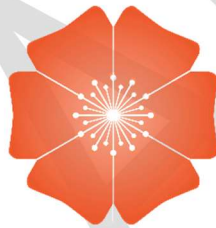


Disability and Deaf Access for Churches and Institutions



THE DIOCESE OF
CALIFORNIA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN THE BAY AREA

October 2023

A WORKING DRAFT. SHADED SECTIONS ARE IN PROGRESS.

Contents

Houses of Prayer for All People.....	4
Our Calling.....	5
For Whose Benefit?.....	6
How Would That Work?.....	7
Accessing Accessibility	8
Access versus Accommodation.....	8
Lessons in Accessibility from the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	8
Accessibility despite limitations (financial, architectural, staff capacity).....	8
Barriers to Access	8
Theology, Liturgy, and Music.....	9
At the Intersection of Disability Inclusion and Gender Identity	9
Take Action.....	9
About Disability and Disabilities	11
Access for People with Specific Disabilities	12
Mobility Disabilities	12
Visual Disabilities.....	12
Audio Description	12
Accessibility on website, social media, signage, and voicemail	13
Alt Text and Image Description.....	13
Autistic and Neurodiverse.....	13
Intellectually and Developmentally Disabilities (IDD).....	13
Behavioral Health, Trauma, and Mental Illness	13
Living with a Chronic Illness	14
Chemical Sensitivities.....	14
Accessibility through training for greeters, ushers, clergy, volunteers.....	14
How to Talk and Not Talk About Disabled People	14
“I was blind but now I see”	14

People First vs. Identity First Language.....	14
Towards A More Respectful and Inclusive Vocabulary.....	15
Disability Access in Ministry & Worship	16
Accessibility Considerations in Ministry.....	17
Training staff and volunteers	19
Access for Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing.....	19
Making online meetings more accessible.....	21
Closed-Captions for Zoom	21
Accessibility and livestreamed services, meetings, and social media	21
Interpreters? Captioning? Assistive Listening Devices? Or a combination?	22
Considerations When Hiring Interpreters or Captioners	23
ASL Interpreter Services.....	23
CART (Captioning) Services	24
Publicizing Your Event.....	24
Accessible Ministry for Disabled Children, Youth & Families	27
Formation and Ministry with Disabled Children	28
Tools for Self-Assessment.....	30
Accessibility Audit for Episcopal Churches	31
How Accessible Is Your Church?.....	33
Links to Resources.....	34
Access Guides.....	35
Resources and Inspiration.....	35
Books	35
Episcopal Church Foundation articles.....	35
Bay Area Disability Organizations	36
National Disability Organizations.....	37

Houses of Prayer for All People

DRAFT

Our Calling

This booklet is about access for disabled and Deaf people in churches and institutions in the Diocese of California, and in any church or diocese where it might be of use. However, it is more than or different from a “guide to best practices” as originally envisioned, or perhaps as you have come looking for.

The Task Force on Disability and Deaf Access was created by a Resolution at the 170th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California in October 2019 and was established the following year. Its principle initial remit was to create a guide for congregations and institutions to increase accessibility for disabled and Deaf congregants, staff, and other visitors and people who use or rent our spaces for meetings and events.

Principles that guided our approach to writing this guide:

- Keep it short, simple, local, and real.
- Provide guidance without being prescriptive or condescending.
- Ground it in Social Justice.
- Trust that individuals and congregations have a genuine desire to become more accessible and welcoming to all people, and to work to achieve this.
- Provide suggestions, tools, and resources for congregations to audit and prioritize for themselves how they may become more accessible.

This guide provides a very broad primer on disability, Deafness, and accessibility; encourages asking questions; and lists resources to learn more and implement practices and measures to enhance access and welcoming for all.

“Best Practice” begins with and requires continually examining our internalized, unconscious ableist attitudes and presumptions. We strive for lifelong learning about and being open to exploring and addressing how disabled and Deaf people have been alienated and excluded from joining in shared worship, community, employment, or feeling a call to lay ministry, the priesthood or diaconate, or clerical assignments once ordained. We focus on *access* as much or more than on *accommodations*, and further reframe access in terms of kindness, equity, and *ministry*.

