

Welcoming People With Disabilities



*A Resource Guide for
Creating Inclusive Parishes*

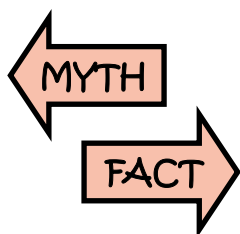
“We all hold the key to opening the door to full and meaningful participation in parish life for persons with disabilities. Using education, advocacy and prayer, we can help them know they are welcomed and encourage them to use the gifts they have to offer. “

- Bishop Alfred A. Schlert



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter of Introduction	1
Definition of Disability	2
The Art of Welcoming	3
Welcoming Through Communication	5
Welcoming Through Adaptive Physical Environment	9
Welcoming Persons with Disabilities Into Liturgical Ministries	11
Welcoming Children to Religious Education	13
Welcome to the Sacraments	15
Welcome Home Veterans	16
Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities (OMPWD)	17
Resource Materials	18



Each section begins with a common myth and subsequent fact to assist in highlighting current information and available resources.



DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN
SECRETARIAT FOR CATHOLIC LIFE AND EVANGELIZATION
Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities
2121 Madison Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18017-4642
(610) 289-8900
FAX: (610) 289-7917

Dear Clergy, Parish Staff and Parishioners,

Since participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church is a right and duty by reason of our baptism, the Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities is pleased to offer this guide to assist clergy and laity in welcoming and including persons with disabilities in the Church's prayer and ministry. We have written this guide to provide congregations with ideas and practical steps to strengthen the invitation, supports, and hospitality offered to persons with disabilities and their families.

In each of the sections of this guide, you will learn best practice in communication, physical environment, religious education, preparation and reception of the sacraments. We hope this guide will encourage your parish to be one in which persons with and without disabilities have rich opportunities to worship, learn, experience fellowship, and serve alongside one another in the parish liturgical celebrations and community.

Catholics with disabilities often express that the attitudes of others is sometime a greater barrier to full participation in parish life than physical accessibility. All Catholics need to feel welcome and be encouraged to fulfill the ministries to which they believe they have been called.

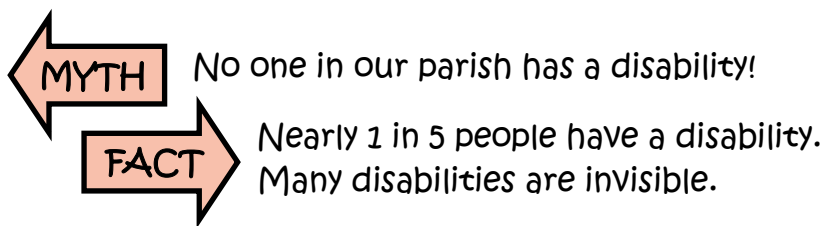
It is my hope and prayer that you will find this Resource Guide a help in welcoming and including persons with disabilities in your parish.

Sincerely,

Sr. Janice Marie Johnson, R.S.M.

Sr. Janice Marie Johnson, R.S.M.

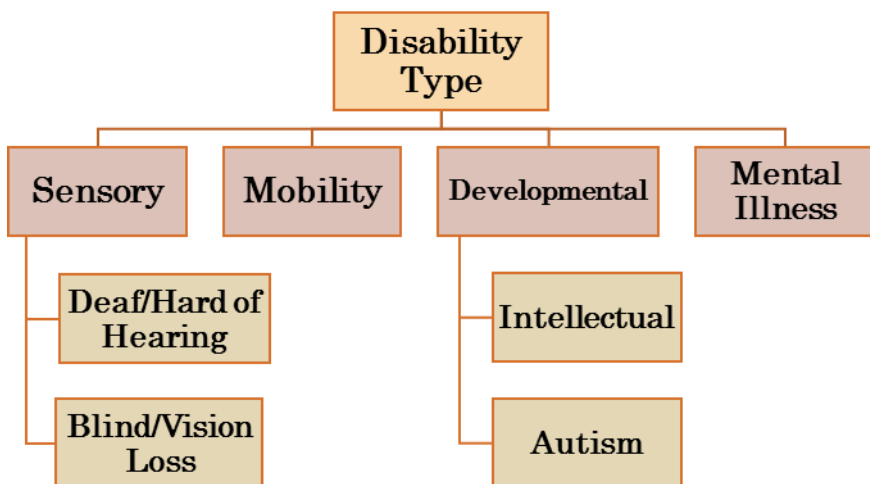
DEFINITION OF DISABILITY



Disability: A physical, mental or psychological condition that limits or restricts a person's life activities such as... walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working or taking care of oneself.

