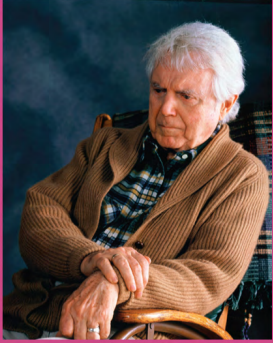


A Quick Start GUIDE



DISABILITIES MINISTRIES



A Quick Start Guide for Disabilities Ministries

Manuscript created by the North American Division Commission for People with Disabilities

Editor: Charlotte L. V. Thoms

Contributors:

Eunice Bailey
Catherine Burks
Joan Bova
David Klinedinst
Rosemary Graham
Arturio Grayman
Michael Harrell
Thompson Kay
Donald Miller
Celeste L.T. Thoms
Edwin L. Thoms
Marcus M. Vassell
Deborah Taylor-Whitfield

Design and layout: Alan Eno

Available from:

AdventSource

5040 Prescott Avenue

Lincoln, NE 68506

800.328.0525

www.adventsource.org

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN #: 978-1-57756-603-8

Introduction

You have been chosen as Disabilities Ministries leader for your church. You were selected prayerfully and with anticipation of what your special gifts can bring to this position. Thank you for accepting this role in ministry. This position is an important part of your church's outreach efforts.

Disabilities Ministries is designed to educate and sensitize all church members as they reach out to people with disabilities. The goal is to share the gospel and empower individuals in all areas of church life so they can evangelize others, inviting them to accept the love and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

People with disabilities within the community and even the congregation are often spiritually neglected. The signs on the front of our churches say "Welcome," but many of these same churches present insurmountable barriers to individuals with disabilities. The steep stairs, narrow doorways and hallways, and restrooms located on another floor or in distant locations are generally unreachable by people with physical disabilities and the elderly. Inaccessible pews prevent people who use wheelchairs from sitting with family members. Strict adherence to worship schedules prevents the participation of people with certain disabilities because of the extra time needed in moving from seat to duty and back. Often these barriers discourage those with disabilities from attending and joining, even when they are looking for a church home.

Governments within North America have taken steps to abolish the barriers that deny equal opportunity of employment, public services, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunication services to individuals with disabilities. Church members, too, are expected to encourage equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in their communities and congregations by eliminating physical and attitudinal barriers. They should see the removal of restricting obstacles for individuals with disabilities not only as a present challenge, but a high priority if their church is seeking to fulfill Christ's mission of reaching, nurturing, and enabling all people.

Support for Disabilities Ministries

The church is a community of people who share the gospel with everybody, and Christ is our example. Out of Jesus' 35 miracles recorded in the Bible, 27 touched people with disabilities. He healed the boy who was "controlled by a spirit...and could not speak anymore" (Mark 9:17 NIRV); a man who was paralyzed (Luke 5:18-26); and the Deaf man of Mark 7. Jesus gives clear evidence and support for an intentional ministry to those with disabilities.

One of the most powerful statements for supporting a disability ministry is from *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 3*, page 511:

"I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf...and persons disabled in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our compassion, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible, we shall feel that debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for others."

Steps to Christ, page 3, states Jesus' work was evidence of His divine anointing:

"This was His [Jesus] work. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing."

In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said:

[The Lord] "hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."
Luke 4:18

What Is a Disability?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities. Major life activities include breathing, seeing, hearing, walking, communicating, learning, taking care of one's self, manual tasks, and working.

7 Major Disability Groups

- 1. Cognitive:** A cognitive disability affects a person's ability to comprehend what is seen or heard, and then infer information from social subtleties and body language. Cognitive disabilities may include, but are not limited to, autism, learning disabilities, Down Syndrome, and traumatic brain injuries.
- 2. Hearing:** A hearing disability affects a person's ability to hear sounds and, in some instances, the ability to discriminate speech. Hearing disabilities may range from a mild to a profound hearing loss.
- 3. Hidden:** A hidden disability is a physical condition that is not easily observed. This term encompasses many conditions including, but not limited to, arthritis, epilepsy, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and conditions related to obesity.
- 4. Mobility:** A mobility disability limits an individual's ability to perform the activities of daily living. The individual may need assistance in moving from one place to another.
- 5. Psychiatric:** A psychiatric disability is a mental disorder that may affect daily living. This may include, but is not limited to, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, multiple personalities, and phobias.
- 6. Speech:** A speech disability affects a person's ability to communicate and can be characterized as language and voice disorders, articulation errors, dysfluency, or stuttering.
- 7. Visual:** A visual disability affects a person's ability to see. Visual disabilities range from limited vision to wearing glasses to correct vision, glaucoma, cataracts, or blindness.