It would be easy not to think about who we do not see in our pews and bible studies and coffee hours. And it would be easy not to ask why they are not here. Then, it would also be easy not to operate food pantries or work for social justice and climate justice, or to

study and confront and work to eradicate racism in society and in ourselves, and so many other ministries we joyfully accept as Christians.

For purely religious activities and education, churches and religious institutions are exempt from certain requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to modify buildings or provide accommodations. However, when renting facilities to the public, such as for AA meetings, and in terms of workplace accommodations for lay employees in office settings, the ADA and equal employment standards do apply. For Episcopalians, though, a shared Baptismal Covenant guides and impels us more powerfully than any legislation to undertake the sacred calling to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. We believe this includes the work that we have outlined here and which we look forward to embarking on together.

For Whose Benefit?

We tend to think that the reason to make spaces and practices accessible to disabled and Deaf people is specifically for their benefit. We don't think about how serving and worshipping alongside disabled and Deaf people and being in fellowship and community with them enriches our shared life together. Any group, organization, or church that doesn't benefit from the charisms and contributions of disabled and Deaf people is at a disadvantage. In the case of churches, we short-change ourselves by not creating spaces – in both the physical and social sense of the term – that don't include disabled and Deaf people as congregants and as clergy.

To be sure, many churches and church offices, preschools, halls and meeting rooms, etc. have been made quite accessible with ramps, elevators, accessible parking and restrooms, lighting, accommodations for people with sensory disabilities, and more. Most often, however, even in these cases, that accessibility stops at the chancel rails. Accessing the sanctuary, sacristy, pulpit, lectern, choir, etc. often involves multiple steps and navigating narrow spaces. Rectories and clergy housing often present another set of challenges. In addressing how to make our churches more accessible to people coming to worship, we need to remember to modify, as much as possible, our buildings and our practices to make it even possible for disabled and Deaf clergy to serve.

Remembering that before taking on architecture or tradition, accessibility and welcoming begin with internalized and often unconscious biases about disability. For those involved in helping people discern a calling to the priesthood or diaconate, we must be extremely careful not to disqualify someone based on their disability. Whether at the inquirer,

postulant, or candidate stage, it should never be presumed that a person's mobility, sensory, speech, neurological, or even cognitive disabilities would prevent them from serving effectively as a member of clergy. A person who uses crutches or a wheelchair, who is blind or Deaf, who stutters or doesn't speak, who is neurodivergent or dyslexic or disabled in many other ways, may well be able to serve as a gifted pastor or preacher.

How Would That Work?

When thinking about any of these things, if you find yourself asking, "Well, how would that work?" then you're on the right track. Colloquially, the phrase "how would that work" tends to be understood as "that would never work". Let's encourage ourselves to take it not as a negative statement, but as the open-ended question that is. In the case of every type of situation with every type of disability, let's try our best to come up with the answer about what it would take to make accessibility work.

- Would a disabled person feel welcome in my church? Would they know that there is a place for them?
- Would someone who uses crutches or a wheelchair, who is blind or deaf be able to access the lectern or pulpit in your church to read or preach? Would they be able to serve as a greeter or usher?
- Would a person who uses a wheelchair be able to preside at Holy Eucharist in my church? Would a little person?
- Would a person with cerebral palsy be able to preach in my church? Would a person with a stutter?
- Would a person who uses crutches be able to sing in the choir in my church?
- Would a Deaf person be able to work as an office manager at my church?
- Would a blind person be able to participate in a procession at my church?
- Would an autistic person be able to serve as a pastor or chaplain in my congregation?
- Would a person with Tourette Syndrome feel welcome to sit in my congregation?
- Are there roles in my church that could be fulfilled by a person with intellectual disabilities?

Can the person do most of a job or a task, with or without accommodations? Can the role be performed in a different way than customarily done by others while still fulfilling the

essential functions? If a person is unable to perform certain aspects of a role, can the remainder be done by someone else or can those aspects of a job be dispensed entirely (i.e., are they really necessary?)

Accessing Accessibility

Access versus Accommodation

About the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and churches...

About Universal Design...

About Reasonable Accommodations for church *employees*...

Lessons in Accessibility from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Practices during the pandemic have resulted in increased access for people with disabilities, such as the use of captions and ASL interpreters for video meetings. Additionally, online services and meetings have enabled people to participate in worship who have difficulty attending or are not able to attend in person due to mobility and sensory disabilities, or anxiety or other mental health disabilities.

