**Spread the Word to End the Word**

**Action Kit**

**KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS**

It is time we **Spread the Word to End the Word™** and build awareness for society to stop and think about its’ use of the R-word. Most people don’t think of this word as hate speech, but that’s exactly what it feels like to millions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends. The R-word is just as cruel and offensive as any other slur. Visit [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org) to make your pledge today.

* Young people around the world are taking a stand and raising awareness of the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the R-word and are helping encourage others to think before they speak.
* Did you know the pejorative and ever increasing use of the R-word in today’s society further perpetuates the stigma and negative stereotypes that face people with intellectual disabilities?
* Up to three percent of the world’s population have intellectual disabilities - that’s 200 million people around the world. It’s the largest disability population in the world, perhaps you know someone?
* We ask that you help us change the conversation and help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word from today’s popular youth vernacular and replace it with “respect.” We are asking for your help in creating a more accepting world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.
* We’re asking every person - young and old - to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word–a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless, and even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It hurts. Even if you don’t mean it that way.
* People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are capable and enjoy sharing life experiences – listening to music, playing video games, watching the latest movies, and yes, having fun – as well as working together toward athletic excellence and mutually enriching one-to-one friendships as demonstrated constantly through Special Olympics and Best Buddies. They can attend school, work, drive cars, get married, participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many ways.
* Special Olympics’ Multi-National Public Opinion Study of Attitudes toward People with Intellectual Disabilities, conducted by Gallup, reveals that throughout the world, over 60 percent of people *still* believe that people with intellectual disabilities should be segregated in schools and in the workplace. This is intolerable. We need massive attitude change now to attack and reverse the stigma that is destructive to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and a barrier to growth.
* Language affects attitudes. Attitudes impact actions. Make your pledge to choose respectful people first language at [www.R-word.org](http://www.R-word.org).