



Parish Advocate
Catholic Diocese of Richmond
JOB DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The Parish Advocacy Program resulted from the 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*. In this document, the Bishops recognized that “it is not merely enough to affirm the rights of people with disabilities. The Church must become an advocate for and with” people with disabilities and “it must work to increase the public’s sensitivity toward (their) needs and support their rightful demand for justice.”

WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?

A Parish Advocate is someone who acts on behalf of people with disabilities to ensure that all are invited to share in the life of their parish. The Parish Advocate is invited to accept this responsibility by the pastor of the parish. The Advocate follows the example of Christ the Good Shepherd and seeks out parishioners who have disabilities to determine their physical and spiritual needs.

GOAL

The goal of the Parish Advocacy Program is for parishioners with disabilities to fully participate in the life of their church community.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

1. Work with the pastor and staff to welcome and include people with disabilities into the parish. Staff could include health ministry/pastoral care coordinator/ parish nurse.
2. Identify and make contact with persons in the parish that have disabilities.
3. Sensitize parishioners to the needs and gifts of people with disabilities.
4. Welcome people with disabilities and their families into parish life and parish programs.
5. Work to eliminate physical and attitudinal barriers in the parish.
6. Maintain contact with the diocesan office for Catholics with disabilities.

SKILLS & QUALITIES

1. Good interpersonal skills and an ability to work closely with the pastor and parish staff.
2. Some knowledge about the broad range of disabilities.
3. Willingness to participate in on-going training (one weekend day per year) to include strategies for inclusion and accessibility and information on specific disabilities.

To learn more about parish advocacy or the Ministry for Persons with Disabilities contact: Nita Grignol at 804 622-5260 or email to ngrignol@richmonddiocese.org.