Accessibility despite limitations (financial, architectural, staff capacity)

What to do if your pulpit, lectern, altar, etc. is not accessible to clergy or congregants who use wheelchairs, crutches, or have other mobility disabilities

Not every church has to “do it all” – for example, if one church per Deanery offered CART services and/or ASL Interpreters at major services, other churches could direct congregants and visitors *there* and perhaps contribute to the cost.

Barriers to Access

1. Attitudinal Barriers.
 - Training can help remove attitudinal barriers to accessibility.
2. Architectural or Physical Barriers.
3. Information / Communication Barriers.

- Signage as a barrier to accessibility.

4. Technological Barriers.

Theology, Liturgy, and Music

- THIS SECTION IS PENDING REVIEW AND WILL BE RE-INSERTED ONCE FINALIZED.

At the Intersection of Disability Inclusion and Gender Identity

Gender fluidity and diversity is more common among autistic people than in neurotypical people. Additionally, people with a variety of physical and other disabilities may not exhibit typical gender signifiers from which others might infer their gender and pronouns.

Including pronouns on business cards, email signatures, and screen names is a way to demonstrate recognition of and welcoming for people who are intersex, transgender, or nonbinary *and is a best practice for disability access as well.*

Perhaps this may seem unnecessary for you if you feel that your name, build, voice, hairstyle, and dress all make your gender and personal pronouns obvious. If this is the case, it's important to understand that stating or posting pronouns is *not about you*. Rather, it's an easy *act of kindness* that cost you nothing and can help people who don't share this privilege with you to feel welcome, included, and most of all safe to tell others what their pronouns are and so they are not the only person doing so. It will signal to people who are intersex, transgender, or nonbinary that your church is "safe" and inviting, both as a congregation and a workplace.

Beyond pronouns, update language everywhere to be more inclusive and gender-neutral. Remove and cease references to "ladies and gentlemen" or "brothers and sisters" and replace "he or she" or "he/she" in written materials with "they".

Take Action

1. **Prioritize.** Make accessibility for all people a priority in your congregation.
2. **Identify.** Conduct an Accessibility Audit of your church.
3. **Implement.** Create an action plan, budget, and timeline .

DRAFT

About Disability and Disabilities

DRAFT

Access for People with Specific Disabilities

Mobility Disabilities

- Reserved seating
- Parking
- Assistants
- Service animals
- Automatic door openers
- Ramps
- Widened doorways
- Accessible restrooms
- Accessible kitchens

Visual Disabilities

- Lighting
- Handouts
- Readers
- Write hashtags in "CamelCase", i.e., capitalize each word in a phrase as in #ForEasierReading to distinguish it as a separate word for screen readers
- Use emojis sparingly at the end of captions as they act as distractions and block the necessary information when read through screen readers
- About elaborate fonts that are difficult for people or screen readers
- Consider color use with color blindness in mind
- Audio books – Some students with visual disabilities prefer audio textbooks The primary source for these books is Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D, www.rfbd.org)

Audio Description

- Movies and videos – People with a visual disability may benefit from a description of non-auditory aspects of the film

Accessibility on website, social media, signage, and voicemail

- Add open and closed captioning to videos possibly using an app like [clipomatic](#) or broader services for captioning and transcription like [rev.com](#) or [3 play media](#)
- Avoid ableist language like "insane/crazy", "lame" or "we stand with..."
- Link descriptive words rather than just (click here) so people know what they are clicking into
- Straightforward bulletin/leaflets that are text-only for easier functionality with screen readers
- Auto-generated captioning for zoom with an app such as [Otter ai](#)
- Live interpreting for many languages including ASL through an app like [Boostlingo](#) may be helpful at the front desk and in other scenarios

Alt Text and Image Description

- Define and explain how to incorporate image descriptions and alt text in every social media post

<https://www.perkins.org/resource/how-write-alt-text-and-image-descriptions-visually-impaired/>

Autistic and Neurodiverse

- Structured schedules and awareness of time
- Quiet Space
- Scents and chemicals

Intellectually and Developmentally Disabilities (IDD)

- Add text

Behavioral Health, Trauma, and Mental Illness

- Companion Animals
- Add trigger warnings where needed. This may apply to gun violence posts, services or posts commemorating victims of violence, or videos with loud noises or flashing

Living with a Chronic Illness

- Add text

Chemical Sensitivities

- Scents and chemicals

Accessibility through training for greeters, ushers, clergy, volunteers

- Add text

How to Talk and Not Talk About Disabled People

“I Was Blind But Now I See”

- THIS SECTION IS PENDING REVIEW AND WILL BE RE-INSERTED ONCE FINALIZED.

