



PARISH ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Description

The Parish Advocate acts on behalf of persons with disabilities to ensure that all are invited to share in the life of the parish. The contact/advocate serves as liaison between persons with disabilities and their parish and between the parish and the Diocese Office of Disability Ministry:

Suggested Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks:

1. To assist the pastor in his ministry with Persons with Disabilities & their families

- Be a visible and approachable presence and ascertain the needs of parishioners with disabilities and their families.
- Work with parish leaders to overcome architectural & attitudinal barriers to full participation in parish life.
- Recruit and coordinate other volunteers including Persons with Disabilities
- Assist in setting and communicating short and long term goals

2. To identify persons with disabilities in the parish.

3. To heighten awareness of the gifts and needs of persons with disabilities.

4. Listen to and welcome persons with disabilities and their families into parish life.

5. Maintain communication with the Diocese Disability Ministry staff and with fellow Parish Advocates to share relevant information.

6. Participate in training sessions, workshops, and other educational/formational opportunities for Advocates provided in or near our archdiocese, or elsewhere around the country.

The Diocese of Des Moines Disability Ministry will provide consultation, training, information, and support services on a continuing basis for the fulfillment of the Parish Contact's responsibilities. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any help you may need. We are here to help you.

Patty Origer, Coordinator of Persons with Disability Ministry
Department of Evangelization & Catechesis
Diocese of Des Moines

601 Grand Avenue | Des Moines | IA 50309

poriger@dmdiocese.org

Phone: 515-237-5073

www.dmdiocese.org/disabilityministry

*"No abled vs disabled. There is just us." Dr. Miguel Romero *Recognizing the Body of Christ: A Theological Engagement on Disability* talk on "Called to Beatitude: Our Wounds, God's Grace, and the Sacraments of the Church"*

POSSIBLE IDEAS TO GET STARTED

Suggestions to identify persons with disabilities:

- Help to identify parishioners with disabilities.
- Communicate with the pastor, parish staff, and parish leaders.
- Notice the presence or absence of persons with disabilities at Mass and parish functions.
- Mention in parish bulletin who you are and ask people to contact you with information regarding parishioners with disabilities.
- Identify individuals in group homes and institutions within the parish limits.
- Contact people with disabilities either by phone or a personal visit.
- Meet with parishioners who have disabilities and their family members to identify and discern their concerns, needs, and gifts.
 - Possible suggestions include:
 - Enlist the help of parish circles, fraternal & social service organizations, Eucharistic ministers who bring the sacrament to the homebound, and groups or individuals who visit private homes, nursing homes and/or assisted living facilities.
 - Host a meeting of persons with disabilities, and brainstorm about their needs and gifts to ascertain what they would like to do for the parish, as well as what they would like the parish to do for them.

Suggestions to heighten awareness:

- Assists pastor and lay leaders in promoting awareness of the existence, talents and needs of parishioners and potential parishioners with disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for awareness education.
- Sponsor talks on specific disabilities and topics of inclusion.
- Help organize Sunday liturgies that encourage awareness of persons with disabilities, in either participation opportunities, or homily.
- Provide parish bulletin inserts.
- Ask that the needs of persons with disabilities be included in the Universal Prayer.
- Advocate for persons with disabilities in affirming their rights.
- Consider forming a committee of interested persons, *including persons with disabilities, if possible*
 - Explore with this committee the best way(s) to:
 - Disseminate information regarding persons with disabilities throughout the parish.
 - Talk with parish council, ministry heads, and parish service groups.
 - Also review parish registration and census forms for sensitivity to the presence and concerns of persons with disabilities.

Suggestions to listen and welcome:

- Arrange to permanently post your name and contact information in your parish bulletin and on the parish's website as the Parish Advocate for Persons with Disabilities.
- Promotes awareness and a welcoming attitude regarding persons with disabilities throughout the parish community at all times.
- Work with pastor and lay leaders to overcome both attitudinal and physical barriers to full participation in parish life by persons with disabilities.
- Invite and assist persons with disabilities to become active, visible roles in parish life (liturgical, educational and social) according to their interests and abilities, such as greeter/usher, liturgical reader, Eucharistic minister, RCIA team member, etc.
- Work toward physical accessibility of the church and other parish buildings.
- Assist with transportation options for parishioners with disabilities.
- Collaborate with the Director of Religious Education (D.R.E.) and adult faith formation leader to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities and to promote awareness of and access to religious education opportunities for persons with disabilities.