Confidentiality

It is extremely important that all information pertaining to a person's disability be kept confidential. In fact, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that information regarding disabilities be kept confidential. Just as you would not want your medical records or condition shared throughout the doctor's waiting room, individuals do not want information regarding their disability shared with others.

It is important that you assure the congregation that information about disabilities will be kept confidential and only shared when necessary and with the permission of the person with the disability. Church members do not need to know who has a disability in order for accommodations to be made.

When you file reports about the number of church members with disabilities served by your ministry, report only the type of disability and the number of members with the disability. Do not use the church member's name, unless you have received permission from the individual with the disability.

4 Major Goals of Disabilities Ministries

- 1. Accessibility:** The goal is to provide a place where everyone feels welcome regardless of their physical or mental condition. You can help ensure your church's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and its current amendments by eliminating barriers (architectural and attitudinal) so structures and programs are easily available to all people. You can also encourage the full inclusion of people with disabilities in your church's programs and services.
- 2. Accommodation:** The goal is to help God's family be inclusive in principle and practice. You can promote the accommodation of people with disabilities by providing services such as transportation to church events and evangelistic meetings. Accommodations should be specific to the needs of the individual. Additional examples are sign language interpreters, allowing the use of service animals, or providing large print handouts of printed materials. You can also conduct surveys and use the results to provide resources to enhance the worship experience and accommodate the specific needs of people with disabilities in your congregation.
- 3. Encouragement:** The goal is to encourage people with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of church life, such as in volunteer service positions, on the church board, and on other committees. In addition, you will want to develop recreational activities that will enhance the interaction to include members and visitors with disabilities.

- 4. Education:** The goal is to train the congregation in the seven major disability groups, current trends, and changes in laws, and make available resources regarding disabilities to develop a supportive environment of informed believers.

Although employment may not be considered a church goal, the director can develop and maintain a database that includes the job skills of members with disabilities.

According to the United States Census Bureau, at least 54 million Americans have some type of disability. This means that 20 percent of the population, or one person in every five, has a disability.

The Leader's Responsibilities

The Disabilities Ministries leader has the responsibilities to:

- Serve as an active member of the Personal Ministries council.
- Establish a Disabilities Ministries committee that functions as a subcommittee of the Personal Ministries council. This committee focuses on outreach to people with disabilities within the church and community. As you establish your committee, be inclusive by inviting young people, people with disabilities, diverse cultures, and people with various skills to become active members of the team. Include key leaders and heads of departments. Remember Disabilities Ministries is not a stand-alone department.
- Ensure people with disabilities are involved in church programs. Members with disabilities should be asked to hold church offices and assist with other ministries. God gives all abilities to be used in His service and the Disabilities Ministries committee can find ways to integrate people with disabilities into a full and active life within the church family.
- Conduct a needs assessment survey so you can identify the needs of people with disabilities in the church and community.
- Look for ways to make your church building more accessible.
- Arrange transportation so people with disabilities can attend Sabbath morning services and other events.
- Develop effective methods to evangelize people with disabilities in the community.
- Create an atmosphere that will challenge people with disabilities to use their talents and skills for the cause of Jesus Christ.

- Send quarterly reports to the conference Disabilities Ministries director using the forms found at <http://nad.adventist.org/disability>. For more information about record keeping, contact your local conference Disabilities Ministries director.
- Plan at least one annual Disabilities Awareness Sabbath to educate and sensitize the church. It is important to provide education for church members concerning mental, emotional, and physical disabilities, and the people those disabilities affect.
- Debrief with the Disabilities Ministries committee after each activity and plan follow-up activities. Strive to improve the ministry.
- Work with professional agencies in the community that serve people with disabilities.
- Serve as liaison between your church and Christian Record Services for the Blind, Adventist Deaf Ministries, the North American Division Disabilities Ministries coordinator, your conference and union Disabilities Ministries directors, and other organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.
- Pursue continuing education for yourself, team members, and the congregation.

