

Accessibility Plan of the Archdiocese of Detroit

Defense of the right to life is one of the highest priorities of the Church's teaching and pastoral mission. As far back as the *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities (Pastoral Statement)* issued in November, 1978, the Church has made very clear that people with disabilities are not only included but even to be highlighted in our efforts to affirm the right to life for every individual.

Defense of the right to life, then, implies the defense of other rights which enable the individual with a disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities and services. (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 10)

It is ironic that the very rights called for by the *Pastoral Statement* in 1978 have become the law of the land with the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* in 1990. The ADA has been called the most comprehensive human rights legislation of this century and all Americans have been alerted to their civic obligation to see that all persons with disabilities are afforded the same opportunities as every other citizen. Naturally, as people with disabilities take their rightful place in the community and are afforded increased acceptance on every level of society, many seek to participate more fully in their parish community as well.

Just as the Church must do all in its power to help ensure people with disabilities a secure place in the human community, so it must reach out to welcome gratefully those who seek to participate in the ecclesial community. (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 12)

While the ADA mandates equal opportunity for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, public accommodations and telecommunications, the *Pastoral Statement* offered people with disabilities full participation in their church community including references to the following areas:

1. Buildings: "The most obvious obstacle to participation in parish activities faced by many people with disabilities is the physical design of parish buildings. Structurally inaccessible buildings are at once a sign and a guarantee of their isolation from the community.... Mere cost must never

be the exclusive consideration, however, since the provisions of free access to religious functions for all interested people is a pastoral duty.” (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 21)

2. Liturgy: “It is essential that all forms of liturgy be completely accessible to people with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together....Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations.” (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 23)
3. Education: “Dioceses...should encourage and support training for all clergy, religious, seminarians and lay ministers, focusing special attention on those actually serving individuals with disabilities, whether in parishes or some other setting.” (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 30)
4. Ministry: “Full participation in the Christian community has another important aspect that must not be overlooked. When we think of people with disabilities in relation to ministry we tend automatically to think of doing something for them. We do not reflect that they can do something for us and with us.” (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 17)

In 1988, on the tenth anniversary of the *Pastoral Statement* the NCCB Resolution, *Celebrate and Challenge* reaffirmed the guidelines, principles, and practices of the earlier statement saying in part: “We proclaim that if any disabled person is prevented from active participation, the church community is incomplete.”

In the Archdiocese of Detroit there has been considerable effort to implement these documents over the past ten years. In May, 1983 Cardinal Szoka issued a *Pastoral Statement* asking that every parish take whatever action was necessary so that people with disabilities might enjoy their full Baptismal rights as members of the Church within five years. As 1988 came and went, however, many among the disabled community became disheartened by the lack of activity or even planning for changes that would enable people with disabilities to take their rightful place in the parish community.

Often the attitudes of pastors or parishioners are as much an obstacle as the handicapping condition. Our sense of compassion should motivate us to welcome, include and accept all persons, especially those that are alienated or marginalized as we recall Jesus' care and concern for the people with leprosy who had been ostracized from the community and forced to fend for themselves. Pope John Paul II, speaking on this subject during the International Year of the Disabled Person, said “The quality of a society and a civilization is measured by the respect shown to the weakest of its members.” In their 1986 pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. Bishops, referring to the example of Jesus stated: “It is the responsibility of all citizens to assist and empower the poor, the disadvantaged and the handicapped.”

There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that serves a single shepherd. (*Pastoral Statement*, par. 33)

The Advisory Committee for Disability Concerns and the Office of Life and Dignity propose that this is an opportune time for all of us in the Archdiocese to renew our commitment to initiate a step by step process that would result in full accessibility by 1998, the twenty year anniversary of the U.S. Bishops *Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities*.

Procedural Steps

1. An updated survey was conducted through the vicariate meetings in the fall of 1992 for all parish/diocesan buildings to indicate their compliance with Barrier-Free Code Rules.
2. Following the publication of the Archbishop's Pastoral, every parish will examine their own situation regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities in parish life and activities. Tools will be provided by the Office of Life and Dignity for this purpose. Parishes will maintain these records in their own offices.
3. A Disability Concerns Representative will be appointed in each parish in the diocese.
4. An Archdiocesan Advisory Board on Disability Concerns is appointed to support and help implement this plan.
5. A variety of sources of funding be developed to assist those parishes with serious financial limitations.

