

### Quick Accessibility Audit

- Do we have accessible parking spaces and signs? Are parking areas paved?
- Are there entrances and restrooms that will accommodate persons with disabilities?
- Do we provide large print bulletins?
- Do we provide hearing devices?
- Is the parsonage accessible to a person using a wheelchair?
- Are the doorways to ALL spaces at least 36 inches wide?
- What programs are available to persons with learning disabilities?
- What services are offered for those who have emotional or mental illnesses?
- Do we have a ramp, elevator, or chairlift and an automatic door for ease of accessibility? What else do we need?
- Do we observe “Disability Awareness Sunday” each year?
- Do we have fire and severe weather exits and escape routes for those with disabilities?
- Do we use person first language and offer training for inclusive language and hospitality to ALL persons?
- Do we offer gluten free bread for communion services? What other food allergies do we need to be aware of? Other allergies (like bee stings or fragrances)?
- Do we offer support and care for care givers and siblings/other family members?

### Resources:

*Sensitivity and Awareness* by Norma McPhee ♥

*Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities* by E.W. Carter

*Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship* by Barbara J. Newman

*Disability and the Gospel* by Michael S. Beates and Joni Eareckson-Tada

*The Church and People with Disabilities: Awareness, Accessibility, and Advocacy* by Peggy A. Johnson (A UMW Resource)

*Amplifying Our Witness* by Benjamin T. Conner

*Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* by Thomas E. Reynolds

♥ The definitions in this brochure are from this resource.

Donations can be made payable to *East Ohio Conference UMC*, Fund# 9212 Disability Awareness.

Many other resources are listed on our East Ohio Conference website:

[www.eocumc.com](http://www.eocumc.com)

Click on **ADVOCACY**  
Then click on **DisAbility Awareness**

## Rethink the Possibilities of People with DisAbilities



### Conference DisAbility Awareness Team



“Everybody Belongs –  
Everybody Serves”

### Some Helpful Definitions:

**Disability:** A physical, sensory or intellectual impairment that subsequently limits one or more of a person's major life activities including, reading, writing, and other aspects of education; holding a job; and managing various essential functions of life such as dressing, bathing, and eating.

**Handicap:** A barrier society places on the person with a disability.



From asthma, diabetes, developmental delays and every medical condition known, people with physical, emotional, and mental health challenges make churches more aware of the cost, changes, and stress that individuals and families go through. There is a need for ongoing, well-grounded, Biblically based ministry with, to and for people with disabilities.



### What are some of the issues?

- **Personal Issues:** grief, isolation, loneliness, time constraints, financial struggles.
- **Medical Issues:** treatment options, insurance coverage, medicines and their side effects, care givers, long term care.
- **Church Issues:** spiritual needs, family support systems, care giver relief, financial counseling, family counseling, and barriers to worship and faith formation.

### How to be sensitive to the issues:

- **Establish** a church policy of inclusion, and make funds available for administering the program for families and individuals with special needs. Celebrate DisAbility Awareness Sunday annually.
- **Provide training** for teachers and leaders. Include training in different ways people learn and interact.
- **Network** with state and local agencies and other churches that provide services. Partner with other groups that provide resources.

### What the Team does:

The Conference Team is made up of 6 representatives and a chairperson. We meet at least 2 times per year. Each of the representatives chairs an area sub-group, which they recruit and staff as needed. The areas are:

- Children
- Youth
- Adults
- Advocacy – looks at legislative issues/causes; translates these into action for conference, districts, and local churches.
- Accessibility – shares ways churches can have greater accessibility for those people who are differently abled. Monitors the Accessibility Audits.
- Communications – provides publicity and maintains the website. Keeps open the communication between the team and the conference.
- Training/Education – Provides resources and personnel for events and education throughout the Conference.

We share resources, plan awareness events, conduct Disability Audits, and answer questions from congregations and individuals in terms of funding, resources, events. We also sponsor a table at the Ministry Fair during Annual Conference. Please contact us!