Consider transforming your church into a hub for ministry by hosting support groups for people with disabilities and their families. This is an excellent way to form an unobtrusive outreach ministry.

Steps to Building a Successful Ministry

Although your church may not currently have any members with disclosed disabilities, now is the perfect time to begin the ministry. Use the following building blocks to get started.

Pray. An effective ministry begins with prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17). The word “prayer” sounds so simple, but a prayer-based ministry is a successful ministry. God will give insight that professional expertise will not provide. As you meet and pray with God, ask Him to direct you to others who have the same mission (Proverbs 16:3). Prayer is your first block.

Listen. Listen to the Holy Spirit’s leading (Revelation 2:7). As you begin this important ministry, you will hear the voice of God speak to you through His Word and provide examples in the life of Christ to strengthen your passion as you discover how Jesus treated people with disabilities. God will bring success. Listening also awakens a new awareness within you. You will begin to notice

people through the same loving, compassionate eyes like the Master. Disabilities Ministries raises sensitivity levels to needs previously unnoticed. For example, a member does not bounce down the stairs, but instead holds firmly to the handrail and cautiously steps onto a stair with the right foot and then slowly brings the left foot to join the right. God's word will fortify, sustain, and encourage you.

Study. Study the Bible (II Timothy 2:15) and the life of Jesus for at least 25 examples of how to minister to people with disabilities. Know the mission of the ministry. Study the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and recent amendments. There are many websites to assist you.

- U.S. Department of Justice. (2009, June 15). Americans with disabilities act of 1990, as amended. www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2009, February 23). The Americans with disabilities act of 1990: Titles 1 and V. www.eeoc.gov/policy/ada.html

Knowledge is a powerful tool. It demonstrates a compelling witness when coupled with sensitivity to the needs of others. With each step up, you will gain spiritual strength.

Organize. Start with a small interest group. Keep in mind, the group might be just you and God in the beginning (Matthew 18:20), but this is a majority for the implementation of a ministry. Disabilities Ministries does not stand alone, but weaves through all ministries. As others witness your missionary spirit in action, it will not be difficult to identify those who share your passion. Building block four is centered with confidence in Christ. He will bring others who are dedicated.

Discuss. Building block five can make or break the ministry. Schedule a meeting with your pastor to discuss the new ministry. You will want his or her counsel (Proverbs 11:14). If possible, make this meeting a brief face-to-face informational discussion. Have your notes ready. Remember Proverbs 24:3. Be prepared to answer questions. If there are questions you are unable to answer, it is appropriate to say, "Please let me find out the right answer and get back to you." You can refer to the conference Disabilities Ministries director for more information.

Plan. Create a plan and let your pastor know you are ready to present the plan to the church board (Luke 12:12). The plan should give evidence of how to welcome those with disabilities into the fellowship. The blocks are easier since you have effectively received the support of the pastor. Building block six will give you an opportunity to show how your ministry supports the church's other ministries in their focus on evangelism and community outreach.

Pray. Thank our Heavenly Father for the opportunities. You started with prayer, and building block seven is the perfect ending to the perfect start (Ephesians 6:18).

NAD Disabilities Ministries Website

The North American Disabilities Ministries website offers ministry ideas, information about federal legislation, resources, suggestions for reaching people with the disabilities, and more.

Visit <http://nad.adventist.org/disability>

Getting Started

Once the Personal Ministries council establishes the Disabilities Ministries committee as a subcommittee and the church board, with the support of the pastor, gives the green light to get started, do not hesitate.

