

*The Giftedness of Persons with
Special Needs*

"They are so faith-filled... there's a love you feel in seeing God in all of these special people that we welcome each year. You don't get this anywhere else."

- Mary Roesinger

"Walk into a SPRED gathering and the first thing you will experience is joy- genuine joy. The friends and catechists are happy to see one another and that joy permeates the gathering. There is delight as greetings are exchanged. There is Christian hospitality and welcome. Newcomers are embraced and accepted in the group even before names, ethnic backgrounds or social classes are known. There is community as everyone looks out for others and makes sure no one is left out of the circle. There is faith. Just watch as eyes close, heads bow and prayer intentions are shared. And when there is an occasional misunderstanding, forgiveness is extended and hugs are shared..."

- Fr. Todd Riebe

"We teach our friends as much as we can, but then they teach us so much more."

-Jean Milharcic

Meet Mike...



Meet Mary...



The best and most important thing you can do is
get to know those for and with whom you serve.

The Reality...

One person in every 5 has some form of disability, one family in every 3 has a member with a disability (per US Census Bureau)

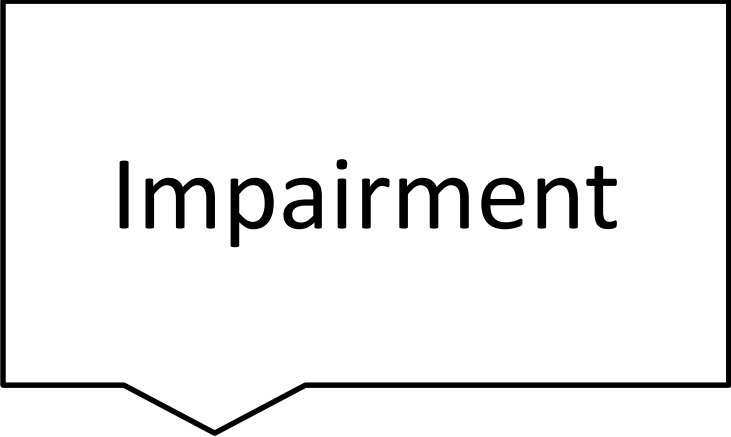
One person in 68 is born with autism (per CDC 2014) (though some numbers given are as high as 1 in 50)

A Common Experience...

NCPD defines disabilities as the "normal, anticipated outcomes of the risks, stresses, and strains of the living process."

(Mary Jane Owen, NCPD, 2000).

Looking at Language...



Impairment



Disability



Handicap

So Now What?

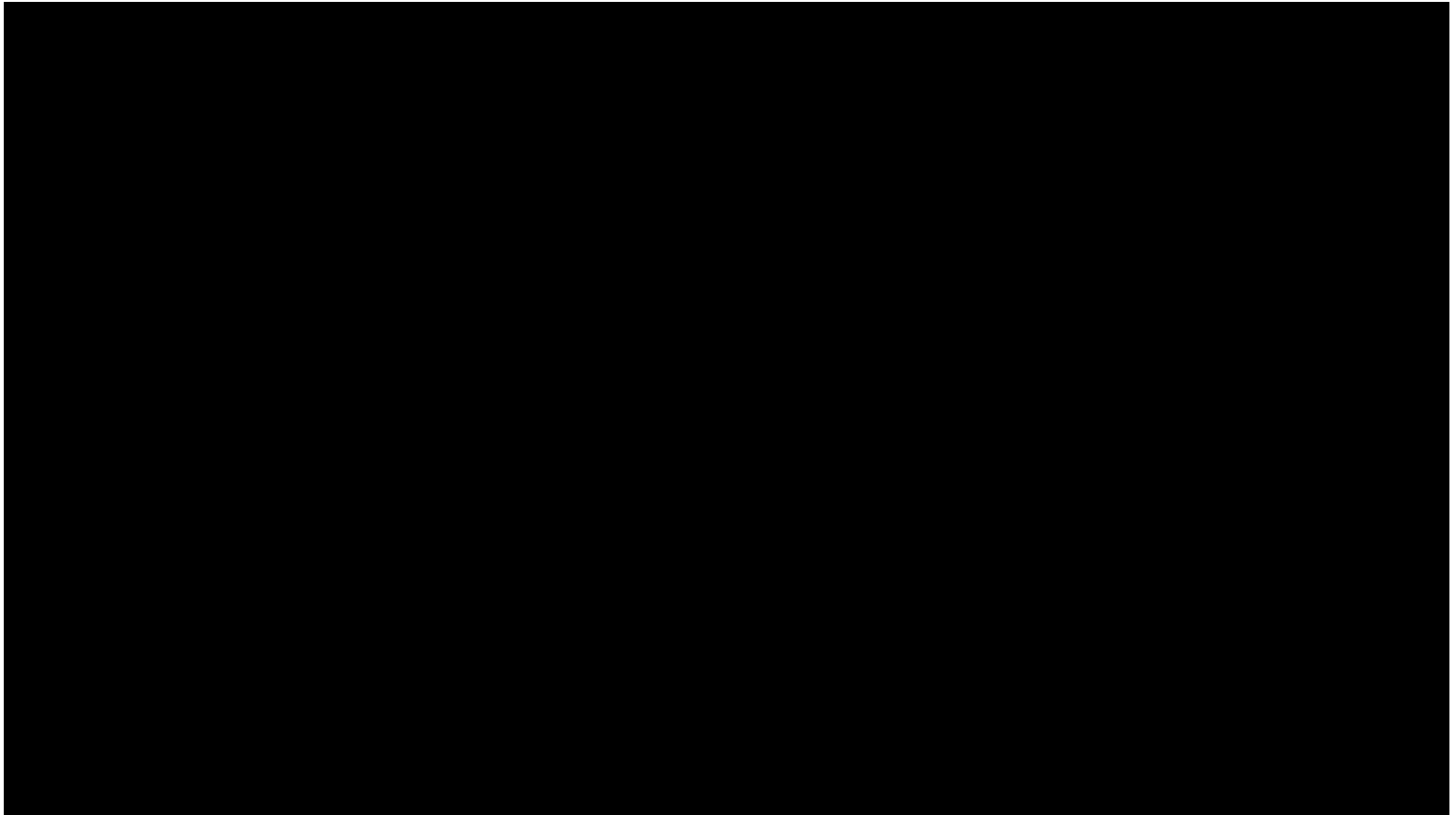
You do NOT need to be a special education teacher to effectively reach out to those with special needs- you just need to be WILLING.

