

No. 24. An act relating to respectful language in state statutes in referring to people with disabilities.

(S.90)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE STUDY

(a) The agency of human services shall convene a working group to recommend guidelines for using respectful language when referring to people with disabilities. In convening the working group, the agency shall designate at least one employee of the agency to serve on the working group and shall invite the participation of two representatives from the Vermont coalition for disability rights, two representatives from Green Mountain self-advocates, one representative from the Vermont center for independent living, one representative from Vermont psychiatric survivors, one representative from the human rights commission, one representative from the disability law project, one representative from disability rights Vermont, and two people appointed by the governor, at least one of whom shall be a high school student. The agency shall provide administrative services to the working group. In preparing its recommendations, the working group shall:

(1) identify words that should not be used in Vermont statutes, regulations, and policies and suggest in their place words that reflect positive views of people with disabilities;

(2) avoid using any language that changes the meaning or intent of state statutes;

(3) identify specific statutes that should be addressed by the general assembly;

(4) select wording that does not conflict with federal law; and

(5) recommend guidelines to support state government agencies and departments to use respectful language.

(b) By November 1, 2011, the working group shall report to the house committees on government operations and on human services and the senate committees on government operations and on health and welfare the group's findings and recommendations, including any recommended legislation to address its findings and recommendations.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Approved: May 11, 2011