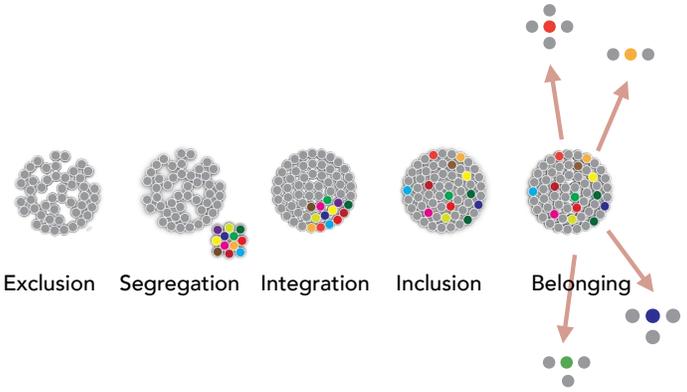


BECOMING COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING

THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Carter, Biggs, & Boehm (2016)

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"FOUR SIMPLE QUESTIONS"

- What are we doing **well** right now?
- What could we be doing **better** or **more of**?
- What should we be doing **entirely differently**?
- What can we begin doing **next** to move us toward deeper community?

4

MYTH #1

"WE JUST DON'T HAVE ANYONE HERE."

1. TO BE

PRESENT

5

6

Reflecting on Belonging

Are people with disabilities and their families...	What are we doing well right now in this area?	What could we do better or differently in this area?
Present		
Invited		
Welcomed		
Known		
Accepted		
Supported		
Cared for		
Befriended		
Needed		
Loved		

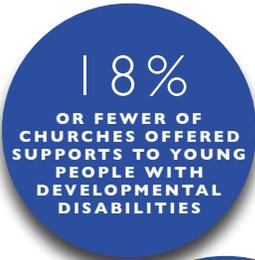
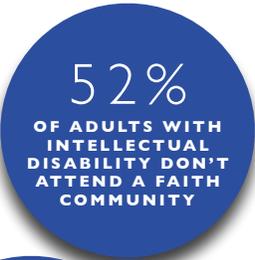
What next steps should we take to address these areas well?



7



8



Sources: Ault, Collins, & Carter (2013); Carter et al. (2016); Carter & Boehm (in preparation)

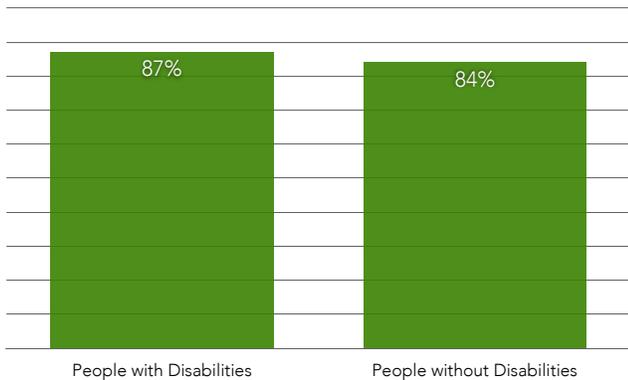
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MYTH #2

FAITH MUST BE LESS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

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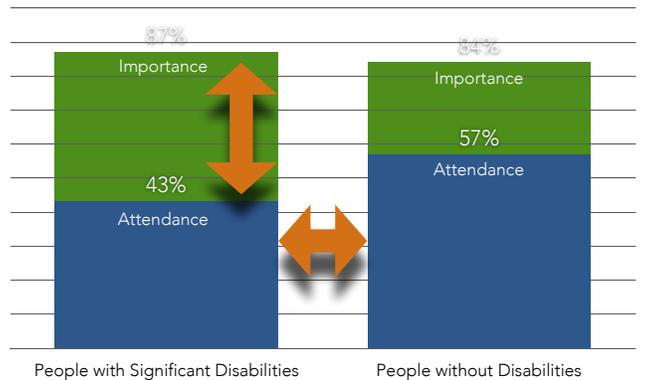
MY FAITH IS "SOMEWHAT" TO "VERY IMPORTANT"