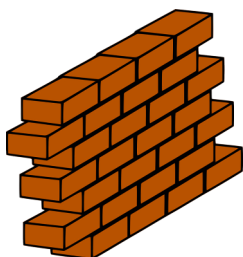
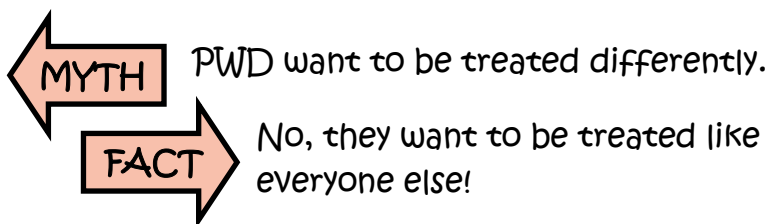


People can be born with a disability, it may occur in youth or adulthood, or as a normal process of aging.



*Note: people with disabilities will be abbreviated as pwd
US Conference of Catholic Bishops as USCCB*

THE ART OF WELCOMING



5 COMMON BARRIERS

that prevent individuals with disabilities and their families from fully participating in a faith community (Carter, 2007).

- **Architectural Barriers** that do not allow individuals with physical disabilities to navigate the space.
- **Attitudinal Barriers** based in a community's fears and misunderstandings about disabilities.
- **Communication Barriers** such as sight and sound that disallow participation.
- **Programmatic Barriers** that do not allow individuals with disabilities an opportunity to share their gifts and talents with the community.
- **Liturgical Barriers** such as sacraments or rituals that may not be adapted to meet individual needs.

GENERAL GUIDELINES for WELCOMING

- Treat all people as you would like to be treated.
- Speak directly to the person, not to a companion, family member or interpreter, be patient.
- Offer to shake hands when introduced.
- Offer assistance, but, do not assume that assistance is always needed.
- Use people first language.
- Be sensitive to individual needs.
- See the *wholeness of spirit* beneath the surface and overcome tendency to turn away or ignore the person.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

When welcoming a person with the following disabilities:

MOBILITY:

Sit at eye level to speak, do not touch or move assistive equipment without permission.

DEVELOPMENTAL/INTELLECTUAL:

Don't treat as a child, rephrase rather than repeat, keep things simple and direct.

AUTISM: Encourage eye contact but do not insist.

VISUAL:

Introduce yourself, speak at a normal volume, ask to guide the person, don't interact with service animals, offer large print or Braille when needed.

HEARING:

Speak facing the person in a normal volume, offer to write a message, reduce background noises.

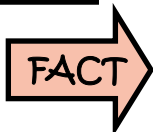
MENTAL ILLNESS:

Don't force conversation or argue, ask what will make them comfortable, offer quiet space.

WELCOMING THROUGH COMMUNICATION



Our church is wheelchair accessible,
there's nothing else we need to do!



Accessibility: It's much more than
just a ramp.

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, words should be chosen with care in order to promote dignity and a positive image.

DO NOT USE these words	REASON	USE these words
Handicapped, crippled	Outdated terms that have negative connotations.	Person with a disability
Wheelchair bound, Confined to a wheelchair	A wheelchair enables mobility and independence.	Uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Retarded	Offensive term.	Intellectual disability
Crazy, psycho, mental case	Offensive terms.	Mentally ill
Deaf and dumb	May not speak, but, there are other forms of communicating.	*Deaf, hard of hearing
Handicapped Parking Handicapped Rest Rooms	Outdated language.	Accessible Parking Accessible Rest Rooms

* Many no longer consider this a disability, instead it is a culture and should be capitalized.

ASL INTERPRETED MASSES for the DEAF



are offered at various locations in the Allentown Diocese. Information can be found at allentowndiocese.org/pwd, Deaf Apostolate (located on the right side of the web page, under Catholic Life, OMPWD.)

USE OF A MICROPHONE

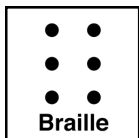
If 15 or more people are gathered at a meeting or an assembly, it is imperative that a microphone be used by all speakers.

ACCESS SYMBOLS

The following symbols should be used to publicize the accessibility features of parish events and activities.



ACCESSIBILITY– Indicates accessible facilities, paths, rest rooms and parking areas for people with limited mobility.



