

§V-3100 RESOURCE: ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

Introduction

In 1978 the U.S. Catholic Bishops declared in their Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities: *It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to people with disabilities.... To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community.*

As a welcoming Church, called to model the hospitality of Jesus, we are charged with reducing the barriers that many parishioners and visitors encounter when they attempt to access our buildings and take part in our worship and programs. To that end, we are providing this “checklist” for parishes to use as they evaluate their physical plant and prioritize needed repairs and renovations.

This survey is quite extensive and is designed to assist parishes in their long-term planning; not everything listed in this document needs to be attended to immediately. Rather, parishes should identify their particular needs and priorities. Therefore, parishes may wish to form a committee of various parish leaders, experts in building and accessibility issues, and especially members of the parish with disabilities to work through this document and make recommendations as how best to fulfill the U.S. Bishops’ call to *do all in our power to ... reach out to welcome people with disabilities who seek to participate in the ecclesial community.*

The operative value underlying this document is “equivalent experience.” This principle calls us to help ensure—to the degree possible—that those with mobility, sensory, and developmental limitations are able to experience the life of the community in as equivalent a fashion as possible. By doing so, we signal that there are no “second class” citizens in the Kingdom.

Sources

This document is a compilation of access assessment instruments from the following organization and dioceses:

- The Archdiocese of Detroit (MI)
- The Archdiocese of Dubuque (IA)
- The Archdiocese of Washington, DC
- The Diocese of Springfield (IL)
- The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (<http://www.ncpd.org/>)

A free copy of the ADA Accessibility Standards is available at: <http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/index.htm>

Not everything in this survey will apply to your parish, but our attempt here is to be as comprehensive as possible. As a result, some of the information is quite technical, including architectural recommendations from the documents listed above.

As you seek to implement this resource and questions arise, the Diocesan Liturgical and Building Commissions are available to assist you.

§V-3100.1 General Considerations / Inclusion in Parish Life

Are the parish staff, volunteers, and parishioners at large informed about issues of accessibility and welcoming of those with disabilities?

Yes	No	
		Does the parish have a stated policy that people with disabilities are welcome?
		If so, does the staff know about this commitment?
		Have the staff ever been trained in awareness / sensitivity to disability concerns?
		Have volunteers (such as ministers of hospitality [ushers, greeters]) been trained in how to appropriately assist those with disabilities?
		Do we try to reduce attitudinal barriers by providing disability awareness programs?
		Does the parish regularly advertise access to its activities and services (for example, in its invitations, publicity, information flyers, and bulletin)?
		Does the parish’s emergency evacuation plan take into account those with disabilities?
		Is there a manual wheelchair available for use if necessary?
		Are persons with disabilities consulted on accessibility questions?
		Are persons with disabilities able to participate in parish social activities, with peer helper when needed?
		In written and oral communication, including preaching, do we use appropriate language that acknowledges the person, not the disability?
		Do we provide transportation (to liturgy as well as to social and formation events) for those with disabilities (e.g., lift van, organized network of volunteers, church bus)?
		Do we provide a tour for newcomers with disabilities so that they would be aware of possible challenges / choices available to them?
		Do we provide for members in group homes or care facilities, and for people who are homebound (communion ministers, taped worship service, parish visitors, invitation to participate with support [if needed], etc.)?

What ministries do we need to undertake in order to better reach out to the homebound or residing in other facilities?

Are people with disabilities actively ministering in the parish?

People with impairment of:	Mobility	Vision	Hearing	Developmental Disability	Other
Altar Servers					
Catechists					
Committees					
EMHCs					
Greeter/Usher					
Parish Council					
Parish Staff					
RCIA					
Readers					
Service Groups					
Youth Ministry					
Other					

§V-3100.2 Auditory Access to Worship and Activities

Are the following devices available and in working condition?

Yes	No	
		Is there a proper system for sound amplification in place?
		Are ministers trained for public speaking and the proper use of the sound system?
		A visual emergency alarm system in the Church and Parish Center
		A Telephone Device for the Deaf in parish administration center and staff familiar with use

Does our parish use the following?

Yes	No	
		Assistive listening devices (Infrared, Audio Loop, FM System)
		Sign / Oral interpreters
		If interpreters are not available, does the parish provide real-time captioning?
		Is there adequate lighting on speakers (so as to accommodate lip-reading) and interpreters, with no shadows on either?
		Written text of verbal presentations (ex: homilies, announcements, catechetical presentations; possibly through e-mail ahead of time or if person unable to attend)
		Captioned audiovisual materials

Any comments regarding auditory access?

Which of the above items is something our parish should consider implementing?