11

Source: National Organization on Disability

ATTENDS WORSHIP SERVICES AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH



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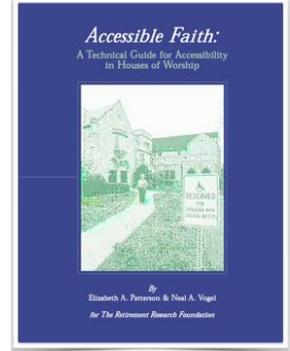
Source: National Organization on Disability

“If ‘shut-ins’ can go to Walmart,
but not to your church;
they are **shut out**, not **shut in!**”

–ED WOOD

A FEW ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS

- **Congregational Assessment Survey**
www.accessibilitynetwork.net
- **Through the Roof Accessibility Checklist**
www.throughtheroof.com
- **Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility & Inclusion**
www.phewacomcommunity.org/images/congregation-audit.pdf
- **Brief Accessibility Checklist**
www.crcna.org/disability or www.rca.org/disability
- **Signs of an Open Door Parish**
www.ncpd.org
- **Accessibility Resources for Churches**
<http://www.umdabilityministries.org/download/audit3.pdf>



www.rrf.org/wp-content/uploads/Accessible_Faith_CF_7_19_11.pdf

Are individuals with disabilities and their families...	What are we doing well?	What should we do better or differently?	What should we do next?
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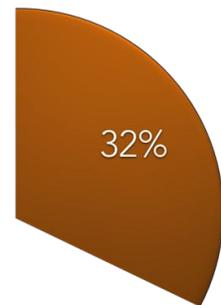
Present

2. TO BE

INVITED

“It’s not that we deliberately excluded them.
In fact, we weren’t deliberate at all.
That was the problem.”

–A CHURCH LEADER



Parents who changed their place of worship because their child with a disability was not included or welcomed.

Source: Ault, Collins, & Carter (2013)

https://graphicartistsguild.org/tools_resources/downloadable-disability-access-symbols

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ACTIVE INVITATIONS

- Visit or share information with...
- Independent living centers and disability organizations
- Group homes
- Parent support groups
- Regional and state disability initiatives

Organization or association*	Web site
The Arc	http://www.thearc.org
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	http://www.aaid.org
Autism Society of America	http://www.autism-society.org
Brain Injury Association of America	http://www.biausa.org
Center for Independent Living	http://www.cilru.org
Councils on Developmental Disabilities	http://www.nacdd.org
Easter Seals	http://www.easterseals.com
Epilepsy Foundation	http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health	http://www.ffcmh.org
Goodwill Industries International	http://www.goodwill.org
Muscular Dystrophy Association	http://www.mdausa.org
National Association for the Dually Diagnosed	http://www.thenadd.org
National Disability Rights Network	http://www.ndrn.org
National Down Syndrome Society	http://www.ndss.org
National Muscular Sclerosis Society	http://www.nationalmssociety.org
Parents Helping Parents	http://www.php.com
People First	Web search or local telephone directory
Salvation Army	http://www.salvationarmyusa.org
Spina Bifida Association	http://www.sbaa.org
TASH	http://www.tash.org
United Cerebral Palsy	http://www.ucp.org
United Way	http://www.unitedway.org
County and state social service agencies	Local web search or telephone directory
Local advocacy groups	Local web search or telephone directory
Local school districts	Local web search or telephone directory
Residential service providers	Local web search or telephone directory
Respite/adult day care service providers	Local web search or telephone directory
Supported employment providers	Local web search or telephone directory
Vocational rehabilitation offices	Local web search or telephone directory
Universities with special education, rehabilitation psychology, social work, and related programs	Local web search or telephone directory

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3. TO BE
WELCOMED

21



"We felt like we were wanted."
—A PARENT

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4. TO BE
KNOWN

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Intellectual disability is “a disability characterized by **SIGNIFICANT LIMITATIONS** both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills.”