BRaille

Indicates that printed material is available in Braille upon request.



ACCESSIBLE PRINT

Indicates print in 18 point or larger.



ASSISTIVE LISTENING SYSTEMS

Indicates enhanced hearing devices or technology are provided.



SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Indicates that Sign Language interpretation is available.

COMMUNICATION continued



GUIDELINES FOR FUNERALS NEEDING INTERPRETERS

Process for Contacting an Interpreter for a Catholic Funeral

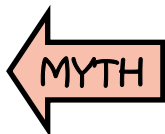
- The Diocesan Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities (OMPWD) contracts with interpreters who are skilled in religious setting interpreting.
- To secure an interpreter a parish may contact this office at 610-289-8900 x2280 or by emailing jjohnson@allentowndiocese.org.
- Parishes are asked to assume responsibility for paying the interpreter. Parishes may pay the interpreter directly or the OMPWD will pay and bill the parish. Interpreter fees range from \$50-65 an hour.
- If paying for an interpreter creates financial hardship for the parish there may be funds available to defray part of this cost.
- It is not usually appropriate to expect relatives or friends of the deaf to serve as their interpreters.
- More information can be found at allentowndiocese.org/pwd on the right side of the web page, under Resources.

TIPS for USHERS AND GREETERS

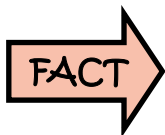


- Wear a **name tag** with first name larger and last name smaller.
 - **Smile!** Greet people with friendliness and warmth without being too intrusive.
-
- Ask those who appear to need **assistance** if they would like you to help them—older adults, adults with small children or persons with a disability. Be sure to give them freedom to refuse help.
 - Ask where he/she would like to receive **communion** and inform the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
 - **Seat** person with family and/or friends. Having pew cuts allows flexibility in seating those using wheelchairs or walkers.
 - Offer the parish **bulletin** whether you think a person can read or comprehend it.
 - Know the **location** of a phone, first aid kit, assistive listening device, accessible restroom and wheelchair or walker.

WELCOMING THROUGH ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



People in wheelchairs can only be accommodated in the back of the worship space!



There are many low cost solutions that allow pwd to worship anywhere in church with their families.



PEW CUTS and/or REMOVING A PEW

are economical solutions to creating space where parishioners with mobility issues can be seated with family and friends.



ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES

1 for every 25 parking spaces

Include van accessible space

Place near curb cut and accessible aisle and entrance



RAMPS

1/2" rise per 12" run

Include railing

36" min width

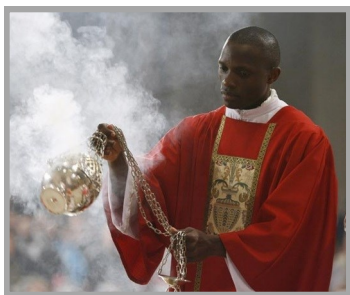
Slip resistant surface

Portable ramps also available



SIGNAGE

Provide inside and outside all areas to create awareness of accessible facilities.



FRAGRANCE

Many persons have allergies to fragrances. Use scentless flowers and allergy free incense.

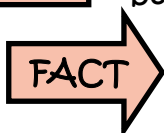
ENVIRONMENTAL BEST PRACTICES

- Automatic or easily opened doors with lever handles
- Accessible rest rooms and meeting areas
- Accessible sanctuary and spaces for worship with access to the sacraments
- Adjustable height ambo, lecterns, etc
- Good lighting
- Good amplified sound system or availability of Assistive Listening Devices (which can be obtained at a reasonable cost)
- Large print hymnals
- Posted hymn numbers (manual or electronic)
- Service animal allowed in pew with parishioner
- Printed or recorded homilies

WELCOMING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES INTO LITURGICAL MINISTRIES



Parishioners with vision problems can't be lectors!



Large print Lectionaries, as well as other materials, are available to support participation in ministries.

Persons with disabilities can and are serving in liturgical ministries in their parishes as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Ushers, Greeters, Lectors and Altar Servers.

- ✚ **LARGE PRINT ROMAN MISSALS** are available for celebrants.
- ✚ **LARGE PRINT LECTIONARIES** are available for lectors.
- ✚ **ALTAR SERVER GUIDELINES** are available to support training. More information can be found at <http://www.allentowndiocese.org/pwd>
- ✚ If lectern or ambo is not accessible, person can be equipped with a portable microphone.
- ✚ A photocopier can be used to enlarge the print on any worship aids.
- ✚ **STRATEGIES** are available from the OMPWD to assist parish in training pwd for liturgical ministries.

