

How Accessible is Your Church?

An Accessibility Review provided by The Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities.

With 19% of the U.S. population having some type of disability (hearing, vision, physical, mental, developmental or environmental), and considering all the family members who are impacted by a relative's disability, it becomes obvious that church accessibility (both attitudinal and architectural) is an important factor in reaching people who do not know Christ.

It is an equally important factor in retaining members, for most of us may eventually have difficulty walking, seeing or hearing. Accommodations (such as ramps) for people with disabilities can also be a blessing for parents of small children.

Meeting most of the needs of people with disabilities need not be expensive. What is crucial is a willingness to commit to accessibility. Your church body most likely has guidelines to help you. If not, contact The Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities for a list of excellent resources.

Meanwhile, use this checklist to build awareness.

	Yes	No
<p>Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are people with disabilities welcome to worship with us? <p><i>Does our church indicate this:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With an accessibility logo at our front door? • On our church sign? • In our church advertising? • Are directions to accessible entrances provided on doorways that are not accessible? • Are people with disabilities included on congregational committees? In leadership roles? • Are the ushers instructed regarding appropriate ways to greet and meet the needs of people with disabilities? • Do we have an annual Disability Awareness Sunday - or awareness training for the congregation? • Do we have a committee on disability issues? (This assures continuing progress and provides a comfortable way for people with disabilities to offer suggestions for reducing barriers without being made to feel like complainers.) 	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

- Does the church library include resources about various disabling conditions? _____

Communication

Does our church provide:

- Large print hymnals, Bibles, and worship bulletins? _____
- Adequate amplification of sound? [Induction loop systems (miniature broadcasting systems) are available today at relatively low cost, so people with hearing losses can directly hear the pastor's words instead of struggling with hearing aids that pick up extraneous noises of rustling papers or children sitting nearby.] _____
- Sign language interpreters? _____
- Printed sermons? Taped sermons? _____
- Adequate lighting? _____

Dhysical

- Is transportation available for those who are disabled or elderly and cannot drive? _____
- Are there marked accessible parking places near accessible entrances? _____
- If a ramp is needed, does it have a slope no greater than 1 foot rise in 12 feet and a width of no less than 36 inches? Does it have a smooth handrail 32 inches above the ramp surface? _____
- Do doorways have a clear opening of 32 inches or more? _____
- Do doors have lever or push handles? _____
- Is space (pew cuts at scattered sites) provided in the worship center for people in wheelchairs? (This enables them to sit with their families without blocking an aisle - or being restricted to the back or obviously stuck in the front.) _____
- Are there spaces with extra leg room for persons with crutches, walkers, braces or casts? _____

Rest Rooms

- Is there one bathroom accessible (ideally one on each floor)? (Note: This could be unisex as on an airplane to allow spouses/parents to assist the disabled individual.) _____
- Are there grab bars on each side of the accessible toilet? _____
- Does a sink have 29 inches of clearance from the floor to bottom of the sink? _____

- Does a wheelchair have turning space of 5'x5'? (This also applies to spaces near other doorways?)
- Are towel dispensers no higher than 40 inches from the floor?

Elevators & lifts

- If your church is multi-story, does it have a chair lift or elevator or some other viable access to both levels that is protected in inclement weather?

Water fountains

- Is at least one water fountain on each floor easily usable from a wheelchair?
- If not, is a supply of paper cups mounted next to the water fountain?

Environmental friendliness

- Informs congregation about allergies and encourages members to refrain from wearing perfume and after-shave lotions.
- Worship center has a "fragrance free" section.
- Purchases unscented candles, soaps, detergents, cleaning supplies, air fresheners, facial tissues. Does not use incense and potpourri pots.
- Has air filters on furnace/air conditioning units.

Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities

Advocating an evangelical perspective regarding people with disabilities and their part in God's world.

[Network with others at our message board.](#)

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