1. Proceed immediately. Every church will eventually establish a ministry for people with disabilities. Therefore, move into action. Remember a ministry can be started before those with special needs are identified.
2. Assemble an inclusive team. You may want to include the following members: a deacon, the Health Ministries leader, communication director, Sabbath School superintendent, and Personal Ministries leader. Do not be shy about asking for volunteers because you have the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy supporting your mission. You also have your personal testimony that expresses your passion for involvement in this ministry. The need is there, and this ministry will benefit every other ministry in the church. Trust God to assemble a faithful, dedicated team.
3. Delegate responsibilities. Many hands make the load lighter. Let people, with and without disabilities, provide input and assistance to create an effective ministry.
4. Avoid preaching to people about why they should be involved in Disabilities Ministries. Service rendered as a result of criticism or guilt is not a long-lasting commitment to the Living God. However, shout from the rooftops every victory toward a viable ministry.
5. Ask a person with a physical disability to accompany you on a walk through your church facility to assess any structural barriers. If needed, mark any areas

that are not accessible with signage indicating where an alternative access is located. Signage will also provide an inexpensive method of raising awareness.

Find solutions for building accessibility by brainstorming with your Disabilities Ministries team or solicit assistance from professional contractors. Because solving structural barriers often involves long-term renovations, the Disabilities Ministries committee should meet periodically with the deacons to assess the church's progress toward this important goal. Also, inform the congregation of your actions before implementation. An informed church will work with you. Your church's accessibility will largely determine the success of your ministry.

Your church's accessibility will largely determine the success of your disabilities ministry. Often solving structural barriers involves long-term renovations; therefore, the Disabilities Committee should meet periodically to assess the church's progress.

6. Encourage your team to assess attitudinal barriers with prayer and candor. Prayer, tact, and education will break down those barriers.
7. Survey the congregation to ascertain the needs of members with disabilities. Be sure the pastor announces the process from the pulpit and include the survey in several issues of the church email/print newsletter so everyone has a chance to respond. You can find a sample survey in the *Disabilities Ministries Handbook*.
8. Ask for a Sabbath to present the findings of your survey. Put your plans into action by launching the ministry with a special event and then continue the enthusiasm and growth through additional services and social activities. Hosting a Disabilities Awareness Sabbath is an excellent way to launch the ministry.

Other areas to assess:

Transportation

Does your church provide transportation for people who need it? Are the parking spots for those with disabilities marked clearly and in the best possible location? Is the number of spots adequate?

Entrances

Is there a ramp leading to your church's entrance? Are all doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs? How high are the door thresholds? Are doors equipped with levers or push handles? Is the floor non-slip and free of loose items?

Sanctuary

Are people with disabilities able to sit with their family or friends? A space in the back of the church is not always the best location, as individuals may not be able to visually appreciate the worship service. Is there a place for wheelchairs? If not, you could cut a pew to fit a wheelchair. Is a certified sign language interpreter needed for clear communication? Are those with a hearing loss accommodated with assistive hearing devices, appropriate lighting, and direct visibility from the speaker and interpreter? Is the light adequate and free of glare for those with a visual disability?

Stairs

Are ramps in place for short sets of steps? Does an elevator or chairlift connect all levels of the church? Is the fellowship hall accessible?

Basic Needs

Is it easy to get into the restrooms? Is each equipped with at least one special stall and a lowered sink? What about the level of the drinking fountains? If the fountains are too high for someone in a wheelchair to reach, are paper cups available?

Emergency Preparedness

Has your church taken people with disabilities into account when preparing for emergency situations such as natural disasters or fire? Are there flashing lights to signal immediate evacuation in the sanctuary, fellowship hall, restrooms, or classrooms?

Website Presence

Has your church included Disabilities Ministries on its website? Link your site to the conference, union, and North American Division sites.

Communication

Are Braille signs posted outside restrooms and other key rooms so someone who has a visual disability can enter the correct door? Does anyone in your church know sign language? If not, are there any special accommodations for communicating with those with a hearing loss or the Deaf? Does your church cut off the lights, blocking communication for the Deaf who need the light to see the interpreter? Do all visual presentations have closed captions?

Disabilities Awareness Sabbath

The Program

Plan a happy, spiritual day that allows the Holy Spirit to have complete control. If this is your first event of this nature, title it “First Annual Disabilities Awareness Sabbath” so members know that more will follow.

Let every section of the program include educating and sensitizing the church. If your church loves to connect Scripture with everyday living, be practical and give them God’s Word in parables with a disability focus. If your church loves music, give the congregation music along with the information.