PASTORAL STATEMENT OF US CATHOLIC BISHOPS on PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

“The leaders and the general membership of the Church must educate themselves to appreciate fully the contribution people with disabilities can make to the Church's spiritual life.”

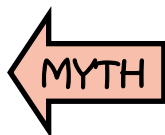


“People can also play a more active role in the liturgy if provided with proper aids and training.”

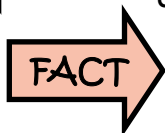
“Moreover, they have the same duty as all members of the community to do the Lord's work in the world, according to their God-given talents and capacity.”



WELCOMING CHILDREN TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Our parish can't provide religious instruction to children with developmental/intellectual disabilities!



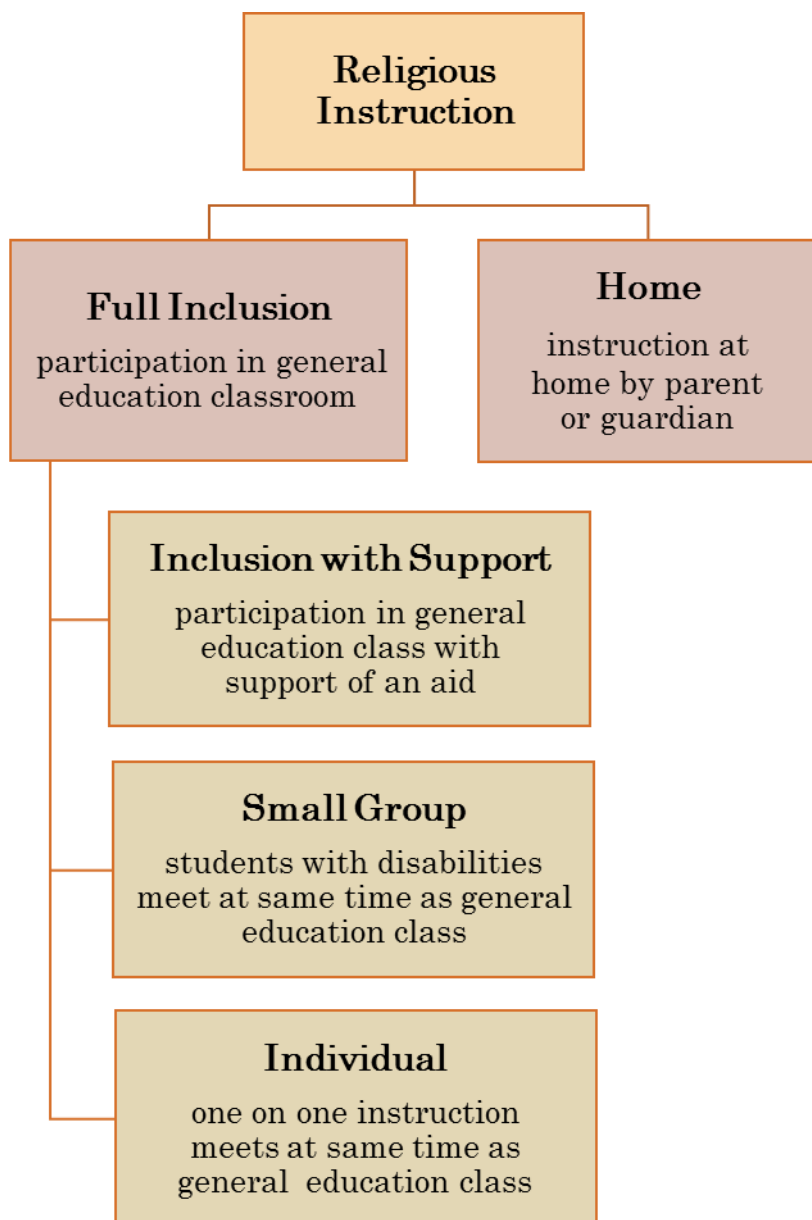
Every parish has options they can offer their families.

