



## CenterPointe’s Language Guide

*“Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another” – Napoleon Hill*

Our language:

- Should focus on the strengths, assets, and abilities NOT diagnoses, deficits, and labels.
- Should reflect our respect and unconditional positive regard NOT our judgments and opinions.
- Should be clear, understandable, and free of jargon NOT difficult to understand for individuals in service.
- Should be based upon evidence-based best practices NOT confusing data, speculation, and assumptions.
- Should focus on a sense of commitment, hope, and opportunity.

<b><u>GENERAL LANGUAGE EXPECTATIONS:</u></b>	
<b>Others May:</b>	<b>At CenterPointe, We:</b>
Use general terms like: Patient, Client, or Consumer <i>These connote a disconnected, business relationship.</i>	Refer to people as People, or Individuals <i>These terms are used to recognize humanity in everyone we serve.</i>
Focus on the use of labels and diagnoses. <i>“They are mentally ill”</i> <i>“They are an alcoholic (or addict, schizophrenic, etc.)”</i>	Put the person first and focus on their struggle. <i>“They are a person struggling with mental health issues.”</i> <i>“They are a person diagnosed with a substance use disorder.”</i>
Generalize the symptoms to the individual. <i>“That’s just the way those people (addicts, borderlines, etc.) behave.”</i> <i>“All mental health patients are dangerous.”</i>	Recognize the specific symptoms that individuals experience. <i>“They have been struggling in the following ways: ...”</i> <i>“Unlike other individuals, they have thrived in the following ways: ...”</i>
Use stigmatizing and condescending terminology. <i>“They are a mental case.”</i> OR <i>“That’s crazy.”</i> <i>“They are an alcohol abuser.”</i>	Use destigmatizing and empowering terminology. <i>“Although They have had struggles with alcohol and mental health issues, they have a lot of strengths and capabilities.”</i>
<b><u>SPECIFIC LANGUAGE EXPECTATIONS:</u></b>	
<b>Others May Say:</b>	<b>At CenterPointe, We Say:</b>
• The clients we see are alcoholics/addicts.	• The people in our services struggle with addictive behaviors.
• They are mentally ill.	• They have struggled with mental health issues.
• They are a schizophrenic.	• They have been diagnosed with schizophrenia.
• They are decompensating.	• They are experiencing a return of symptoms.
• They are being manipulative.	• They are skilled at getting their needs met.
• They are non-compliant, and treatment resistant.	• They choose not to, would rather not, or prefer other options.
• They are low functioning.	• They have a tough time with this activity/skill.
• They are dangerous.	• They tend to become aggressive when upset.
• They are unmotivated.	• They haven’t found anything that sparks their motivation yet.
• They are in denial.	• They are not sure if they have a problem yet.
• They are manic and paranoid.	• They haven’t slept in three days and struggle with trusting others.
• They are being very difficult.	• We aren’t on the same page and it’s a challenge for me to work with them.
• Wow! That’s crazy. I can’t believe it.	• Wow! That’s wild. I can’t believe it.