Below are a few additional tips for planning your program:

- Save acknowledgements or awards for an afternoon program. This will keep the worship service focused on honoring and glorifying God.
- Caution every program participant to keep track of the time.
- If you decide to have lunch at the church, try a box lunch with healthy food instead of a heavy meal that causes drowsiness – especially if you plan a workshop after lunch.

Sabbath School

Here is where you want to be as creative as possible. Be sure to incorporate the Sabbath School superintendent and teachers in your planning and implementation. You can use the current lesson study, but ask the teachers to cover the lesson from an inclusion perspective or tie the lesson to a person with a disability – biblical or real.

On occasion, in lieu of the Sabbath School lesson, a panel featuring people with various disabilities can increase the sensitivity of church members to the goals of the ministry and the challenges people with disabilities face. Be sure you use the time to point out the abilities individuals with disabilities, as well.

Divine Worship

Continue to weave the disabilities perspective into every phrase of the program. Add a section entitled, “Why Are We Here?” This will give you an opportunity to bring the purpose of Disabilities Ministries to the church. Share real-life or biblical stories. Use the theme song. Be time sensitive and eliminate as many preliminaries as possible. Remember, this is a day for those with disabilities.

Choose a speaker who is knowledgeable about disability issues and what the Bible says about ministering to people with disabilities. The speaker could be the pastor or one of the Disabilities Ministries team members. The service should also include several persons with disabilities.

Workshop or Skit

If you decide to host an afternoon program, make it short and to the point. Do not exhaust your audience. Everyone can give powerful, spirit-filled information in five minutes instead of boring the congregation in 55 minutes. Truly, it is more difficult in five minutes, but God will help you. If you do not have a workshop, try a skit. Visit the NAD Disabilities Ministries website at <http://nad.adventist.org/disability> for suggestions.

Not a Stand-alone Ministry

Disabilities Ministries does not stand alone. Rather, it supports every other ministry because people with disabilities should be involved in every ministry in the church. The church should view Disabilities Ministries as a vein that carries life-giving blood to the entire church body.

Education

During the Disabilities Awareness Sabbath, the director should sensitize the congregation to words and terms that may be found in biblical translations, but should be avoided when ministering to people with disabilities. It is also important to use language that focuses on the person and not the disability.

Language That Puts People First

Say	Don't Say
She has a psychiatric disability.	She is crazy, nuts, mentally ill, a fruitcake, insane, or looney.
He had a stroke.	He is a stroke victim.
He is Deaf.	He is Deaf and dumb, a Deaf-mute, or a deafie.
She has a congenital disorder.	She has a birth defect.
He is blind. He has low vision.	He is blind as a bat, four-eyed, or sightless.

Say	Don't Say
She has arthritis.	She is arthritic or is suffering from arthritis.
He does not speak.	He is mute, speechless, or retarded.
She has a cognitive disability.	She is retarded, dumb, feebleminded, stupid, unfortunate, or an imbecile.
He has a mobility impairment or disability.	He is wheelchair bound, sick and shut-in, confined to a wheelchair, crippled, withered, lame, or deformed.
She is a person without a disability.	She is normal.
He is a person with a disability.	He is disabled or handicapped.

Follow-Up

Coordinate a debriefing session following your event so you can make improvements for the next Disabilities Awareness Sabbath. You can also plan follow-up programs and advertise them while Disabilities Awareness Sabbath is fresh in members' minds.

Tips for Improving Your Skills

As Disabilities Ministries director, you will want to partner with organizations and find resources that can assist people with disabilities. As you gather information about available resources, you will be able to provide greater levels of assistance to people in your church and community. Below are some tips:

- Read, read, and read. Become acquainted with as much information as possible.
- Surf the Internet.
- Check your local public library.
- Contact your local Social Security Office for materials related to disabilities.
- The Department of Human Services is an excellent resource for information on disabilities.
- Talk to individuals with disabilities who may assist you in understanding their needs.

- Check the telephone book.
- Network with other churches that have or want a Disabilities Ministries program.
- Talk with caregivers of people with disabilities.
- Nursing homes and home care agencies share willingly and will allow you to volunteer.
- Attend seminars.
- Attend meetings (contact different disability-related organizations and businesses for locations).
- The Red Cross is an excellent resource.