AAIDD definition (2010)

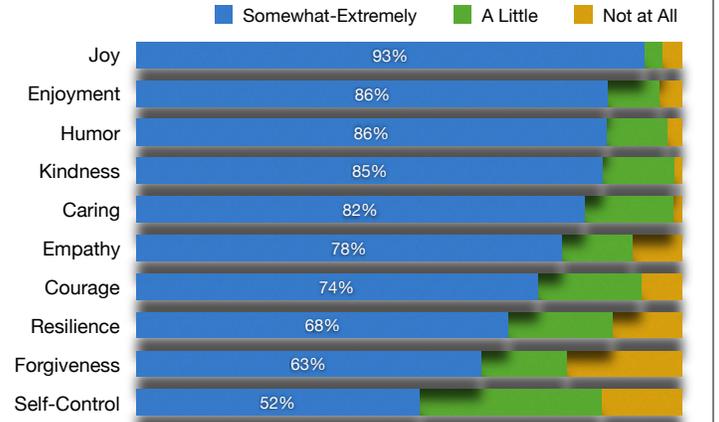
Autism is characterized by...

- **DEFICITS** in social-emotional reciprocity; ranging from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back and forth conversation through reduced sharing of interests, emotions, and affect and response to total lack of initiation of social interaction,
- **DEFICITS** in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction; ranging from poorly integrated- verbal and nonverbal communication, through abnormalities in eye contact and body-language, or deficits in understanding and use of nonverbal communication, to total lack of facial expression or gestures.
- **DEFICITS** in developing and maintaining relationships, appropriate to developmental level (beyond those with caregivers); ranging from difficulties adjusting behavior to suit different social contexts through difficulties in sharing imaginative play and in making friends to an apparent absence of interest in people

APA definition (2012)

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HOW MUCH IS EACH TRAIT CHARACTERISTIC OF YOUR CHILD?



Selected Items from the Assessment Scale for Positive Character Traits-Developmental Disabilities (Woodard, 2009)

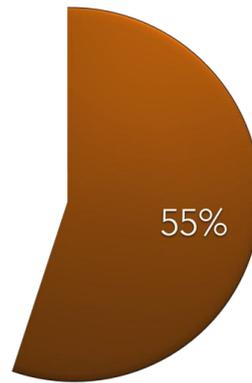
Carter, Boehm, Biggs, Annandale, Taylor, Logeman, & Liu (2015)

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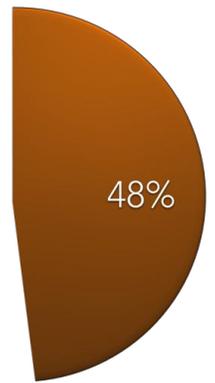
5. TO BE

ACCEPTED

27



Congregational leaders accept my child.



Congregation members accept my child.

Source: Carter, Boehm, Annandale, & Taylor (2016)

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- “If Abel can’t read, how will he get anything out of the class?”
- “She has autism? None of us are trained to work with those children.”
- “Some members of the congregation are finding your group to be distracting. Perhaps you and your clients would be more comfortable sitting in the balcony.”
- “Our church just isn’t big enough to have a disability ministry.”
- “Sandy really doesn’t understand the meaning of communion. I’m not sure we can really allow her to participate.”
- “I’m so sorry to hear about your child. You must be devastated.”
- “I know he is a little old, but he would probably still best be cared for in the nursery.”

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- “It seems like a lot of energy and effort when we can’t really be sure that Louise will actually get anything out of being in Sunday school with the other children.”
- “We have a special class for children just like your son.”
- “These renovations seem a bit much. After all, we don’t have any people with disabilities in our congregation.”
- “I’d love to invite my neighbor to attend our church, but we just don’t have a program for people with disabilities.”
- “Maybe your family would feel more comfortable at Trinity Methodist—I believe they do disability ministry.”

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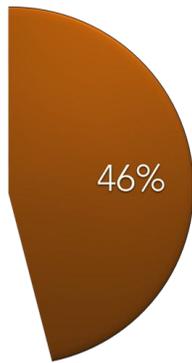
**INCLUSION AWARENESS ACTIVITIES
ACCESS SUNDAY
CELEBRATING INCLUSION**

31

6. TO BE

SUPPORTED

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Parents who say they have been asked about the best way to include their child in religious activities.

