

Disability Ministry Task Force



Disability Ministry Task Force

Mission: *To equip the Church to reach out, include, and encourage full participation of people with disabilities and their families in the life of Christ's Church.*

Vision: *To see people with disabilities and their families welcomed and included as members of Christ's Body, the Church.*

This is a continuing series of articles about reaching out to people with disabilities to welcome them into the Church of Christ. The goal is to start and continue addressing the needs of people with disabilities so that no person or family affected by a disability is turned away from the Church of Christ.

Defining a Disability

It is important to remember that in the context of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), "disability" is a legal term rather than a medical one. Because it has a legal definition, the ADA's definition of disability is different from how disability is defined under some other laws.

The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability.

The following are some definitions of key words related to defining a disability:

The definition of an **impairment** is, "The state of being diminished, weakened, or damaged, especially mentally or physically."

The definition of a **disability** is, "A disadvantage or deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that interferes with or prevents normal achievement in a particular area.

The definition of a handicap is:

- (1) A disadvantage experienced by a person due to impairment or disability, which reflects interaction and adaptation to the person's surroundings, to which may be added stress, which reflects the person's subjective response to the impairment.
- (2) Inability to carry out normal social roles because of an impairment or disability handicap.

While there is not enough space to define all physical or developmental disabilities, the following is a link to the Specialized Ministries Information Sheets from the LCMS web site <http://lcms.org/socialissues/disability>. It includes information about people who are blind,

people who are deaf, people with developmental disabilities, people with mental illness, and people with mobility disabilities.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is becoming more diagnosed and more prevalent in the population. The following is a link to a four minute radio broadcast by Joni Eareckson Tada about the response of a pastor when a family with a child with autism came to the church.

<http://www.joniandfriends.org/radio/5-minute/autism-and-your-church/>

Please let the Disability Ministry Task Force (DMTF) know about the physical accessibility of your church (disability-min@cnh-lcms.org). The DMTF would like to add to the CNH website churches that are disability friendly in any way so that people with disabilities can find your church and know that they are welcome. The DMTF is ready to come to your church to make a presentation on disability ministry and how your church can become an irresistible church to people with disabilities.