



Texas Parent to Parent

# Youth Friendly/Accessible Language

Youth friendly/accessible language is helpful to all audiences. The KASA project advocates for using accessible language because it is often the biggest barrier [something that stops them], keeping young people from being involved in leadership.

## What Youth Friendly/Accessible Language means:

- Using clear language – avoiding or explaining conceptual words [words that include a lot of ideas in one word]
  - This can be done by exactly explaining what the word means, [like was done for the word conceptual in the statement above], or by explaining what you mean a different way [look for examples on this sheet]
- Make sure to explain acronyms [an acronym is letters that stand for words. For example, KASA is an acronym for Kids As Self Advocates.]
- Use examples to explain complex ideas and concepts
- Steer clear of jargon [terms or words that are used specifically in your area of work or community]

Using youth friendly/accessible language means being inclusive of the young people and people with disabilities in the room. Make sure to assume that the young people and people with disabilities have experience with the topic, just as a presenter would assume of any non-disabled person/adult in the room.

## What Youth Friendly/Accessible Language Does NOT Mean:

- That a presenter needs to use slang
- That a presenter will not appear to be professional [that a presenter is going to be seen as not knowing what they are talking about or that they are not smart]
- Often people respond in a really positive way to youth friendly/accessible language. It makes everyone more comfortable, and people can relax and really be open to learning.

## Accessibility in a Presentation:

There are many different ways to make presentations accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. A presenter should not worry about trying to figure out what everyone in the room can or cannot do. Instead they should focus on sharing their information in as many different ways as possible.

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## Ideas to Use:

- If a presenter is going to use interactive activities, [in which the group is involved in the presentation], then making sure there are at least a couple of ways to respond is helpful.
  - For example: if asking a large group to answer a question by raising their hand, also say “or by clapping or give a shout out.”
  - If asking people to do work in small groups, make sure the questions are clear, written down and read aloud. Ask the small groups to try and get information from everyone who wants to share.
- A presentation should also be given in as many ways as possible; visually [where people can read along], verbally [reading information aloud], giving people a chance to share their own knowledge/experience
- Have your materials [forms/worksheets/information pages] on CD disks for those who may need items in accessible format [always make sure to have a couple, and announce you have them to the group, or offer to send people items in accessible format through email/mail].

*Helpful Hint:* When trying to put something in youth friendly/accessible language, just try to be as clear as possible. [Note: Ask a young person to review written materials, or offer to read these to them to make sure they understand and that they think others will also understand.]

## Examples:

- ✓ “Today we are here to learn effective tools in advocating for health care.”
- ✓ Youth friendly/accessible language: Today we are here to learn useful ways to advocate for ourselves and our community and talk to those who make decisions about these issues that affect us, about healthcare.
- ✓ “Formalize structure and membership of committee”
- ✓ Youth friendly/accessible language: Figure out and agree on who will be involved and how the committee will be structured [who will make decisions, how will decisions be made, how the committee will work].
- ✓ “Develop outreach materials to recruit participants and distribute via email.”
- ✓ Youth friendly/accessible language: Put together [create] announcements and flyers to find people who want to be involved in our work and then send these out over email.

## Youth with disabilities and health care needs speaking on behalf of ourselves and our friends

Visit us on the web [www.fvkasa.org](http://www.fvkasa.org)

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