

Moving Past Attitudinal Barriers

47% of Americans with disabilities attend religious services at least once per month, compared to 65% of those without disabilities.

Most congregations work hard to be hospitable and welcoming, but the barriers which exclude children and adults with disabilities from full participation may not be easily understood or identified. Certainly, it is easier to add ramps, pew cuts, accessible parking places and restrooms than to remove the barriers of limiting attitudes and stereotypical thinking.

<http://www.nod.org>

ACCESS: It Begins in the Heart

Congregations across America are opening their hearts, minds and doors to people with disabilities and to older adults, recognizing their unique needs while appreciating their gifts and talents. For each of the fifteen levels in the journey of your congregation, select the bubble that best matches current progress. You will notice that each level of the Journey represents a greater commitment by your congregation toward the goal of full participation and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities.

<http://www.nod.org>

1	AWARENESS. Recognition by some congregation members or the ordained religious leadership that certain barriers were preventing children or adults with physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities from accessing a full life of faith (including worship, study, service and leadership)	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
2	ADVOCACY (Internal). Growing advocacy within the congregation to welcome people with disabilities as full participants and to remove barriers (architecture, communications and attitudes) to this participation	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
3	DISCUSSIONS. Concerns raised regarding ability of the congregation to meet the challenges (e.g., Are there enough people with this need to justify the expense? Will people with disabilities feel comfortable in joining us once barriers have been removed?) and then solutions identified--ideally with input from people with disabilities and other experts	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>

4	PLANS. Invitation of people with disabilities to join the congregation as full members (including participation in rites of passage and initiation), action plans devised to achieve barrier-removing goals, and formal commitment made to welcome people with disabilities	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
5	ACCOMMODATIONS. Accommodations made to improve the participation of people with disabilities (e.g. large print bulletins, trained ushers, accessible parking spaces, ramps and pew cuts, improved lighting and sound systems, appropriate religious education for children with disabilities)	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
6	WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT. Appreciation expressed for the changes being made and friendships extended to people with disabilities and their family members by increasing numbers within the congregation	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
7	HURDLES. Identification of architectural (e.g., elevator, accessible restroom, ramp to the altar, chancel), communications (e.g., sign language interpreter or alternative formats for materials), transportation (e.g., wheelchair accessible van), financial, or other barriers and ways found to move forward in spite of them	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
8	INCLUSION. Increased participation of people with disabilities in worship, study, service and leadership, as well as increased comfort levels of members with a more diverse congregation	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
9	OUTREACH (Local). Options explored and action plans formulated for partnership opportunities with local agencies and organizations serving people with disabilities	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>

10	LEADERSHIP. Recruitment of lay members with disabilities for leadership roles within the congregation and a willingness demonstrated to accept and accommodate an ordained leader with disability	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
11	NEW CONSCIOUSNESS. Resistant barriers of attitude within the congregation toward people with disabilities addressed (e.g., through adult education forums, consciousness raising by the leadership of the congregation, and one-on-one friendships)	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
12	TRANSFORMATION. Ongoing transformation of the congregation (through enriched opportunities, responsibilities, and friendships) into a place where children and adults with disabilities are welcomed, fully included, and treated with respect	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
13	ADVOCACY (External). An expanded advocacy role for congregation members regarding the needs and rights of persons with disabilities in the community-at-large	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
14	OUTREACH. Successful strategies, insights, and effective practices compiled and shared with other congregations and communities	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>
15	SHARING THE STORY. The story of the transformation of the congregation publicized through articles, presentations, and/or media events	not started <input type="checkbox"/>	getting started <input type="checkbox"/>	well on our way <input type="checkbox"/>	we're there!! <input type="checkbox"/>