prior to identifying any aspect of their life. Compare, contrast and consider the following examples.

<p><b>David is experiencing homelessness.</b></p> <p>To say that David is experiencing homelessness recognizes that a life experience is not the genuine identity of an individual. Using the word “experiencing” conveys hope because present circumstances do not determine future outcomes.</p> <p>David is in need of housing. David doesn’t have a home.</p>	<p>David is homeless.</p> <p>To say that David <i>is</i> homeless identifies David as <i>being</i> a problem. Lack of safe affordable housing is a significant problem within our society, but to say a person <i>is</i> homeless is the equivalent of saying that a person <i>is</i> a problem. People are not problems. People have problems and sometimes create problems, but all people are part of the human race.</p>
<p><b>LaChelle has bipolar.</b></p> <p>To say that LaChelle has bipolar recognizes that a diagnosis/disability is not the genuine identity of an individual. LaChelle is influenced by many aspects of her life (height, vision, speech) that do not define her nor limit her potential.</p> <p>LaChelle is diagnosed with bipolar. LaChelle lives with bipolar.</p>	<p>LaChelle is bipolar.</p> <p>To say that LaChelle <i>is</i> bipolar identifies LaChelle as <i>being</i> an unwanted diagnosis/disability. If LaChelle had cancer instead of bipolar, we would never characterize her by saying “LaChelle is cancerous.” Instead, we would say that “LaChelle has Cancer.” The reason for this is because one part of an individual does not make up the individual as a whole and completed person.</p>
<p><b>Maria works as the Director of Human Resources.</b></p> <p>To say that Maria works as the Director of Human Resources recognizes that a professional role is not the genuine identity of an individual. This is true for both volunteer and paid work.</p> <p>Maria serves as the Director of Human Resources.</p> <p>Maria is employed as the Director of Human Resources.</p>	<p>Maria is the Director of Human Resources.</p> <p>To say that Maria <i>is</i> the Director of Human Resources identifies Maria as <i>being</i> her job. It conveys that she is unable to lay aside her professional responsibilities after work hours have ended. Identifying Maria as <i>being</i> her professional role also has the potential to create difficulty when she decides to transition into a new career, retirement or stay home with her children.</p>