Ministry Accessibility Checklist
All Are Welcome Here

It is essential to create a welcoming and spiritually nurturing environment for everyone. As Christ taught us to reach out to those who need us and welcome them with open hearts, please consider the following items to ensure we meet the sacramental and spiritual needs of all parishioners, their families, and guests in all parish activities.

Although we may not be required to accommodate the disabled, showing our faith community that we do welcome participation by all helps us grow together in Christ’s love. Those living with disabilities and their caregivers may feel excluded from the sacraments and social activities, concerned that they won’t “fit in” or be “too much trouble” or that asking for assistance calls too much attention to their disability. Let’s conscientiously and with compassion take these steps so that all feel welcome here.

General

- In your ministry work and at the start of any meeting/event planning process, invite someone who is living with a disability or one who cares for someone with a disability to be a part of your group. They will bring an important perspective to all you do.
- Assign one or more individuals to welcome those who are attending, open doors, being attentive to obvious special needs, offering assistance if needed, pointing out handicapped seating/restrooms.
- These assistants should be available throughout the meeting/event, and ready to help those in need during an evacuation.
- When providing handouts, use photocopier to enlarge print. Consider the availability of Braille printed handouts as well as handouts in other languages, should there be a need for either or both.
- Invite parishioners to share accommodation requests needed to have a meaningful part in Mass or the parish family life in general.

Physical Location

- Is the location for your meeting(s)/event(s) accessible to everyone; on the first floor or higher level with elevator access
- Does the location have wheelchair-accessible doorways with push-button access to the building
- Is there sufficient monitored handicapped parking (to safely direct traffic), handrails, ramps, entrances, restrooms; are these clearly marked?
- Does handicapped seating allow for unobstructed views (if the group is standing, will someone seated in a wheelchair be able to see?)
- If outdoors, are sidewalks easy to maneuver?
Sound

- Sound systems with adequate amplification are recommended for groups that include the elderly and hearing impaired. A good sound system is essential in communicating information to attendees, especially important instructions.
- Provide deaf interpretation if warranted.

Food

- If food will be served, do you have options that for those with food allergies, such as celiac disease, or low fat, low sodium items. Clearly mark these items as such.

Promotion

- Do your promotional materials/announcements clearly state if your meeting/event is/is not handicapped accessible? Include the universal accessibility symbol.
- If you have a registration process, include a question or checkbox inquiring about special accommodations. Follow up for detailed instructions.
- When taking pictures of the events, be sure to include everyone. It is important for all parishioners to see people they can identify with.

Post Event

- Did any issues/questions arise regarding accessibility that weren’t planned for?
- Was there adequate parking spaces/hash marked areas?
- What can be done differently next time to make the meeting/event even more welcoming?
- Share you challenges and successes with other ministries so they may learn too.

Involvement Checklist

To your knowledge, people with disabilities serve in which of the following ministries:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Intellectual/Developmental</th>
<th>Other Disability</th>
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(CYO, KC, Altar Society, Holy Name Society, St. Vincent DePaul, Men’s Cub, Young Adult Ministry, RCIA, Home & School Association, VBS, and others specific to your parish)
Sacraments and Worship

Everyone should have full access to the full life of the Church, including all ministries and activities, but especially the sacraments. Use the following checklist to examine the accessibility of all sacraments.

- Are sacraments available to all who wish to receive them even when a disability may form a barrier?
- Is sacramental formation available to all including those where a disability may be a barrier?
- Are all invited and encouraged to participate in liturgical ministries, making the ambo accessible?
- Are alternate print or electronic versions of the readings?
- Is access to the sanctuary for extraordinary ministers, servers, lectors?
- Are audio aids for those who need it to read?
- How can greeters/ushers be accommodated if they cannot fulfill all the requirements?
- If your ministry venue is not accessible, how do you plan to accommodate someone who needs it?
- Do we set unnecessary restrictions on people with disabilities, e.g., refusal of sacramental formation due to learning disabilities or issues of access?
- How can we be creative in finding solutions to make sacraments, catechesis, ministries and services accessible?
- Accessibility is not only about physical access, but about cognitive access too. It may be that a person perceives he/she cannot participate due to a disability, so how do we invite them, accommodate them, and encourage them to be involved?

Additional Resources

Archdiocese of New Orleans Commission on Person with Disabilities
https://nolacatholic.org/commission-on-persons-with-disabilities

National Catholic Partnership on Disability
https://ncpd.org

Loyola Press
https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/parish-ministry/special-needs

Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with persons With Disabilities

Do you have suggestions that can improve this checklist?
Email planningandministries@arch-no.org