



A Resource for Parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Below please find some practical tips to support parishes in building relationships with parishioners who have disabilities as well as supporting their families

Building Relationships

- Encourage openness and flexibility from the top down.
- Model hospitality: introduce yourself and invite. More than once!
- Model respect: Look at, smile and talk TO individuals with disabilities, not just their parent/siblings/caretaker(s).
- Encourage relationships: provide social gathering opportunities.
- Be not afraid: ask, and don't worry, just be respectful.

Effective Communication

- Identify people within your parish who have helpful expertise and experience. This includes but is certainly not limited to Deaf individuals, individuals with disabilities and their families, and professionals such as occupational therapists, special education teachers, counselors, and ASL interpreters.
- Identify the good things already present [ALDs (Assistive Listening Devices), hearing loop, sign language interpretation, quiet Masses] and advertise them! Use the parish website and social media presence, the bulletin, bulletin boards, etc.
- Consider how communication is received. Is your communication accessible if a person can't see, or can't hear, or perhaps can't read well, for example?

Decision Making

- Identify already-involved individuals or family members and invite onto parish councils
- When considering new projects, whether it is renovations, new programs, or trainings, consider accessibility. Consult the folks you identified who have helpful expertise and experience.
- Ask individuals what THEY would like to participate in.

*The Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization resources catechetical ministry for people with disabilities. This effort takes a three-pronged approach of **Awareness, Inclusion and Specialized Approaches** in enhancing evangelization and catechesis for and with persons who have disabilities, who show us God's face, helping us grow in His love. We're here to help!*

Contact Erin Jeffries, Coordinator of Ministry to Persons with Special Needs at

(317) 517-4744 or ejeffries@archindy.org

"... [E]ach parish is called to provide access into all aspects of the communal life of the Church, engaging in relationship and offering appropriate supports. Thus each person is empowered to achieve the fullest measure of personal participation, belonging, serving and flourishing as a member of the Body of Christ."

National Catholic Partnership on Disability: "Statement of Belonging"