

## **LPA issues statement to abolish the "m" word**

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Little People of America, the world's oldest and largest dwarfism support organization, and an international, membership-based organization for people with dwarfism and their families, advocates to abolish the use of the word "midget". The word "midget" was never coined as the official term to identify people with dwarfism but was created as a label used to refer to people of short stature who were on public display for curiosity and sport. Today, the word "midget" is considered a derogatory slur. The dwarfism community has voiced that they prefer to be referred to as dwarfs, little people, people of short stature or having dwarfism, or simply, and most preferably, by their given name.

When we surveyed our community about the usage and overall impact of the word "midget", over 90% of our members surveyed stated that the word should never be used in reference to a person with dwarfism. As an advocacy organization, our charge is to take the lead in providing accurate and current information to the public when the "m" word is used erroneously, and often carelessly, as a description of a person with dwarfism. Whether the intention of the user of the word is used to bully and to demean, or just as a synonym for small, our collective experience shows us that language has the power to cause permanent damage to one's self-esteem and identity.

We have made great strides in our advocacy with effective results. For example, major media venues, like the New York Times, have stopped using the term "midget" to refer to people with dwarfism. Over the years, LPA has educated politicians, sports figures, and people in the entertainment industry regarding the improper and hurtful use of this word. Further, we have been in contact with schools around the country whose sports teams and/or mascots have the word "midget" in their names, encouraging them to change it. The word "midget" in use today has a negative, degrading, and mean-spirited feel and identity.

LPA can provide further educational materials about the history of the word "midget" and its evolution, advocacy resources, and support for you to help in the effort to remove "midget" from the everyday vernacular. Our collaborative efforts will put the word "midget" into permanent retirement, and have it join the ranks of other antiquated and hurtful terms that are not used anymore.