People First vs. Identity First Language

- THIS SECTION IS PENDING REVIEW AND WILL BE RE-INSERTED ONCE FINALIZED.

Towards A More Respectful and Inclusive Vocabulary

Add introduction.

USE	AVOID USING
disabled disability	handicapped differently abled less abled afflicted with suffers from
accessible (restroom, stall, entrance, parking)	ADA or handicapped (restroom, stall, entrance, parking)
disabled child student/child with a disability	Special Needs child child with special needs
Deaf or deaf hard-of-hearing late-deafened DeafBlind	hearing impaired NEVER USE "deaf-mute" or "deaf and dumb"
developmental disability intellectual disability	NEVER USE mentally retarded
interpreter ASL interpreter	signer translator
little person	dwarf
uses a wheelchair wheelchair user	wheelchair bound confined to a wheelchair
Blind and/or low vision	visually impaired; sight impaired

Disability Access in Ministry & Worship

DRAFT

Accessibility Considerations in Ministry

Based on publications by **Episcability** (no longer available)

- Get to know people in your congregation who have disabilities and their families. Ask what would be helpful to them. Is there anything you can do to help them feel more welcome and included?
- Don't forget to include disabilities that may be less obvious.
- Think of barriers you can help remove to enable people to participate more fully and to serve.
- Help discern gifts and find ways to invite persons with disabilities to share in serving, learning, and living out their baptismal ministry.
- Ask persons with physical disabilities to help take a good look at your building, parishioner movement and engagement in worship, classrooms and common areas, parking, etc. What are some simple adjustments that would improve accessibility? What other items need to be incorporated in church plans? Are there resources, such as large print editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, or an improved sound system, that will help more people participate?
- Provide large-print copies of the prayer book or other materials used in worship. Large print is 18-point and should be produced on paper that is white or off-white and produces good contrast with the type. Use Arial or other sans serif text.
- If there are steps to your chancel or sanctuary, consider having a communion station on the floor of the nave This will permit young children, people who are frail or elderly, wheelchair-users and others receive the Sacrament in the same way the rest of the congregation receives.
- Involve disabled people when planning all architectural modifications.
- Make sure that toilet paper dispensers are close enough for easy reach by the person using the toilet.
- Make sure that sinks can be easily accessed by a wheelchair user and d lower towel and soap dispensers so that they can be easily reached.
- If any wheelchair users work or volunteer in your office, raise the height of desks and tables to 34 inches so that their wheelchair can fit under these surfaces.
- Suggest that congregants who are hard-of-hearing sit toward the front of the nave so that they can easily see the preacher and lectors. Ask the preacher and lectors to speak clearly and slowly, looking frequently at the congregation. Make

copies of the sermon before the service as well as copies of the lessons to be read.

- Install long-handled door hardware that's easier for everyone, especially people with limited hand function.
- Apply brightly colored, textured strips at the top of all stairs. These strips alert people with limited vision that they are approaching stairs.
- Discover sources of large print or taped books, magazines and Bibles Share this information with older congregants who may not be acquainted with these resources.
- During the fall months, make sure that slippery leaves are removed.
- Survey present church lighting to ensure that the wattage is high enough and that the placement of light fixtures ensures maximum visibility.
- Make yourselves knowledgeable about the needs of persons with less readily apparent disabilities such as diabetes, epilepsy, high blood pressure, mental illness, etc.
- Create a separate bulletin board to display material concerning your own accessibility projects. Be sure the height of the bulletin board is friendly to persons who use wheelchairs. Also ensure that the background is not too distracting for those with low vision.
- Explore ways of working with other congregations and faith communities on projects related to disability access and ministry.
- install signage in Braille and raised letters.
- Install fire alarms with flashing lights Before installing this kind of alarm, however, make sure that there are no persons with epilepsy in the congregation since this light alarm may trigger seizures for them.
- In an educational program or in a sermon, explore the differences between "healing" (wholeness) and "cure". All people can receive God's healing grace.
- Educate your congregation about environmental illnesses. Survey your cleaning supplies being mindful of those with environmental sensitivities Encourage everyone to curtail the wearing of perfumes and colognes. For some, the use of incense will be a problem. At the very least, when incense is to be used, notify the congregation beforehand.
- Designate your church campus as a non-smoking area.

