

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about parish advocacy or the Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities contact:

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Additional online resources:

National Catholic Partnership on Disability
www.ncpd.org
National Catholic Office for the Deaf
www.ncod.org
National Organization on Disability
www.nod.org

Office for Ministry with
Persons with Disabilities

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities of Catholic Life & Evangelization, Diocese of Allentown, is committed to facilitate the implementation of the Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities which calls for “realizing the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church” and Society, and to advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the full participation of the liturgical and sacramental life of the church.



PARISH ADVOCACY

FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

**“We are one flock
that serves a single shepherd.”**

-Pastoral Statement of
U.S. Catholic Bishops

WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?

- ◆ A Parish Advocate is someone who acts on behalf of persons with disabilities to ensure that all are invited to share in the life of their parish.
- ◆ The Advocate follows the example of Christ the Good Shepherd and seeks out parishioners who have disabilities to determine their physical and spiritual needs.
- ◆ The Parish Advocate is invited to accept this responsibility by the pastor of the parish.

WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

- ◆ A disability is defined as difficulty seeing or hearing, moving the body, or understanding everything quickly.
- ◆ It is a physical or mental impairment, which limits one or more of a person's life activities.
- ◆ It can be from birth; it can come with age. Approximately one out of five people lives with some type of disability.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ADVOCATE?

- ◆ Work with the pastor to welcome and include persons with disabilities into the parish.
- ◆ Identify and make contact with persons in the parish that have disabilities.
- ◆ Sensitize parishioners to the needs and gifts of persons with disabilities.
- ◆ Welcome persons with disabilities and their families into parish life and parish programs.
- ◆ Work to eliminate physical and attitudinal barriers in the parish.
- ◆ Be a liaison to the Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities for referral purposes.

SUPPORT FOR THE ADVOCATE

- ◆ The Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities provides materials and support on a continuing basis toward the fulfillment of the parish advocates responsibilities. Materials include information on disabilities, strategies for identification and inclusion, and ways to make parishes accessible.
- ◆ A resource library is available containing books, videos and DVD's.
- ◆ Training is provided at an annual Diocesan Parish Advocacy Conference.

HISTORY ♦ PURPOSE

- ◆ The Parish Advocacy Program resulted from the 1978 National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- ◆ In their Pastoral Statement, the Bishops recognized that "it is not merely enough to affirm the rights of people with disabilities. The Church must become an advocate for and with" people with disabilities and "it must work to increase the public's sensitivity toward (their) needs and support their rightful demand for justice."