



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Department on Disability Services**  
**Office of the Director**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** DDS Employees, DDA and RSA Providers, and Stakeholders

**FROM:** Laura Nuss, Director 

**DATE:** September 2, 2014

**RE:** People First Respectful Language policy; Support for Voter Registration and Voting policy; and Silver Alert procedure

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On August 27, 2014, the Department on Disability Services (DDS) released two new policies and a new procedure. This memorandum provides a short summary of each, including effective date. The documents are attached and will be posted on the DDS on-line policy manual at: <http://dds.dc.gov/page/dds-resources>. Please review them carefully.

People First Respectful Language Policy

This policy requires the use of people first respectful language in all official verbal and written communications. Specifically, it requires that all new, revised, or republished forms, documents, rules, policies, procedures, publications, internet publications, and signage as well as all official verbal communication shall (1) avoid the use of the “R” word; and (2) use people first respectful language, putting the person before his or her disability. For example, “John has an intellectual disability.” All existing policies, procedures, documents, forms, publications, and signage, must be brought into compliance within sixty (60) days from August 27, 2014. The policy is effective immediately and applies to all DDS staff and providers.

Resources on using people first respectful language include “Words Matter: Put People First,” a guide written by Project ACTION! (PA!) and Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities (QT), attached. DDS, PA! and QT also produced a short training video on using people first respectful language which will be posted on the DDS webpage. Another helpful resource is <http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/>.

If you have any questions about this policy or the use of people first respectful language, please contact Erin Leveton, Program Manager, State Office of Disability Administration (SODA) at (202) 730-1754, [erin.leveton@dc.gov](mailto:erin.leveton@dc.gov).





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Support for Voter Registration and Voting Policy

This policy requires the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to distribute voter registration application forms at intake, upon notification of change of address, and, for people who receive supports from DDA, annually at the person's ISP. DDA and RSA staff must also assist applicants in completing voter registration forms (unless the person refuses such assistance), and accept completed voter registration application forms for transmittal to the D.C. Board of Elections. The policy further requires that all DDA Residential and Day Supports providers work with the people they support who would like to vote, to arrange transportation or any other supports that may be needed so that they can exercise their right to vote.

The vast majority of D.C. citizens with disabilities, including citizens with disabilities are eligible to vote. According to the Board of Elections, to be eligible to register a person must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be a DC resident.
- Be at least 18 years old on or before the next election.
- Not be in jail for a felony conviction.
- Not have been adjudged "mentally incompetent" by a court of law. *(A guardianship order will typically NOT strip a person of the right to vote in the District.)*
- Not claim the right to vote anywhere outside D.C.

This policy is effective on September 23, 2014, which is National Voter Registration Day. Also attached is a new DDA Voter Registration or Declination Form, a DC Voter Registration Form, and a sample memo with information about voting.

If you have questions about whether a person who is under guardianship is eligible to vote, please contact Neha Patel, Deputy General Counsel at (202) 679-3142 or [neha.patel@dc.gov](mailto:neha.patel@dc.gov). For general questions on this policy or the voting rights of people with disabilities, please contact Erin Leveton, Program Manager, SODA, at (202) 730-1754, [erin.leveton@dc.gov](mailto:erin.leveton@dc.gov).

Silver Alert Procedure

DDA has partnered with the Metropolitan Police Department to implement Silver Alert for District of Columbia residents supported by DDA. Silver Alert is a public notification system





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designed to broadcast information about missing persons who are at high risk for injury or harm if they are lost or missing; such as, seniors with dementia and an adult of any age who has an intellectual disability, in order to aid in their safe return home. This procedure requires that upon intake, and annually at a person's ISP, the person's service coordinator explains the Silver Alert program and asks for permission for the person to participate. The procedure also explains the protocols for using Silver Alert. In addition to the procedure, attached is a Silver Alert Information Sheet and Consent Form. This procedure is effective September 30, 2014.

For questions about Silver Alert or this procedure, please contact Winslow Woodland, Program Manager, Service Planning and Coordination Division at (202) 730-1618 or [winslow.woodland@dc.gov](mailto:winslow.woodland@dc.gov).

