

# Congregational Accessibility

*Created through the Disabilities Ministries of the Church of the Brethren*

The following survey form is intended to help your congregation assess its level of accessibility to persons with various disabilities, including mental illness, and provide ideas to increase your accessibility.



**Physical Accessibility** to the building and grounds. This includes parking, entrances, restrooms, and worship space accessible to wheelchair users.



**Assistive Listening Devices** – Assistive listening devices are provided to persons who are hard of hearing.



**Sign Language** – Sign language interpretation is provided for those who are deaf.



**Visual Aids** – Visual aids are provided for persons with vision impairments.



**Support Services** – The church supports persons with disabilities through awareness-raising, education, support groups, and provision for individual needs that promote inclusion into the life of the church.



## Physical Accessibility

**Physical Accessibility** to the building and grounds. This assesses whether wheelchair users and other persons with mobility issues will find accessible parking leading to an accessible entrance which in turn leads to an accessible worship area and preferably to at least one accessible classroom.

Churches that are physically accessible will **meet the criteria outlined for each area** of the building and grounds under **1-5**. In addition, areas 6-7 are highly recommended. **Criteria for meeting accessibility standards for each area are listed below.**

1. \_\_\_\_ **Parking.** Accessible parking spaces are provided.
2. \_\_\_\_ **Entrance.** Entrance to the building is accessible to people who use wheelchairs and others who cannot walk up and down steps.
3. \_\_\_\_ **Interior.** Hallways and other interior sections of the building are accessible to people who use wheelchairs and others with mobility issues.
4. \_\_\_\_ **Worship Area.** Entrance to the main worship area (often referred to as the “sanctuary”) is accessible and seating options are provided.
5. \_\_\_\_ **Restroom.** At least one wheelchair accessible restroom is available for both men and women.

*The following are highly recommended.*

6. \_\_\_\_ **Classroom.** At least one classroom is accessible to wheelchair users.

7.        **Fellowship/Gathering Area.** The area where the church gathers for fellowship activities is accessible to wheelchair users.

**Physical Accessibility – Detailed Criteria**

**PARKING**

1.        **Accessible parking spaces are provided based on total number of spaces.**

| Total Spaces | Van Space | Auto Space(s) |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Less than 25 | 1         | 0             |
| 25-50        | 1         | +             |
| 50-75        | 1         | +             |
| 75-100       | 1         | +             |
| 100-150      | 1         | +             |
| 150-200      | 1         | +             |
| 200-300      | 1         | +             |
| 300-400      | 1         | +             |
| 400-500      | 2         | +             |

(Over 500, 2% accessible with 1/8 of those van spaces and 7/8 auto)

**All accessible parking spaces should meet these criteria:**

- At least 8 feet wide
- Each parking space has a level, stable surface.
- Upright, visible sign with universal wheelchair symbol for autos plus “van accessible” sign for van spaces. (Check local requirements for signage)
- Marked smooth, level aisle (5' for autos, 8' for van) beside each parking space for wheelchair accessibility (Two spaces may share an aisle).
- A path at least 3 feet wide leads from the parking space aisle to an accessible entrance.
- Curb cuts with 1" to 12" slope and 36" wide are provided if only street parking available.

**ENTRANCE**

2.        **Entrance to the building is accessible to people who use wheelchairs and others who cannot walk up and down steps.**

**Accessible entrances meet all of the following criteria:**

- Accessible **path at least 3 feet wide** from parking spaces.
- Clear **signage** indicating the accessible entrances.
- A **5-foot level platform** at the entry door.
- Minimum **3-feet (42" preferable) wide doorway**
- Doorway has level **threshold of no more than ½ inch.**

Three types of accessible entrances:

- Ground level.** No accommodations needed.
  - Ramp. 3 feet wide ramp (maximum incline of 1:12-or 1" of rise for 12" of length but preferably 1:20) with handrails** (2 rails if rise is greater than 6 inches-see below) and a 5' level platform at the top and at all switchbacks
  - Elevator or lift.** Certified and usable by wheelchair user (Reach controls - 54" or less from the floor, space to accommodate chair and preferably an attendant, at least one handrail 32" high and carry the weight of a power chair and its user.)
- Also recommend:* A covered drop off area with 114" vertical clearance.

**Doors** -- **Automatic doors** are recommended wherever possible. **Manual doors** can be made more accessible according to the criteria below.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Manual doors** should be **light, easy to open** ( $\leq 5$  lbs. pressure) by a wheelchair user, not force the wheelchair off the surrounding level surface, and have a **handle** easy to grasp with one hand without the need for tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist. (Highly recommended to have an usher or greeter stationed at the door to help persons with mobility challenge.)