- The Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities supports several options for providing religious instruction to children with disabilities.
- Communication with the family is essential in determining which option best suits the child's strengths and needs.
- The Director of the Ministry with Persons with Disabilities is available for individual consultations.
- Picture Book templates are available for individual parishes to personalize:

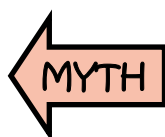
This Is My Church & Going to Mass



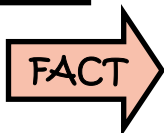
OPTIONS for RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION CHILDREN/YOUTH with DISABILITIES



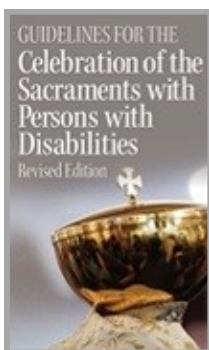
WELCOME TO THE SACRAMENTS



People with intellectual disabilities shouldn't receive Holy Communion!



Ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them. (USCCB, 2017)



Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities were developed by the USCCB to address many of the concerns raised by persons with disabilities and their families and advocates, and also clergy and other pastoral ministers, for greater consistency in pastoral practice in the celebration of the sacraments.

A link is available at allentowndiocese.org/pwd, on the right side of the web page, under Resources.



Low Gluten hosts are available for those with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity. They can be ordered from 4 providers.

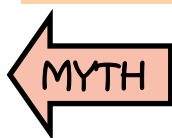
More information can be found at allentowndiocese.org/pwd on the

right side of the web page, under Resources.

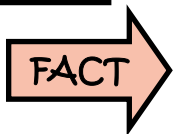
Celiac Disease is an auto-immune condition estimated to affect 1 in 133 people in the U.S. causing intolerance to gluten, the protein in wheat.

Sacramental Instructional Materials are available for nonverbal individuals.

WELCOME HOME VETERANS



The church has nothing to offer returning veterans.



Churches can be helpful in the readjustment process by understanding what soldiers and their families experience when they reunite.

Supporting Returning Veterans

1. **Make your parish “military friendly.”**
Acknowledge parishioners who are in the military, post photos and organize prayer teams.
2. **Reach out to military families during separations.**
Include pastoral calls and offer practical help. Teachers and youth ministers may make a special effort to reach out to children who feel the trauma of separation from a parent.
3. **Reach out to deployed soldiers.**
Send the weekly parish bulletin, handwritten notes, and care packages to let them know they are not forgotten.
4. **When a soldier comes home, welcome them.**
Acknowledge the sacrifice both the vet and their family have made.
5. **Support beyond the yellow ribbon.**
It will take a long time for the family and soldier to rebuild their lives after the fire of war. With the help of their church, over time, the family can grow into a new normal.
6. **Be alert for signs of distress.**
Don't assume if a soldier and their family attend Mass regularly that everything is going well. Express concern and refer to community resources as needed.

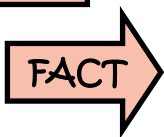
National Catholic Partnership on Disability

OFFICE FOR MINISTRY WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



MYTH

Our parish is on it's own if we need help!



FACT

The diocese offers parishes support to assist in the inclusion of pwd into their spiritual community.

In the Diocese of Allentown we recognize the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church and society. Through our programs and services, we welcome persons with disabilities into full participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

You Are Not
Alone Ministry



If a prenatal diagnosis is adverse...there is help.

PARISH ADVOCACY

A Parish Advocate acts on behalf of pwd to ensure all are invited to share in the life of their parish. The OMWPD provides support, training and materials for advocates.

DEAF APOSTOLATE

Interpreted Masses for the Deaf are offered.

SERVICES for ADULTS with DEVELOPMENTAL/INTELLECTUAL

Annual retreat and trip are offered.

GENERAL ADVOCACY

RESOURCES

- Sacramental Guidelines
- Catholic Curricula
- Various USCCB and NCPD publications
- Parish Advocate Resource Book
- Portable assistive listening system
- Numerous brochures and pamphlets
- Large print Lectionary and Sacramentary
- Picture Book templates are available for individual parishes to personalize:
 This Is My Church
 & Going to Mass
- Reconciliation materials
- Lending Library— books, videos, etc...



At the very least, we must undertake forms of evangelization that speak to the particular needs of persons with disabilities, make those liturgical adaptations that promote their active participation, and provide help and services that reflect our loving concern for those with serious problems. “

- US Conference of Catholic Bishops



MISSIONING PRAYER

Affirming Divine Love for all of God's people, we pledge to minister with persons with disabilities, enabling each of us to grow in grace.

We recognize that a church without persons with disabling conditions is itself limited.

We commit ourselves to create models of ministry within and beyond this congregation, breaking down the barriers of architecture and communication in all ways necessary to affirm the whole family of God as we strive to make the ideal of full inclusion of ALL people in the Church a reality.

Amen.

