

Accessibility Audit for Local Churches

The Disability Concerns Committee of the North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to assisting you and your congregation to increase awareness and sensitivity to the needs, gifts and interests of persons with disabilities and their families in your community. To that end, we urge you to work prayerfully and diligently toward barrier-free accessibility in your church.

Please keep in mind that full accessibility applies not only to physical and mobility limitations but also to those of hearing, sight and mental abilities. In order to help you help those whose ability to worship, learn and serve in the usual setting is compromised, we offer an Accessibility Audit to help you determine which steps to take to fully open your ministries to all of God's children.

Every local church should expect to have members and visitors with disabilities. In order to better serve the entire congregation, the church can use the Accessibility Audit to determine if its building or buildings have architectural or physical barriers that restrict or prevent anyone from having full access to the ministries of the church.

Remember that accessibility is more than ramps, parking spaces or restrooms – more than eliminating physical barriers. It also means eliminating communication and attitudinal barriers. Unfortunately, the greatest barrier that exists in our churches is attitude. A church seeking to be totally accessible needs to be aware that attitudinal barriers are real and do exist.

Paragraph 2532.6. of the Book of Discipline says that the Board of Trustees shall conduct “an annual accessibility audit of their buildings, grounds and facilities.” This audit “shall be used in filling out the annual church and/or charge conference reports.” To that end we offer the Accessibility Audit for Churches as a standardized form that can be used for churches of all sizes. Few existing churches will be able to eliminate all barriers. However, each local church should develop a plan to reduce the barriers that keep anyone from fully participating in the life of the church.

The Accessibility Audit is designed to help congregations analyze the church's facilities, methods of communication and attitudes. It may be used to assist churches in identifying barriers that can cause persons with disabilities to be excluded from full participation in worship and other congregational activities. Realizing that the goal of full accessibility is a continuing process, we offer this audit as a tool and starting point.

(Revised from a resource of the Health and Welfare Ministries Program Department of the General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church also using information from the Iowa Conference Commission in Ministry with Persons with Disabilities. January, 2007)

Accessibility Audit for Churches

It is recommended that a task force, including at least seven (7) persons, be formed to complete this audit. To be most effective, this group should include the chair of trustees, pastor, lay leader, persons with disabilities and others interested in disability concerns. As the audit is made, it is important to consider what can be accomplished in a short period of time and which goals must be long-range.

CHECK
YES or NO

A. PARKING

- ___ ___ Have you provided accessible parking? IF NO, go to B: if yes, does each accessible parking space:
- ___ ___ 1. have a vertical sign showing the International Symbol of Accessibility?
- ___ ___ 2. have an overall ratio of 1 accessible space to 25 total spaces in the lot?
- ___ ___ 3. measure at least 96 inches wide?
- ___ ___ 4. have a clearly marked adjacent access aisle at least 60 inches wide by 96 inches long for vans?
- ___ ___ 5. Is there an accessible route connecting accessible spaces to accessible buildings on the same site? IF NO, go to B: if yes,
- ___ ___ 6. Is accessible parking located between the entrance drive and the building so that the accessible route is short and does not cross streets, drives or the parking lot?

B. PASSENGER LOADING ZONES

- ___ ___ Have you provided a passenger loading zone? IF NO go to C; if yes,
- ___ ___ 1. is its access aisle a minimum of 60 inches wide and 20 feet long?
- ___ ___ 2. is the loading zone's surface level and even?
- ___ ___ 3. can passengers get in and out of vehicles sheltered from the weather?

C. CURB RAMPS

- ___ ___ Is there a curb ramp wherever an accessible route (connecting accessible facilities, accessible buildings, accessible elements and accessible spaces) crosses a curb? IF NO go to D; if yes,
- ___ ___ 1. is the ramp's width, not including the flared sides, a minimum of 36 inches?
- ___ ___ 2. is its slope no steeper than 1:20 (one foot rise in 20 feet)?

D. RAMPS

- ___ ___ Where there are steps or a change in grade level, and platform lifts or elevators are not appropriate, has a ramp been provided? IF NO go to E; if yes,
- ___ ___ 1. is its slope no steeper than 1:12 (one foot rise in 12 feet)?
- ___ ___ 2. if the ramp rises more than 6 inches or is longer than 72 inches, does it have a handrail on each side that extends the length of the ramp?
- ___ ___ 3. is the clear width (between handrails) at least 42 inches?
- ___ ___ 4. is there a level landing (as wide as the ramp and at least 60 inches long) at the top and bottom of each ramp and each ramp run, and a resting platform every 30 feet?