**Automatic doors** should **meet the following criteria:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Marked** with the universal wheelchair access symbol and working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plainly visible **push buttons** at comfortable height for person in wheelchair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Buttons at **sufficient distance** from any door that opens toward the user.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doors open at **moderate speed** for safe passage through.

## INTERIOR

3. \_\_\_\_\_ **Hallways and other interior sections of the building are accessible to people who use wheelchairs and others with mobility issues.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Hallways. Barrier-free** with width of at least **48"** (60" preferable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Stairs.** At least one **handrail** mounted **34-38"** above the step and extending 1" beyond top and bottom; (includes podium platform) and slightly raised, abrasive floor strips at top.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Carpets and rugs** Carpets and rugs **securely attached, firm backing** and a **maximum pile level** of 1/2-inch thick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Door handles.** Room doors are **easy to open** (*See manual doors above.*) (**Required** for doors on restrooms, worship area, and classrooms labeled accessible, and highly recommended for others.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Coat Racks.** If provided, at least one section **low** enough to be **accessible** by persons in wheelchairs and small children.

Recommend half or more drinking fountains are accessible with spout no more than 36" from the floor, easily operated by a person using a wheelchair, and cups available nearby.

## WORSHIP

4. \_\_\_\_\_ **Entrance to the main worship area** (often referred to as the "sanctuary") **is accessible and seating options are provided.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Accessible entrances** to the Worship Area (*See accessible doors & entrances sections*)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Ushers** should be available at the doorway to help persons find seating.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Seating.** Seating is provided so that a wheelchair user can sit beside family members and sit at different locations.
- Number of spaces provided (scattered site cutouts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Front
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Rear
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Middle (scattered with considerations for drafts, temperature, sound, light, view)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Accessible platform** with wheel chair ramp or lift to encourage participation or, if impossible, provide an **alternative choir area and speaking area** where speaker can be seen and heard. A 27" table may be preferable to a short podium.

\_\_\_\_\_ If stairs needed to access platform, provide at least one **handrail 34-38"** above the steps

## RESTROOMS

5. \_\_\_\_\_ **At least one wheelchair accessible restroom is available for both men and women.**

Can be provided by a **family/single user** restroom (accommodates an attendant and is highly preferred) **OR** at least one **accessible restroom stall** in standard restrooms for each gender.

| Accessibility Standard  | Type of Restroom                              |  |                                   |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
|   | Accessible Family or Single User (genderless) | Standard Restroom with Accessible Stalls | Individual Stalls Within Restroom |
| Check all that apply on line provided to the right below  |   |  |                                   |
| Signs clearly marking as accessible   | _____   | _____                                    | _____                             |
| Entrance has lever door handles-no tight grasping, pinching, wrist turning  | _____   | _____                                    | NA                                |
| Minimum 36" entrance door width   | _____   | _____                                    | _____                             |
| Entrance door swings outward into hall/room <b>OR</b> has 5' turning space beyond the radius of inward opening door | _____   | _____                                    | _____                             |
| Restroom/Stall is 60" wide beyond the radius of the door and 59" deep   | _____   | NA-See right column                      | _____                             |
| Wall-mounted grab bars are 33-36" high next to and at the back of the commode that is 19" from floor                | _____   | NA-See right column                      | _____                             |
| Sink is open and 29" from bottom to the floor with ever type-faucet controls  | _____   | _____                                    | NA                                |
| Towels, soap, mirrors, dryers are no higher than 40"  | _____   | _____                                    | NA                                |

NA is Not Applicable

## CLASSROOMS

6. \_\_\_\_\_ **At least one Sunday school classroom and a Fellowship Area is accessible to wheelchair users as follows:**

An accessible **path** at least **36 inches** wide leads from an accessible entrance to the \_\_\_\_\_ classroom door and \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship area door

There is a 5 foot level platform at the \_\_\_\_\_ classroom door and \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship area door.

The doorway entrances are 36 inches wide with a level threshold no more than ½" at the \_\_\_\_\_ classroom door and \_\_\_\_\_ fellowship area door.

*Recommended as well:*

## FELLOWSHIP/GATHERING AREA

7. \_\_\_\_\_ A telephone with the top of the controls no more than 48" from the floor and with a knee clearance of 27".

# Hearing Accessibility

In this category, it is important to distinguish between three descriptive terms.