Source: Ault, Collins, & Carter (2013)

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EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

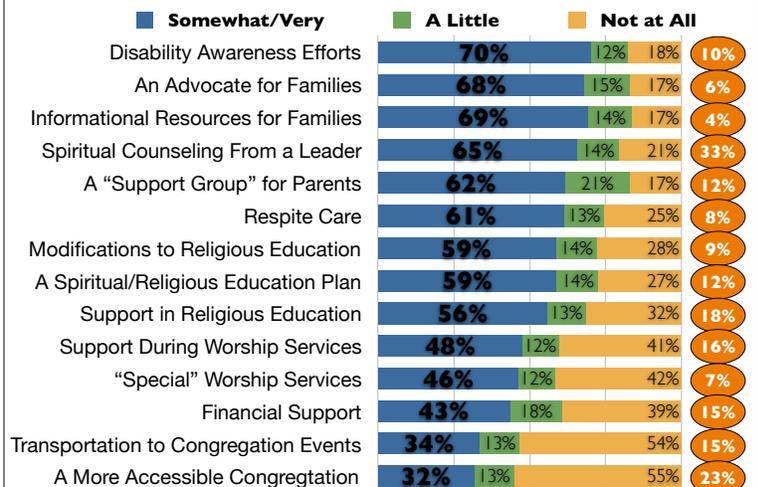
- Tell us about your child.
 - What does she enjoy doing? Not enjoy doing?
 - What are her gifts and talents? What does she do well? What does she love to “show off”?
 - How does she communicate with others? Express excitement? Frustration?
- Tell us about your family.
- In what ways would you like to see your child involved in this congregation?
- What has been your child’s previous experience in other congregations?
- What should we know about supporting your child in congregational activities?
 - How can we best support her positive behavior?
 - Are there things we should definitely avoid doing or saying?
 - Are there things we should absolutely do?
 - What does she find most rewarding?
 - What is the best way to respond when your child becomes upset?
 - How can we help support your family as you raise your child? Can we _____ [offer specific examples]?

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EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

- How would you describe your child’s faith? What are the best ways to communicate spiritual truths?
- Are there important goals that you have for your child as she participates in our program this year? As you look into the future?
- What could we do to make our children’s program the most exciting time of the week for your child?
- How would you like us to respond when other children or adults ask us about your child’s disability or support needs?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges to including your child in congregational activities?
- How can our congregation help support your family as you raise your child? Can we _____ [offer specific examples]?
- Is there anything else that you would like us to know about your child or family?

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Source: Carter, Boehm, Annandale, & Taylor (2016)

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Facilitating or Connecting Parents to a Support Group

Families raising children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities sometimes face unique challenges and concerns.

Support groups can help families across concerns, from helpful parenting strategies, who share the strengths and gifts of their children with disabilities. These groups also offer an opportunity for people who have recently received a diagnosis or are still learning from their child who has been in similar situations. Each child and family has their own unique needs in a support group and parents/families should be focused on a particular diagnosis (e.g., parents of children with autism) or a more general "who would best fit the group, and how often would I meet? Additionally, both considerations should be taken when joining a support group and that disability organizations should offer:

- There is a many ways to connect parents with one another and needed resources, and they often can benefit from getting to know others who have a brother or sister with a disability.

Practical Strategies

1. Contact local agencies and disability organizations (e.g., the Arc, Autism Society, Easter Seals) and ask them to help you find what needs the best in the community for connecting and supporting parents. Ask how you can help them support families.
2. Consider a list of support groups for parents and siblings in your area. This may be supported by what already exists in your area.
3. Make sure the group in your congregation are familiar with those parents of support for those with the disability.
4. Ask each member to share their own experience and ask how you might design a group that best meets their needs.
5. Ask each of those groups who are passionate and interested in disability to facilitate the group. This can mean either in person or online.
6. Reach out to other disability organizations in your area.
7. Reach out to other disability organizations in your area.
8. Reach out to other disability organizations in your area.
9. Reach out to other disability organizations in your area.
10. Reach out to other disability organizations in your area.