E. WALKS

Do outside walkways have:

- ___ ___ 1. a minimum width of 48 inches?
- ___ ___ 2. firm, non-slip surfaces?
- ___ ___ 3. good lighting and markings?
- ___ ___ 4. grates with 3/8" maximum holes?

F. ENTRANCES

- ___ ___ Is there at least one accessible door at each accessible entrance to the building, and to the worship, fellowship, education and pastoral care areas? IF NO go to F: if yes, does each door
- ___ ___ 1. measure 36 inches wide?
- ___ ___ 2. have levers, U-shaped handles, push plates, door pulls, panic bars or other door hardware that can be operated with one hand, and does not require twisting, tight grasping, tight pinching or finger strength to operate?
- ___ ___ 3. have a threshold no higher than 3/4 inch for exterior doors, and 1/2 inch for other doors?

G. CORRIDORS (or interior accessible routes)

Is each corridor:

- 1. at least 36 inches wide (with passing space at least 60 inches wide and 60 inches long, or intersecting corridors allowing passing at reasonable intervals not exceeding 200 feet)?
- 2. equipped with handrails preferably on both, but at least on one wall?

H. STAIRS

Does each stair case:

- 1. have handrails on both sides?
- 2. have a non-slip surface?
- 3. a minimum width of 44 inches?
- 4. good lighting?
- 5. have an elevator or lift?

I. FLOORS

Do the floors have:

- 1. smooth, hard, slip-resistant surfaces?
- 2. non-glare finish surfaces?
- 3. tightly woven carpet?

J. RESTROOMS

- 1. Is there at least one wheel chair accessible restroom (may be unisex) 72x96 inches?
- 2. Is at least one toilet stall equipped with grab bars and able to accommodate wheelchair turning space?
- 3. Do faucets have lever handles to ensure easy operation?
- 4. Is there a 27-inch clear knee space under the sink to accommodate wheelchair users?
- 5. Is there an unobstructed wheelchair turning space (60-inch diameter circle or T-shaped space) in the restroom?

K. COMMUNICATIONS

- ___ ___ 1. Are service dogs permitted within the congregation and in the sanctuary area?
- ___ ___ 2. Is the worship bulletin in large print?
- ___ ___ 3. Are hymnals, Bibles and church school materials all readily available in large print?
- ___ ___ 4. Are church school and worship materials available on tape or CD or written in Braille?
- ___ ___ 5. Are interpreters available for deaf persons upon request?
- ___ ___ 6. Are the video presentations (DVD or VHS) used during services or classes closed- captioned?
- ___ ___ 7. Are video or audio recordings made of worship services?
- ___ ___ 8. Are greeters/ushers available to welcome persons and assist them to their seats if needed?
- ___ ___ 9. Do you have someone available to act as a 'note-taker' for a person who is hard-of-hearing, if needed?
- ___ ___ 10. Are assistive listening devices (e.g., audio loop, FM system) provided for persons who are hard-of-hearing?
- ___ ___ 11. Are microphones (portable and stationary) used during all parts of the worship service?
- ___ ___ 12. Is there adequate lighting for reading and on the speaker?

L. ASSEMBLY SEATING

- ___ ___ 1. Are all aisles, including side aisles, at least 36 inches wide?
- ___ ___ 2. Have special seating arrangements or paired wheelchair spaces totaling 66 inches in width been provided (by means of pew cuts, the shortening of selected pews or by the removal of several chairs) that accommodate wheelchair users within the body of the congregation and still provide lines of sight (one such location in area seating up to 25 persons; two in an area seating up to 50; four in an area up to 300)?
- ___ ___ 3. Is the chancel platform accessible via ramp?
- ___ ___ 4. Are people who are physically or mentally challenged encouraged to be involved leaders (e.g. choir member, liturgist, acolyte, usher, greeter, etc.) in the worship service?
- ___ ___ 5. Is the choir loft accessible to wheelchair users in all vocal sections?

M. TELEPHONES

- ___ ___ Have you provided accessible telephones? IF NO go to N; if yes,
- ___ ___ 1. is at least one phone at a maximum height of 48 inches to accommodate wheelchair users?
- ___ ___ 2. is at least one phone equipped with a volume control for persons who are hard-of-hearing?
- ___ ___ 3. is a telephone communications device – Text Telephone Yoke (TTY) – available to accommodate persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing?

