



Consumer Council System of Maine

A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

www.maineccsm.org

FIRST DRAFT-Revised

GROUP NAME: THE STATEWIDE CONSUMER COUNCIL OF MAINE

DATE: April 10, 2019

THE ISSUE STATEMENT: Person first language: reducing stigma and focusing on a strength-based approach to care

THE ISSUE:

The language a society uses to refer to persons with disabilities shapes its beliefs and ideas about them. Person-First Language is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating, and reporting on disabilities. It eliminates generalizations and stereotypes, by focusing on the person rather than the disability.

Person first language is not a new concept. It began in the 1970's within the larger Disability Rights Movement. Unfortunately, it has not had much work in the mental health disability community. We have been preceded by the ID/DD community in Maine. To this end, we want to make sure all, laws, contracts and statutes reflect person first language.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. SAMHS will add PFL requirements in all mental health provider contracts.
2. DHHS/SAMHS will provide statewide training on PFL with providers including all peer support programs.
3. SAMHS and CCSM will partner together on a work plan for potential legislative action that may be needed to update mental health statutes.
4. DHHS/ MaineCare to make needed changes to MaineCare rules and communications to members to make sure they are consistent with PFL.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By fixing outdated language, we hope that we can affect change in the way people see people with disabilities and see them as a person, not a diagnosis.