



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)**