Many accommodations can be made without placing a great financial burden on the parish, such as: providing clearly marked handicapped parking, small ramps and curbscuts for those buildings having only one or two steps, lowering of telephones and towel dispensers, and changing wall panels to make wide enough doorways for restrooms and reconciliation rooms. Every effort in this regard is appreciated and taken as a sign of support and a desire to be truly inclusive.

In some situations where the needed accommodations would impose an undue financial burden, the Office of Life and Dignity will work with the vicariate and the individual parish to assist in obtaining the resources. For the next five years the Archdiocese will have a small fund available for this purpose.

*Adapted from plan produced by the
Archdiocese of Detroit Department of Christian Service.
This entire plan, including the following forms may be reprinted provided
you credit the Archdiocese of Detroit Department of Christian Service.*

*Access Plan of the Archdiocese of Detroit
Opening Doors, Chapter One, Sect. B.3.b.(1)*

Instruction Sheet for Parish Accessibility

Name of Parish _____ Date _____

How to use this checklist:

1. Get Organized
 - Set a time frame for completing the survey.
 - Decide who will conduct the survey. We recommend that you invite two or three additional people including persons with disabilities to assist in identifying barriers, and developing solutions for removing these barriers and setting priorities for implementing improvements.
2. Conduct the Survey
 - Bring copies of this checklist, a clipboard, a pen or pencil, and a flexible steel tape measure.
 - Think about each space from the perspective of people with physical, hearing, visual, and cognitive disabilities, noting any areas that need improvement.
3. Summarize Barriers and Solutions
 - List barriers.
 - Brainstorm ideas for their removal.
 - Consider, consult and estimate cost of proposed modifications.
4. Make decisions and Set Priorities
 - Review summary with Pastor and Pastoral Council.
 - Decide on best solutions and make a time line for carrying them out.
 - Consider alternatives for the modifications that are not readily achievable.
5. MAKE CHANGES
6. Maintain Documentation
 - Keep your survey, notes, summary, and a record of work completed.
7. Follow Up
 - Re-evaluate annually.

Checklist for Existing Parish Facilities

Policy and Program Issues

YES/NO

- Does the parish have a stated policy that people with disabilities are welcome?
- Does the staff know about this commitment?
- Have the staff ever been trained in awareness/sensitivity to disability concerns?
- Does the parish regularly advertise access to its activities and services?
- Is there a policy for providing a sign language interpreter?
- Are homilies and other spoken material provided in an alternative form? (ex. cassette or print)
- Are assistive listening devices available?
- Are printed materials available in alternative forms? (large print, tape, braille)
- Are opportunities for participation provided for persons with mental retardation?
- Is there an emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities?

Architectural Barriers—Entrance Way

- Are an adequate number of parking spaces designated as handicap spaces? (8 feet wide for car, with, optimally, a 5 foot striped access aisle)
- Are the handicap spaces closest to the accessible entrance?

Is the route from the parking to the entrance accessible:

- Level all the way?
- Curb cuts?
- Steps?
- Handrails?

YES/NO

___ Pathway a minimum of 36" wide?

___ Are there protruding objects?

Is the entrance to the building level with the street/sidewalk:

___ Steps? ___ Handrails? ___ Ramp?

Is the door at the entrance accessible:

___ Easy to use door handles?

___ Door is light and easy to maneuver?

___ Do all inaccessible entrances have signs indicating the nearest accessible entrance?

Architectural Barriers—Interior

Inside the building, are the main paths of travel accessible:

___ Aisles 36" wide?

___ Are there seating options for people who use wheelchairs?

___ Changes in levels?

___ Ramps? ___ Steps? ___ Handrails?

___ Floor covering maneuverable?

___ Is there a 5-foot circle or a T-shaped space for a person using a wheelchair to reverse direction?

___ Do doors into rooms have at least a 32" clear opening?

___ Are door handles 48" high or less and operable with a closed fist?

___ In hallways and aisles, are all obstacles cane-detectable?y(located within 27" of the floor or protruding less than 4" from the wall)

___ Are all thresholds level (less than 1/4 inch), or beveled, up to 1/2 inch high?

___ Is there a clear path (no barriers) to the altar and ambo?

YES/NO

Architectural Barriers—Restrooms

If restrooms are available, is at least one fully accessible:

___ Door into restroom opens easily and allows room for wheelchair?

___ Path inside restroom is maneuverable?

___ Is at least one stall accessible?

___ Grab bars?

___ Raised toilet seat?

___ Is one sink accessible?

___ Mirror accessible?

___ Soap dispenser is in easy reach?

___ Towel dispenser is in easy reach?

Other

___ Are there accessible water fountains?

___ Is there an accessible public telephone?

___ Is all signage easy to read?

Signature

Date

Instruction Sheet for School Accessibility

Name of School _____ Date _____

How to use this checklist:

1. Get Organized
 - Set a time frame for completing the survey.
 - Decide who will conduct the survey. We recommend that you invite two or three additional people including persons with disabilities to assist in identifying barriers, and developing solutions for removing these barriers and setting priorities for implementing improvements.
2. Conduct the Survey
 - Bring copies of this checklist, a clipboard, a pen or pencil, and a flexible steel tape measure.
 - Think about each space from the perspective of people with physical, hearing, visual, and cognitive disabilities, noting any areas that need improvement.
3. Summarize Barriers and Solutions
 - List barriers.
 - Brainstorm ideas for their removal.
 - Consider, consult and estimate cost of proposed modifications.
4. Make decisions and Set Priorities
 - Review summary with Principal and Board.
 - Decide on best solutions and make a time line for carrying them out.
 - Consider alternatives for the modifications that are not readily achievable.
5. MAKE CHANGES
6. Maintain Documentation
 - Keep your survey, notes, summary, and a record of work completed.
7. Follow Up

Re-evaluate annually.

Checklist for Existing School Facilities

Policy and Program Issues

YES/NO

___ Does the school have a stated policy that people with disabilities are welcome?

___ Does the staff know about this commitment?

___ Have the staff ever been trained in awareness/sensitivity to disability concerns?

___ Does the school regularly advertise access to its activities and services?

___ Is there a policy for providing a sign language interpreter?

___ Are special events provided in an alternative form? (ex. cassette or print)

___ Are assistive listening devices available?

___ Are printed materials available in alternative forms? (large print, tape, braille)

___ Are opportunities for participation provided for persons with mental retardation?

___ Is there an emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities?

Architectural Barriers—Entrance Way

___ Are an adequate number of parking spaces designated as handicap spaces? (8 feet wide for car, with, optimally, a 5 foot striped access aisle)

___ Are the handicap spaces closest to the accessible entrance?

Is the route from the parking to the entrance accessible:

___ Level all the way?

___ Curb cuts?

___ Steps?

___ Handrails?

___ Pathway a minimum of 36" wide?

YES/NO

___Are there protruding objects?

Is the entrance to the building level with the street/sidewalk:

___Steps? ___Handrails? ___Ramp?

Is the door at the entrance accessible:

___Easy to use door handles?

___Door is light and easy to maneuver?

___Do all inaccessible entrances have signs indicating the nearest accessible entrance?

Architectural Barriers—Interior

Inside the building, are the main paths of travel accessible:

___Aisles 36" wide?

___Are there seating options for people who use wheelchairs?

___Changes in levels?

___Ramps? ___Steps? ___Handrails?

___Floor covering maneuverable?

___Is there a 5-foot circle or a T-shaped space for a person using a wheelchair to reverse direction?

___Do doors into rooms have at least a 32" clear opening?

___Are door handles 48" high or less and operable with a closed fist?

___In hallways and aisles, are all obstacles cane detectable? (located within 27" of the floor or protruding less than 4" from the wall)

___Are all thresholds level (less than 1/4 inch), or beveled, up to 1/2 inch high?

___Are chalk boards and other a-v equipment useable by a person seated in a wheelchair?

___Is there a clear path to the altar and ambo in the chapel?

YES/NO

Architectural Barriers—Restrooms

If restrooms are available, is at least one fully accessible:

___ Door into restroom opens easily and allows room for wheelchair?

___ Path inside restroom is maneuverable?

___ Is at least one stall accessible?

___ Grab bars?

___ Raised toilet seat?

___ Is one sink accessible?

___ Mirror accessible?

___ Soap dispenser is in easy reach?

___ Towel dispenser is in easy reach?

Other

___ Are there accessible water fountains?

___ Is there an accessible public telephone?

___ Is all signage easy to read?

Signature

Date

Barrier Worksheet

Date _____

Make one sheet for each barrier.

Describe barrier:

Possible Solutions:

Estimated Cost

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.