- Partner with neighboring churches to provide disability programming for the community.

Training staff and volunteers

Add text.

**Access for Deaf &
Hard-of-Hearing**

DRAFT

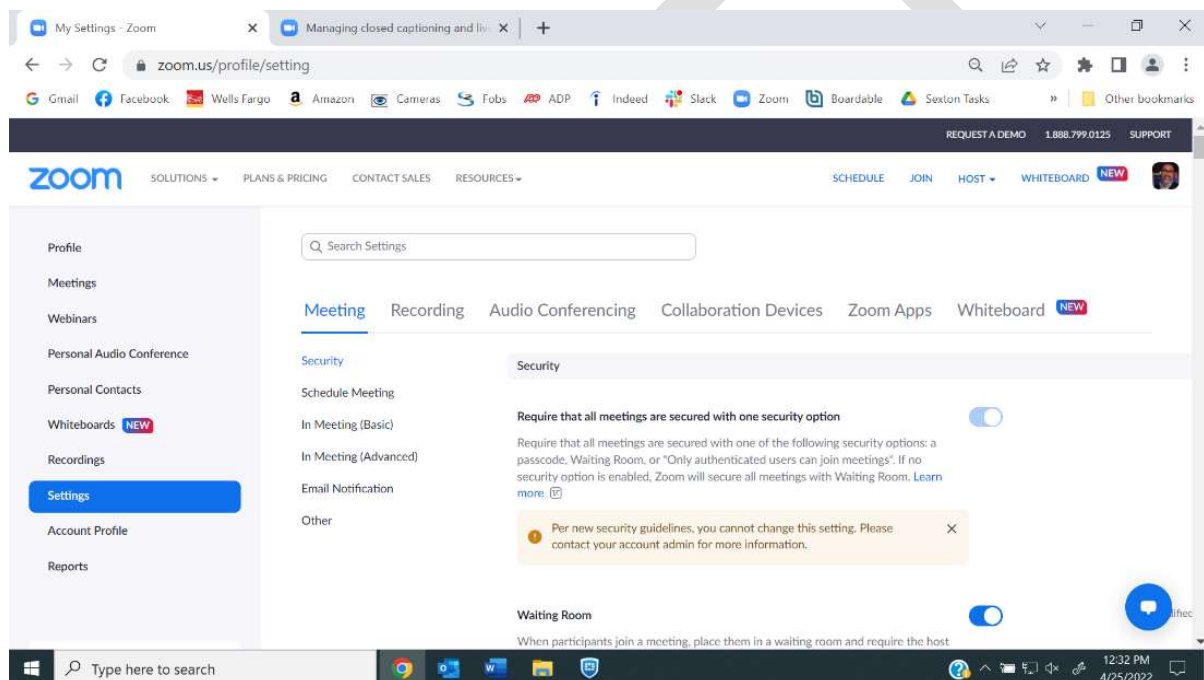
THE FIRST SECTION IN THIS CHAPTER IS PENDING REVIEW AND WILL BE RE-INSERTED ONCE FINALIZED.

Making online meetings more accessible

- Meeting rules and etiquette
- Information on Google Meet, Otter.ai, etc

Closed-Captions for Zoom

Click on settings in the options on the left of your screen



Scroll way down till you come to Manual captions and Automated captions.

Accessibility and livestreamed services, meetings, and social media

Information on AI translation services for Google Meet, Zoom, WebEx, Teams, etc.

