

## What is Down Syndrome?

- Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial copy of the 21st chromosome. Typically developing individuals have two copies of the 21st chromosome, individuals with Down syndrome have three copies.
  - The cause of the extra or partial chromosome is still unknown.
- Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease or birth defect.
- People with Down syndrome are a part of the Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) community.
- Approximately 1 in 772 babies in the United States are born with Down syndrome.

## Use this Language When Referring to Down Syndrome and Individuals who have Down Syndrome

- The Down syndrome community prefers to use "People First Language" when talking about individuals with Down syndrome. People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is.
- Avoid:
  - "a Down syndrome child" or "Down's child". It should be a "child with Down syndrome."
  - describing the condition as "Down's," as in, "He has Down's."
- People "have" Down syndrome, they do not "suffer from" it and are not "afflicted by" it.
- NDSS strongly condemns the use of the word "retarded" in any context. Using this word is hurtful and suggests that people with disabilities are not competent.
- "Typically developing" or "typical" is preferred over "normal" when referring to individuals who do not have a disability.
- NDSS prefers to write out Down syndrome in all instances rather than shortening to DS.
- Choose language that emphasizes a person's abilities, not their disabilities. NDSS discourages the use of functioning labels such as "high functioning" or "low functioning".

## Down vs. Down's

- NDSS uses the preferred spelling, Down syndrome, rather than Down's syndrome which is often used in other parts of the world.
- Down syndrome is named for English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it. An "apostrophe s" connotes ownership or possession.