



Serving as a Parish Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Responsibilities

- 1) Seek out parishioners with disabilities through contact with parish staff, families, other parishioners, and/or parish census
- 2) Meet with parishioners who have disabilities and their family members to identify and discern their concerns, needs, and gifts
- 3) Assists pastor and lay leaders in promoting awareness of the existence, concerns and gifts of parishioners and potential parishioners with disabilities
- 4) Promotes awareness and a welcoming attitude regarding persons with disabilities throughout the parish community at all times
- 5) Work with pastor and lay leaders to overcome both attitudinal and physical barriers to full participation in parish life by persons with disabilities
- 6) Work with parish Director of Religious Education/Parish Catechetical Leader and (if applicable) School Catechetical Leader to promote awareness of and access to religious education opportunities for persons with disabilities
- 7) Educate yourself regarding available resources for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities, and share this information with all parish ministries and organizations
- 8) Maintain telephone and e-mail communication with the archdiocesan Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CPD) and with fellow Parish Advocates to share relevant information

Suggestions for Fulfilling This Role

- 1) 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
- 2) Form a committee of interested persons, including persons with disabilities, if possible
- 3) 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
- 4) Contact individuals identified as having disabling conditions. 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
- 5) Invite and encourage persons with disabilities to take active, visible roles in parish ministries such as greeter/usher, liturgical reader, Eucharistic minister, RCIA team member, etc.
- 6) Participate in training sessions, workshops, and other educational/formational opportunities for Advocates provided in or near our archdiocese, or elsewhere around the country