- **Hard of hearing** – persons who have a hearing loss, but hear with a hearing aid or Assistive Listening Device, and/or sign language.
- **deaf** (with a small “d”) – persons who have very little or no hearing and rely on printed or visual language materials and/or speech reading (“lip reading”), as their primary means of communication.
- **Deaf** (with a capital “D”) – persons who use a distinct language, American Sign Language and identify themselves with a cultural group (North American Deaf Culture). They may have some hearing.

Two separate symbols are possible in this category



Assistive Listening Devices

AND



Sign language interpretation



**Assistive Listening Devices (ALD)** address the issues for persons who are hard of hearing.

Churches that display this symbol will **meet criteria 1-3**. Criteria 4-8 are highly recommended. In addition, most persons who are hard of hearing or deaf can read, so the visual aids under Vision Accessibility are also recommended.

1. \_\_\_\_ **Sound System.** A regularly used, clear audible sound system with at least one microphone.
  2. \_\_\_\_ **ALD.** The sound system includes individual Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) for people who have a hearing loss. Ushers are educated on the location of Assistive Listening Devices and how to assist persons wishing to use them.
- Either 3 or 4 is acceptable for Hearing Accessibility*
3. \_\_\_\_ **Roving microphone.** A roving microphone is available for sharing time, joys/concerns, etc, or when a roving microphone is not available, the pastor/worship leader summarizes over his/her microphone so that all can understand.

*The following are highly recommended.*

4. \_\_\_\_ At least one hearing aid compatible **telephone with a volume control**
5. \_\_\_\_ **Taped or paper copy of sermons/services.** Worship services are made available on audio and/or videotape
6. \_\_\_\_ **Face lighting of speakers**
7. \_\_\_\_ **Closed captioning** may be helpful as well as other visual language options.
8. \_\_\_\_ **Eliminate background noise.**



## Sign Language

Sign language interpretation is provided.

Congregations meet the criteria for displaying this symbol by providing a qualified sign language interpreter in the sign system of persons who are deaf and already attend that congregation, or by providing **American Sign Language (ASL)** interpretation as an outreach to the Deaf community. Congregations meet the criteria for displaying this symbol by providing a qualified interpreter to assist with communication between deaf people and those who do not know sign language.

**Either Criteria 1 or 2 plus Criteria 3 are required and Criteria 4 and 5 are highly recommended.**

1. \_\_\_\_ **ASL.** Interpretation in American Sign Language is provided. **OR**
  2. \_\_\_\_ **Other sign system.** Interpretation is provided in the following signed English systems.
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### **AND #3 below**

Sign language interpretation is provided in the following contexts:

3. \_\_\_\_ **Worship.** Sign language interpretation is provided in at least one main weekly worship service.
4. \_\_\_\_ **Classrooms.** Sign language interpretation is provided in educational settings for persons who need it.
5. \_\_\_\_ **Fellowship.** Sign language interpretation is provided for informal fellowship activities.

# Large Print

## Visual Accessibility

Aids are provided for persons with vision impairment, usually large print.

Basic standards for visual accessibility are met when **Criteria 1** and at least **2 items in numbers 2-8** (the more the better) are met. Number 9 and numbers 13-20 are recommended and 10-12 accompany other accessibility features.

1. \_\_\_ **Adequate Lighting.** Provided throughout the worship area (sanctuary).

Large Print worship materials are provided and ushers are educated on their location and use.

Large Print should be at least 16-point type.

2. \_\_\_ **Large Print Bulletins.**
3. \_\_\_ **Large Print Hymnals.** Include song sheets for other music used.

Worship materials are projected on an overhead screen.

4. \_\_\_ **Worship Order projected.**
5. \_\_\_ **Worship Readings projected.**
6. \_\_\_ **Announcements projected.**
7. \_\_\_ **Hymns projected.** An alternative to Large Print Hymnals.
8. \_\_\_ **Worship Songs projected.**