Making Services and Events Accessible to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

- If you're calling a Deaf organization, don't expect to necessarily reach a hearing person unless they specifically list a voice line. You may need to use the [California Relay Service](#).
- When speaking about Deaf *people*, capitalize the word Deaf. In fact, many Deaf people often use the word Deaf as a noun by itself rather than an adjective.
- For many people in the Deaf community, English is a second language. ASL grammar is ***very*** different from English grammar. It can sometimes be challenging to understand the meaning of written messages by some Deaf persons. Keep this in mind in crafting your own initial email as well.
- Don't be discouraged if few or no Deaf people show up at your service or event despite your efforts to arrange interpreters, captioning, assistive listening devices, or other accommodations. It can take a while to demonstrate commitment to communication access and consistent reliability over time before Deaf people will discover and trust that they will not be disappointed if they turn up for an event publicized as accessible. It's a common experience of Deaf people to show up for events and performances with unqualified interpreters, or interpreters being located in awkward or poorly lit locations. Churches and organizations must be patient to earn the trust of the Deaf community over time

Interpreters? Captioning? Assistive Listening Devices? Or a combination?

- Hearing people often make the mistake that making their events accessible to a Deaf audience means providing ASL interpreters, which may be an accommodation for some visitors, but not all.
- Keep in mind that many people who are Deaf or hard-of hearing, or otherwise have hearing loss do not use American Sign Language and may rely on speech-reading (formerly known as "lip-reading"), captions or a combination.
- Providing captioning is helpful to many people who aren't Deaf, including:
 - People whose first or primary language is not English
 - People with learning differences or disabilities
 - People who have difficulty hearing spoken or sung language
 - People who want to follow along while listening to spoken or sung language

Considerations When Hiring Interpreters or Captioners

- Use only certified interpreters – not just someone who knows ASL. All the interpreters through BACA are certified.
- If an event will be longer than an hour, make sure to hire two interpreters who will alternate every 10-15 minutes.
- Interpreting poetry, song, or musical performances is a specialized skill beyond ASL fluency. Make sure the interpreter or agency knows that your event requires this skill.
- If there is a script or lyrics, send to the interpreter and/or captioner ahead of time. If possible, try to have the interpreter(s) attend rehearsals with the performers.
- Where will the interpreter stand or the captioner sit? Deaf audience members should be able to view the speaker/performers while also being able to see the interpreter or screen where the captions will be projected. The interpreter should be well lit, preferably standing or seated in front of a solid background without glare or distractions from nearby windows. Make sure to adjust for this if a spotlight on the interpreter will interfere with lighting design for the performance, or if it will shine in the musicians' or performers' eyes.
- Make sure to set aside seating for Deaf and hard-of-hearing audience members near the interpreter or caption screen.

ASL Interpreter Services

[BACA \(Bay Area Communication Access\)](#)

Located in San Francisco

Voice (415) 356-0405

bacareq@bacainterp.com

[SF Mayor's Office on Disability – Guide to Interpreting and Captioning Services](#)

To hire *certified* ASL interpreters

[BACA \(Bay Area Communication Access\)](#)

Located in San Francisco

Voice: (415) 356-0405

bacareq@bacainterp.com

[SF Mayor's Office on Disability – Guide to Interpreting and Captioning Services](#)

CART (Captioning) Services

CART = Communication Access Realtime Translation

BACA_ – In addition to interpreters, BACA can also provide captioners.

Google meet

Replay

[3Play Media](#)

Captioners as of March 2023

- 1) April Heveroh aheveroh@sbcglobal.net
- 2) Audrey Spinka captionit@gmail.com
- 3) Connie Pierce conniecaptioner@gmail.com
- 4) Daryl Morrel realtimecaptioner@gmail.com
- 5) Diana Kuypers dianakuypers@gmail.com
- 6) Eileen Rogers Ong lionfish12@aol.com
- 7) Jane James captioning@earthlink.net
- 8) Karen Dahl theked1234@yahoo.com
- 9) Kitty Baca bacakitty@aol.com
- 10) Lori Jury lorijury@sbcglobal.net
- 11) Patricia McCarthy pmccarthy@pacbell.net

[West Coast Captioning](#)

Publicizing Your Event

Notify Bay Area Deaf Organizations

Email well in advance to get the word out about your event.

[BACA \(Bay Area Communication Access\)](#)

bacareq@bacainterp.com

Although this is an interpreter agency, most ASL interpreters have networks of Deaf family, friends and colleagues, so emailing info to BACA may reach a Deaf audience indirectly.

[Bay Area Asian Deaf Association](#) (Berkeley)

<http://www.baadaus/contact.html>

[Bay Area Black Deaf Advocates](#) (Vallejo; no phone or email)

[California School for the Deaf](#)

<https://wwwcsdeaglescom/apps/contact/>

[DCARA – Deaf Counseling, Advocacy and Referral Agency](#)

info@dcara.org

[Deaf Hope](#) (deafhope@deaf-hope.org)

Our mission at DeafHope is to end domestic and sexual violence in Deaf communities through empowerment, education and services.