N. ATTITUDE

- ___ ___ 1. Is your congregation accepting, caring and loving toward persons with disabilities?
- ___ ___ 2. Is Access Sunday observed each year?
- ___ ___ 3. Do you hold training sessions and sensitivity workshops for greeters, ushers, church school leaders, church staff and others interested in developing and maintaining ministries with people with mentally and physically challenging conditions?
- ___ ___ 4. Have teachers and children discussed their own attitudes toward persons with disabilities?
- ___ ___ 5. Do you conduct sign language classes to help members of the congregation learn to communicate with persons who are deaf?
- ___ ___ 6. Do you include persons with disabilities in all aspects of congregational life?
- ___ ___ 7. Do you actively involve persons with mental and physical challenges in the ministries of the church (such as teaching a class, reading scripture at worship, ushering, singing in the choir, serving on or chairing a committee)? Persons with disabilities wish to be in ministry, not just be ministered to.

O. EMERGENCY PREPARATION

- ___ ___ 1. Do you have a wheelchair available for use?
- ___ ___ 2. Do you have an emergency evacuation plan (fire drill, storm drill, etc.) that includes persons with disabilities?
- ___ ___ 3. Do you have fire/emergency drills for the whole congregation?
- ___ ___ 4. Do ushers and select others know how to handle an emergency – illness, fire, CPR need, etc. – if a person with a handicapping condition is involved or present?
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P. **SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

Are the international sign and symbols of accessibility posted at the following:

- ___ ___ 1. building entrance doors?
- ___ ___ 2. accessible parking spaces?
- ___ ___ 3. passenger loading zones?
- ___ ___ 4. restrooms?
- ___ ___ 5. Are the signs in high contrast colors?
- ___ ___ 6. Are the sign's letters raised or recessed 4 1/2 or 5 feet above the floor?

Q. **PARSONAGES** (If you have more than one parsonage, complete a separate audit for each one.)

- ___ ___ 1. Is parking designed so that a person in a wheelchair could park and get into the parsonage with ease?
- ___ ___ 2. Is there at least one outside entry to the ground floor that has no steps or is ramped?
- ___ ___ 3. Is there a garage or covered area for loading and unloading passengers?
- ___ ___ 4. Are hallways at least 36 inches wide?
- ___ ___ 5. Are all doorways at least 36 inches wide? If not all, how many are?___
- ___ ___ 6. Is there at least one accessible bathroom on the ground floor?
- ___ ___ 7. Is there one bedroom on the first floor that can be used to accommodate a person with a disability?
- ___ ___ 8. Is the laundry facility on the first floor?
- ___ ___ 9. Could a person in a wheelchair readily navigate the kitchen and appropriately access the stove and refrigerator?
- ___ ___ 10. Is there an accessible deck, patio or other private outdoor area suitable for leisure activities?
- ___ ___ 11. In case of an emergency are there at least two exits that a person with a disability could use?
- ___ ___ 12. Has a member of your task force attempted to navigate the parking area, outdoor areas and living areas of the parsonage in a wheelchair?

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT WORKSHEET (to be submitted with Charge Conference reports)

Put the total number of YES and NO responses answered in each category below.

Total		Total	
YES	NO	YES	NO
___	___	___	___
A. Parking		J. Restrooms	
___	___	___	___
B. Passenger Loading Zone		K. Communications	
___	___	___	___
C. Curb Ramps		L. Assembly Seating	
___	___	___	___
D. Ramps		M. Telephones	
___	___	___	___
E. Walks		N. Attitude	
___	___	___	___
F. Entrances		O. Emergency Preparation	
___	___	___	___
G. Corridors		P. Signs and Symbols	
___	___	___	___
H. Stairs		Q. Parsonages	
___	___		
I. Floors			

If you answered NO to the first questions in sections A, B, C, D, F, M or you have more than two (2) NO answers in any category, you are not considered accessible in this area of your facility. In order to ensure greater access, we suggest that you complete the planning worksheet below.

PRIORITY ITEMS BASED UPON AUDIT RESULTS

Short Range Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Long Range Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List all deficiencies that will require a large financial layout (+\$5,000).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Name of Church: _____ District: _____

Pastor: _____ Date Audit Completed: _____