Conclusion

As Disabilities Ministries director, you, along with others of like passion, will discover the privilege of making your church a welcoming environment to those with disabilities. Members with disabilities are waiting to share the gospel with others, and Disabilities Ministries can give equal opportunities to all who desire to serve and participate in the church of the Living God.

You can help create those opportunities with a Disabilities Ministries program that embraces the motto, Including All...Omitting None.

Resources

The following resources are available from AdventSource. Find more resources at www.adventsource.org or 800.328.0525.



Can You Hear Us?

By Esther Doss

Can You Hear Us? is a quick reference guide to deaf ministry. In this booklet you will find amazing tidbits, discover myths about Deaf people, shocking statistics, how-to's, and heart-warming stories.

Catalog #425653



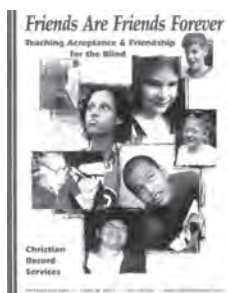
Disabilities Ministries Handbook

Prepared by North American Division Commission for People with Disabilities

This Christ-centered manual will challenge your church to ensure that the needs of members with disabilities are met.

This user-friendly handbook includes tips for building a disabilities ministry in your church, government guidelines for accessibility, practical tips for leaders and members, ideas for activities, sample programs, and more.

Catalog #416495



Friends are Friends Forever

Prepared by Christian Record Services for the Blind

Use this teaching kit to help children and adults learn about blindness. Included in the three-ring binder are lesson plans, activities, a resource list, and the stories of Helen Keller, Louis Braille, H.M.S. Richards, Sr., and others who have succeeded in spite of visual disabilities.

Catalog #425655



Missionaries of the Blind Volunteer Manual

Prepared by Christian Record Services for the Blind

Use this program to reach those who are blind and have a visual disability in your community. The information comes in a folder and includes instructions. This packet is ideal for personal ministries leaders, disabilities ministries leaders, and others interested in reaching those who are blind and have a visual disability.

Catalog #450025



Working Together: Deaf and Hearing

By Thompson U. Kay

This helpful guidebook shows you how to establish a ministry for the Deaf in your church and community, identify the causes of deafness, and discover how to develop relationships with persons who are Deaf while finding ways to include everyone in the worship service.

Catalog #416100

The following resources are available online or from your local bookstore.

Dancing with Disabilities: Opening the Church to All God's Children

United Church Press, 1997

God Plays Piano Too: The Spiritual Life of Children with Disabilities

Brett Webb Mitchell

Crossroad, 1993

Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, & Congregations

Erik Carter

Brookes Publishing Company, 2007

Let All the Children Come to Me: A Practical Guide to Including Children with Disabilities in Your Church Ministries

MaLesa Breeding, Dana Hood, and Jerry Whitworth

Cook Communications Ministries, 2006

That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities

Ginny Thornburgh and Ann Rose Davie
National Organization on Disability, 1993

The Sibling Slam Book: What It's Really Like to have a Brother or Sister with Special Needs?

Edited by Don Meyer
Woodbine House, 2005

Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities

Sally Patton
UUA, 2004

Organizations

Adventist Book Center

Contact the Adventist Book Center at www.adventistbookcenter.com or 800-765-6955 for Bible Study Guides in large print, Easy English edition, and on audio CD.

Adventist Deaf Ministries

Adventist Deaf Ministries is a non-profit ministry for people who are Deaf. Their goal is to create ministries that reach Deaf people in the church and community. To learn how Adventist Deaf Ministries can help you reach your community, visit www.deafadventist.org or call 301-680-6407.

Christian Record Services for the Blind

Christian Record Services for the Blind (CRSB) is an international Seventh-day Adventist organization that serves the people with visual disabilities. From large print materials, Braille magazines, and the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide to hundreds of Braille and audio books, CRSB helps the blind to see Jesus. They also provide summer and winter camp programs and scholarship assistance. For more information, visit www.christianrecord.org or call 402-488-0981.