[NorCal Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)

info@norcalcenter.org

Drop off and/or post flyers, postcards or programs[Deaf Services Center](#)

San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin St, San Francisco, CA 94102

Mail promotional flyers, postcards or programs[California School for the Deaf](#)

39350 Gallaudet Drive, Fremont, CA 94538

[DCARA – Deaf Counseling, Advocacy and Referral Agency](#)

14895 E 14th St Suite 200, San Leandro, CA 94578

[Deaf Hope](#)

470 27th Street, Oakland, CA 94612

[NorCal Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)

2321 W March Ln Ste 200, Stockton, CA 95207

Post to events calendars[Deaf Bay](#) (<https://deafbayorg/how-to-post-your-event/>)

You need to register with this service before being able to post directly to their calendar. It is meant FOR Deaf people, so it might be best to ask a Deaf friend to post your event.

Social Media

All of the groups above have Facebook pages, Instagram, and other accounts, etc. Follow their pages, use hashtags and retweets to get noticed by their communities.

DRAFT

Accessible Ministry for Disabled Children, Youth & Families



Formation and Ministry with Disabled Children

Based on publications by *Episcability* (no longer available)

You'll reflect God's love in your community by

- Creating a place for everyone
- Recognizing the value of every person
- Communicating your church's goals
- Children will experience God's love
- Children will develop a relationship with the Church

Possible challenges

- Hyperactivity with short attention spans
- Distractibility and impulsiveness
- Poor visual/motor skills and poor large-muscle and fine-motor coordination
- Rapid and excessive changes in mood and reasoning
- Faulty perception of a thought or action problems with social interaction and inconsistent and unpredictable behavior

Supports

- Special equipment would likely be provided by the family (eg wheelchair, language board)
- Providing a buddy or aide
- Print lessons in Braille with parents' help or enlarge lessons
- Learning disabilities – highlight main points
- Don't give children materials below their age, provide assistance
- Buddies or 1:1 assistants (clipboard with communication sheet, customized schedule, additional or alternative learning activities)

Sensory challenges

- Sensitivity to bright light
- Distress with loud noises or certain sounds
- Aversion to certain smells

- Uneasiness in high-energy settings
- Inability to self-regulate or calm down
- Certain sensory-seeking needs

Accommodation challenges

- Physical barriers
- Sensory challenges
- Activities involving fine motor skills or gross motor ability
- Learning exercises necessitating independent reading
- Tasks involving teamwork
- Snacks/allergies
- Transitions
- Quantity and quality of planned activities

Inclusion tips

- Create a sensory bin.
- Allow independent time and space.
- Provide an item to hold during story time.
- Define personal space at activity tables.
- Use sounds and music to signal an upcoming activity.
- Provide controlled choices.
- Provide a quiet corner.
- Proactively provide *specific* praise to children (e.g., "I really appreciate how you are sharing" vs. "Good job!").
- Provide visual cues to stop undesirable behavior.
- Display schedules, calendars, and classroom rules.

Tools for Self-Assessment

DRAFT

Accessibility Audit for Episcopal Churches

Use the checklist below to audit your church for how accessible it is to disabled and Deaf people with respect to worship, fellowship, education, and pastoral care in your church or institution. This audit is inspired by and based in part on the work of Sr. Pamela Clare Majors, CSF adapted from material produced by Paralyzed Veterans of America.

- Adequate lighting at book level is provided for all pews.
- Large print copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal* are available by request and noted in the bulletin, on your church's website or otherwise announced.
- The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal* are available in Braille by request and noted in the bulletin, on your church's website, or otherwise announced.
- Audible life-safety warning signals are accompanied by simultaneous visual signals,
- ASL interpreter are provided by request in advance and noted in the bulletin, on your church's website or otherwise announced.
- An assistive listening system ancillary to existing sound systems has been installed.
- Lighting has been arranged to illuminate faces of those conducting worship.
- At least one public telephone is equipped with a voice amplification control.
- Deaf congregants and others with hearing disabilities are encouraged to sit close to where most of the liturgical action occurs.
- At least one door into the worship, fellowship, Christian education and pastoral care areas is accessible.
- Seating is provided to accommodate wheelchair users within the body of the congregation.
- Chancel and sanctuary areas are accessible to people with mobility disabilities, including clergy.