*The following are recommended:*

9. \_\_\_ **New Hymn Introduction.** New hymns/songs are introduced so that people with low vision can participate more fully during the worship i.e. prior to worship.
10. \_\_\_ **Exterior signs visible.** Signs are easily visible near the church entrance indicating location of accessible parking spaces and entrances.
11. \_\_\_ **Interior signs visible.** Interior signs are easily visible noting the location of any available accommodations, i.e., accessible restrooms, elevators, Assistive Listening Devices, etc.
12. \_\_\_ **Lighting for speakers.** Lighting for the area which speakers use is directed to the front of speakers, toward the face, not from behind the person. This is important for persons who are also hard of hearing or who rely on speech reading.
13. \_\_\_ **Glare eliminated** from windows or lights.
14. \_\_\_ If **Braille** reader, provide bulletins, signs, and other written material in Braille
15. \_\_\_ **Bookstands or lapboards available** if unable to hold hymnals or Bibles.
16. \_\_\_ **Special seating** with seat 19" from floor, arm rests, foot stool, and extra wide leg room.
17. \_\_\_ A **fragrance free section** available.
18. \_\_\_ All **carpeting a maximum** of ½" thick.
19. \_\_\_ **Fire alarms, visual and auditory**, 48" inches from floor.
20. \_\_\_ **Evacuation plan** for persons in wheelchairs, blind, mentally ill, or others needing help.



## Support Services

The congregation provides support services to members and participants through such things as awareness-raising events, educational materials and activities, support groups, and provision for individual needs to include persons with disabilities and mental illness in its church life.

This symbol will be awarded by **meeting the criteria in any of the following areas**. The more areas met, the better.

### Awareness and Education.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **Mission Statement.** Congregation has language in its mission statement or church covenant addressing its intention to provide access to, and inclusion of, people with disabilities and mental illness.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **Awareness activities. At least one** of these awareness-raising activities has been carried out **within the past year.**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Disabilities awareness.** Disabilities awareness is promoted by the observance of an annual awareness event in the worship or education program of the congregation. Example: Disabilities Awareness Week (second week in March).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Mental health awareness.** Mental health awareness is promoted by the observance of an annual awareness event in the worship or education program of the congregation. Examples: Mental Health Month (May), Mental Illness Awareness Week (first week in October)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Sermons.** At least one sermon relating to disabilities and/or mental health issues has been preached.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Educational events.** At least one workshop, seminar, or educational series has been held in the congregation.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **Church Participant Disabilities Survey.** Members and attendees have been surveyed within the last three years about disabilities and mental illness present in their families and input sought on how the congregation may become more inclusive, supportive, and accessible to them.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **Library resources.** Educational materials on disabilities and mental illness are available in the church library, church office, or other accessible space.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ **Hospitality training.** Specific training is provided to greeters and ushers so they can better help individuals with mental illness and other disabilities feel welcomed, accepted, and included in the congregation.

### *Highly recommended:*

6. \_\_\_\_\_ **Companion training.** Training has been held in the past two years for persons who serve as aides or companions to persons with disabilities and/or mental illness.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ **Individual Spiritual Formation Plan (ISFP).** An ISFP is on file for children and adults who need special accommodations in order to be included in worship, spiritual education, and/or other aspects of church life.

8. \_\_\_\_ **Classroom Integration.** Children and adults with developmental, cognitive, and learning disabilities and differences are accommodated in the regular education program of the church through the use of special materials, teaching methods, behavioral supports, etc. as necessary.
9. \_\_\_\_ **Special education classes.** Classes are provided for adults with developmental disabilities which accommodate their abilities to learn without treating them like children.
10. \_\_\_\_ **Gift discernment.** The congregation has ministry and service opportunities (e.g. choir, Sunday school teaching, ushering, elder, etc.) open to persons with disabilities and mental illness and a gift discernment program that includes those persons.
11. \_\_\_\_ **Leadership knowledge.** Pastor(s) and other church leaders are educated on the difference between a diagnosis of mental illness and a diagnosis of mental retardation.
12. \_\_\_\_ **Referrals.** Pastor(s) and other church leaders can refer people with mental health or disabilities needs to counseling professionals and agencies in the community.
13. \_\_\_\_ **Benevolence fund.** A benevolence fund (or other financial support structure) is available through the congregation/deacons to provide financial assistance for expenses incurred above and beyond insurance coverage for members, including those who have a mental illness or other disability.
14. \_\_\_\_ **Support groups.** The congregation organizes support groups or caring circles for people who have mental illness and other disabilities and their families.
15. \_\_\_\_ **Facility availability.** The church facility is available free of charge to community support groups on issues involving disabilities, mental illness, addictions, etc.
16. \_\_\_\_ **Respite.** The congregation has designated individuals who can provide respite care to family members who have dependents with disabilities and/or mental illness.
17. \_\_\_\_ **Special diets** (e.g. diabetic) are considered when food is served and **Assistive eating devices** available (e.g. non-slip placemat, plate with rim, non-spill mug, rocker knife).
18. \_\_\_\_ **(Other)** \_\_\_\_\_