North American Division Commission for People with Disabilities

In the 1980s the North American Division Commission for People with Disabilities (NADCPD) was established through the North American Division Human Relations office. In 2005 the Division appointed a coordinator to lead the Division in complying with the 1995 vote of the General Conference to provide

a ministry for people with disabilities. The NADCPD coordinator reports to the NAD Vice President of Ministries. Each union in the division has a director, some conferences have directors, and many churches across the North American and Bermuda have directors. Do not hesitate to contact your local conference or union director for resources or information.

For more information, visit <http://nad.adventist.org/disability>.

Web Resources

North American Division Disabilities Ministries

<http://nad.adventist.org/disability>

Adventist Deaf Ministries

www.deafadventist.org

Atlantic Union Conference Disabilities Ministries

<http://Atlantic-union.org/dis.html>

Christian Record Services for the Blind

www.christianrecord.org

Friendship Ministries

<http://friendship.org>

Hope Keepers Magazine

www.hopekeepersmagazine.com

Hole in the Wall Camps for Children with Serious Illnesses

www.holeinthewallcamps.org

Joni and Friends International Disability Center

www.joniandfriends.org

Kathleen Deyer Bolduc – Parenting a Special Needs Child

www.kathleenbolduc.com

KidNeeds.com

<http://kidneeds.com>

Rest Ministries

www.restministries.org

Disabilities Ministries Coordinator Ministry Description

Introduction

God's church is a community of people who share the Gospel with everybody. Christ healed the boy with deaf and mute spirits (Mark 9). His healing of the man that was paralyzed (Luke 5:18-26) is clear evidence of a new, intentional ministry to those with disabilities. It suggests that in every congregation there should be a band of compassionate workers responsible for sensitizing and reminding the entire church of its mission to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities within the community and local church are often spiritually neglected. The signs on the front of our churches say "WELCOME," but many of these same churches present insurmountable barriers to individuals with disabilities. The steep stairs, narrow doorways and hallways, and restrooms located on another floor or in distant locations are generally unreachable by people with physical disabilities and elderly. Inaccessible pews prevent people in wheelchairs from sitting with family members. Strict adherence to worship schedules prevents the participation of people with certain disabilities because of the extra time needed in moving from seat to duty and back. In too many places these barriers discourage those with disabilities from attending and joining – even when they are looking for a church home.

Governments within North America have taken steps to abolish the barriers that deny equal opportunity of employment, public services, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunication services to individuals with disabilities. Church members, too, are expected to encourage equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in their communities and congregations by eliminating physical and attitudinal barriers. They should see the removal of restricting obstacles for individuals with disabilities not only as a present challenge, but a high priority if their church is seeking to fulfill Christ's mission of reaching, nurturing, and enabling all people.

Church leaders are to demonstrate the acceptance of all members as equal in work and worship environments. Unless leadership clearly appreciates the diversity of those whom God loves, Disabilities Ministries will be in vain. Realizing this, the position of disabilities awareness coordinator has been established at the union conference, local conference, and local church levels to give special attention to members and others with disabilities.

Duties of the Disabilities Ministries Coordinator

Specifically, the job description of the Disabilities Ministries coordinator is to:

1. Monitor physical access to church facilities and functions, and make recommendations that will help make the church fully accessible to people with disabilities.
2. Provide education for church members concerning mental, emotional, and physical disabilities and the people they effect.
3. Assist in the process of assimilating people with disabilities into the active life of the church.
4. Conduct surveys to identify the needs of people with disabilities in the church and community.
5. Develop, coordinate, and maintain vital programs to meet the spiritual needs of members with disabilities.
6. Serve as a liaison with Christian Record Services (the church's ministry to the blind, www.christianrecord.org), Adventist Deaf Ministries (the church's ministry to the Deaf, www.deafadventist.org) and local organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.

Disabilities Ministries

This Quick Start Guide for Disabilities Ministries is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry at your local church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or a seasoned volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

Other titles in the Quick Start Guide series include:

- Personal Ministries
- Religious Liberty
- Family Ministries
- Communication Director

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DISABILITIES MINISTRIES



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ISBN: 978-1-57756-603-8



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