- In areas where carpeting is used, low pile has been installed.
- In the church office or other work areas, at least one work station is at an appropriate height for wheelchair users.
- When removal of steps to the chancel and sanctuary is not feasible, consideration has been given to providing a communion station on the floor of the nave and/or using a free-standing altar in the nave.
- Space used for fellowship, Christian education, and pastoral care is accessible and located on an accessible route.
- When interior ramping can provide access to fellowship and other areas, a portable or permanent ramp is available.
- Where interior ramping is not feasible, an elevator or platform lift has been installed.
- Fully accessible restrooms are available for wheelchair users.
- Accessible parking with an adjacent access aisle is available in the parking lot or nearby on the street.

How Accessible Is Your Church?

Accessibility Assessment Matrix

Use the matrix below as more of a worksheet than a scorecard to begin a conversation with your vestry or congregation. Think about how accessible you believe your services, ministries, and other activities are to people with various types of disabilities. You might mark the boxes with checkmarks for fully accessible, stars for priorities or “low hanging fruit”, and question marks for challenges.

DISABILITIES SERVICES & ACTIVITIES	Mobility disabilities	Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing	Blind & visually disabilities	Autistic & neurodiverse	Learning disabilities & IDD	Behavioral health disabilities	Living with a chronic illness	Chemical sensitivities
Worship services								
Baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.								
Youth formation and ministries								
Social gatherings (coffee hour, etc.)								
Adult formation classes								
Pastoral meetings (clergy or lay) with people, couples, or families								
Ministration at times of sickness or death								
Meetings and classes (Bible study, vestry meetings, etc.)								
Leaflets and printed material								
Church website								
Signage								
Voicemail greeting								

Links to Resources

Bay Area, California,
National and Global,
Episcopal Church
and Beyond

Access Guides

[East Bay Meditation Fragrance Free](#)

[Holding Inclusive Events](#)

[NALSWD Guide](#)

[Sins Invalid Access Suggestions](#)

Resources and Inspiration

[The Inclusive Church](#)

[Crisis Plans/T-Maps](#)

[Disability and Faith](#)

[Fireweed Collective Crisis Maps](#)

[The Ed Roberts Campus of the University of California – A Universally Designed, Transit-Oriented Campus](#)

Books

[Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church by Bethany McKinney Fox](#)

[Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha](#)

[Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities by Erik W Carter](#)

[Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship by Barbara J Newman](#)

[Leading Special Needs Ministry by Amy Fenton Lee](#)

Episcopal Church Foundation articles

[Access Builds Interest](#)

Vestry Papers on Hospitality and Outreach

[Improving Inclusion: Words Matter](#)

[Improving Inclusion: Engagement](#)

[Improving Inclusion: Sensory kits](#)

[Welcoming adults with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities](#)

Bay Area Disability Organizations

[AASCEND – The Autism-Asperger Spectrum Coalition for Education, Networking and Development](#)

[BORP – Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program](#)

[CA Department of Rehabilitation](#)

[Center for Independence of People with Disabilities – CID San Mateo](#)

[Center for Independent Living, Berkeley](#)

[CFILC - California Foundation for Independent Living Centers](#)

[DCARA – Deaf Counseling and Referral Agency](#)

[Deaf Queer Resource Center](#)

[Disability Justice Culture Club](#)

[Disability Visibility Project](#)

[DREDF – Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund](#)

[Independent Living Resource Center of San Francisco](#)

[Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

[Mental Health Association of San Francisco](#)

[Silicon Valley Independent Living Center](#)

[World Institute on Disability](#)

[YO! Disabled & Proud](#)

National Disability Organizations

[ADAPT](#)

[American Association of People with Disabilities \(AAPD\)](#)

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)

[Disability Pride Parade](#)

[Fireweed Collective](#)

[Disabled American Veterans](#)

[International Disability Alliance](#)

[National Association of the Deaf \(NAD\)](#)

[NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

[National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities](#)

[National Council on Disability](#)

[National Council on Independent Living \(NCIL\)](#)

[National Federation of the Blind](#)

[World Federation of the Deaf \(WFD\)](#)