

Become a *Parish Advocate*

Are you driven by a joy-filled passion for inclusion of disabled persons in your parish/cluster? Would you like to connect with other parish advocates throughout the Diocese, and make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities? Become an advocate for persons with disabilities and their families in your parish or parish cluster!

The Parish Advocate acts as a contact person on behalf of persons with disabilities, to advance the full participation of persons with disabilities and ensure that ALL are invited to share in the life of the parish/cluster. This advocate serves as a liaison between parishioners with disabilities and their pastor and other parishioners, and participates in training and networking with others in diocesan disability ministry.

Become part of the network of advocates who share ideas and help one another in ministry! Share your compassionate heart with persons with disabilities in your parish/cluster!

Suggested Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks of the Parish Advocate:

- **To assist the pastor** in his ministry to persons with disabilities and their families in the parish
 - Educate parish leaders to overcome barriers (in both architecture and attitudes) in order to provide full participation in parish life for persons with disabilities
 - Work with the pastor, parish leaders, and families with disabilities, to identify and address the spiritual needs of physically and intellectually disabled persons in the parish/cluster
 - Be a liaison between the pastor, families, and the Diocese

- **To identify and welcome persons** with disabilities in the parish/cluster
 - Be available and approachable, to assist with meeting the physical and spiritual needs of parishioners with disabilities and their families
 - Recruit and coordinate volunteers with a shared passion for inclusion (including persons with disabilities)
 - Be the contact for those who seek information, resources, or a supportive presence.
 - Create a connection/network for families of persons with disabilities in your parish/cluster

- **Set short-term and long-term goals** for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the parish/cluster
 - Brainstorm with parish faith formation commission and faith formation leaders to provide opportunities to advance the full participation of persons with disabilities (adaptations to religious education programming, retreats, faith-sharing groups, intentional invitations, etc.)
 - Advocate for greater involvement of persons with disabilities in liturgical ministries (greeters, ushers, altar servers, lectors, gift bearers, etc.)
 - Facilitate an annual Celebration of Life Mass in your parish/cluster.
 - Advocate for greater involvement of persons with disabilities at parish events (take tickets, greet attendees, provide JOY!!!)
 - Form a committee of parish volunteers to assist with special needs ministries (Religious Education assistants, provide transportation to Mass and parish events, provide meals for special needs families, etc.)
 - Encourage families and friends of persons with disabilities to take part in events with their family member (familiar faces, companions, etc.)

- **Network with other parish advocates** across the Diocese
 - Attend Diocesan parish advocate networking opportunities
 - Take advantage of educational opportunities (meetings, webinars, online courses, conferences, etc.)