Online Resources

Autism Society: www.autismspeaks.org
 Autism Society: www.autismspeaks.org
 Autism Society: www.autismspeaks.org

For Further Reading

1. www.autismspeaks.org
 2. www.autismspeaks.org
 3. www.autismspeaks.org
 4. www.autismspeaks.org
 5. www.autismspeaks.org
 6. www.autismspeaks.org
 7. www.autismspeaks.org
 8. www.autismspeaks.org
 9. www.autismspeaks.org
 10. www.autismspeaks.org

7. TO BE CARED FOR

<http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/assets/files/resources/CongregationPracticeGuide.pdf>

7. TO BE CARED FOR

Putting Faith To Work:
 A Guide for Congregations and Communities

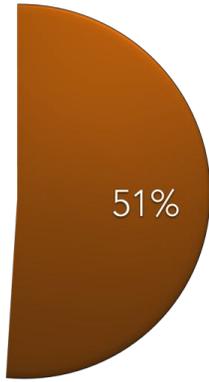
Connecting Job Seekers with Disabilities to Meaningful Employment

www.puttingfaithtowork.org

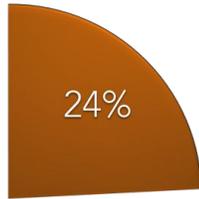
www.friendshiphousepartners.org

8. TO BE BEFRIENDED

“... alone we are poor, together we are rich.”
 –SUE MOSTELLER



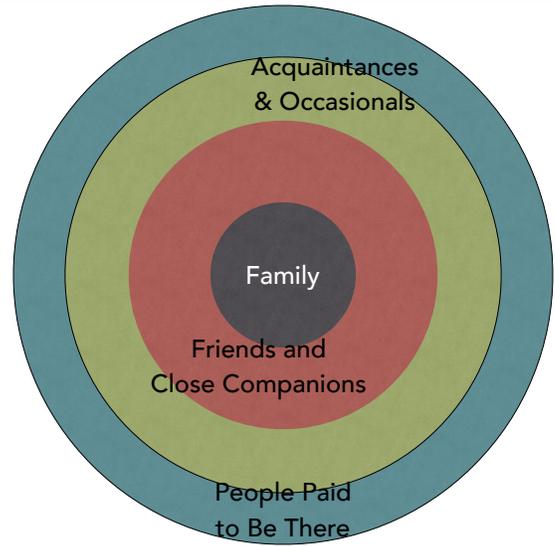
Never invited to a social activity with peers



Have **no** friends outside of staff and family

Source: www.nlts2.org and www.nationalcoreindicators.org

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Acquaintances & Occasionals

Family

Friends and Close Companions

People Paid to Be There

44

“...being loved and befriended does something for you that rights and choice cannot possibly do. It brings you the invaluable experience of being chosen by someone else. Whatever it is that rights and choice can do—and we do not have to prove that they can do a lot of very important things—**but whatever rights and choice can do, they are not going to make me your friend.**”

– HANS REINDERS
THE POWER OF INCLUSION AND FRIENDSHIPS

45

9. TO BE

NEEDED

46

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church:

every part dependent on every other part,
the parts we mention and the parts we don't,
the parts we see and the parts we don't.

If one part hurts,
every other part is involved in the hurt,
and in the healing.

If one part flourishes,
every other part enters into exuberance.

1 Corinthians 12: 12, 25-26

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10. TO BE

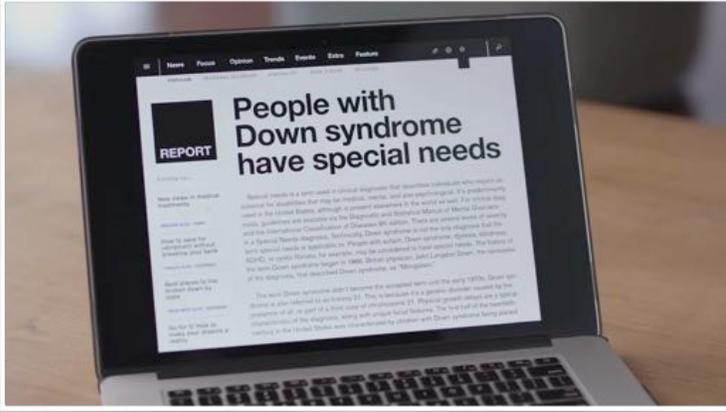
LOVED

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MYTH #3

PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PRIMARILY HAVE "SPECIAL NEEDS"



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNMJaXuFuWQ>

MYTH #4

PEOPLE NEED PROGRAMS MORE THAN RELATIONSHIPS

MYTH #5

FOSTERING BELONGING IS BEST LEFT TO THE EXPERTS

MYTH #6

SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD DEFINITELY ADDRESS THIS.