- Identify needs
- Know *where* to find ideas and resources
- Do any planning WITH the person or people involved

What can Parish Professional Staff Do?

- Evaluate the accessibility of the liturgy and sacraments, training, workshops, faith formation opportunities etc.
- Evaluate the ***sensory*** and ***cognitive*** accessibility as well as ***physical***.
- Encourage parish groups and committees to do the same.

The Effect of Physical Accessibility



Physical Accessibility Need Not Be Expensive

Here are some examples of low cost ways to make your parish accessible to all people:

- Install handrails wherever there is a change in floor level.
- Position greeters to open heavy doors for those who can't.
- Install a doorbell at the parish office door to alert staff when a visitor needs assistance entering.
- Use the photocopier to enlarge print on worship aids.
- Equip a lector who can't step up to the ambo with a portable microphone.
- Apply slip-resistant tread to steps.
- Furnish worship space with chairs that can be easily rearranged / removed to suit the changing needs of congregations.
- Relocate a small Christian community meeting to the home of a member who doesn't drive.
- Offer a ride to an elderly parishioner to Sunday mass and Lenten fish fry's.
- Clean light fixtures and light bulbs regularly to keep dust from diminishing their output.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with halogen or compact fluorescent bulbs to improve lighting.
- Replace doorknobs with levers.
- Relocate a religious education class to a first floor room.
- Install a paper cup dispenser near a difficult-to-reach drinking fountain.
- Reserve seating close to the altar for those with hearing impairments.
- Post signs to indicate accessible entrances, parking, and restrooms.
- Offer a concurrent para-liturgy for children and adults with limited attention during Mass.

Planning to be a good host...

- Be aware of curbs, steps, rough terrain, or narrow passages that cannot be traversed by someone using a mobility aid, such as a walker, cane, scooter, wheelchair, or assistance dog (or a stroller!)
- Is the schedule flexible enough to provide for guests who need more time moving about or need frequent breaks?

Small Group Session #1

1. The NCPD defines disability as the "normal, anticipated outcomes of the risks, stresses, and strains of the living process." How does this affect the way you think about disabilities?
2. Share one or two ways you have already adapted a program, and how it worked for you.

Sensory Accessibility



- Hyper sensitive 'senses'
 - Brain cannot filter all the input
 - overly sensitive to sound, light, touch
 - and taste and texture.
- Visually oriented
 - Difficulty filtering sensory stimulus.
 - Constant motion can affect ***Vestibular*** and ***Proprioceptive*** senses.

The key here is to be **aware**, **limit** and possibly **adapt** sensory input wherever possible.

Planning to be a good host...

- Consider potential issues for guests, such as lighting, sound, and chemical sensitivity.
- Less crowded seating, perhaps near an exit available.
- Perhaps have a designated “quiet place” available.

Not All Are the Same...



Cognitive Accessibility

“Developmentally Appropriate” means addressing the person in a manner they can understand, engage and respond to, while respecting their age and experience.



Planning to be a good host

- Get creative with presentation
- Allow ample time for questions
- Don't be afraid to slow down just a bit...
- Modeling is always a good thing

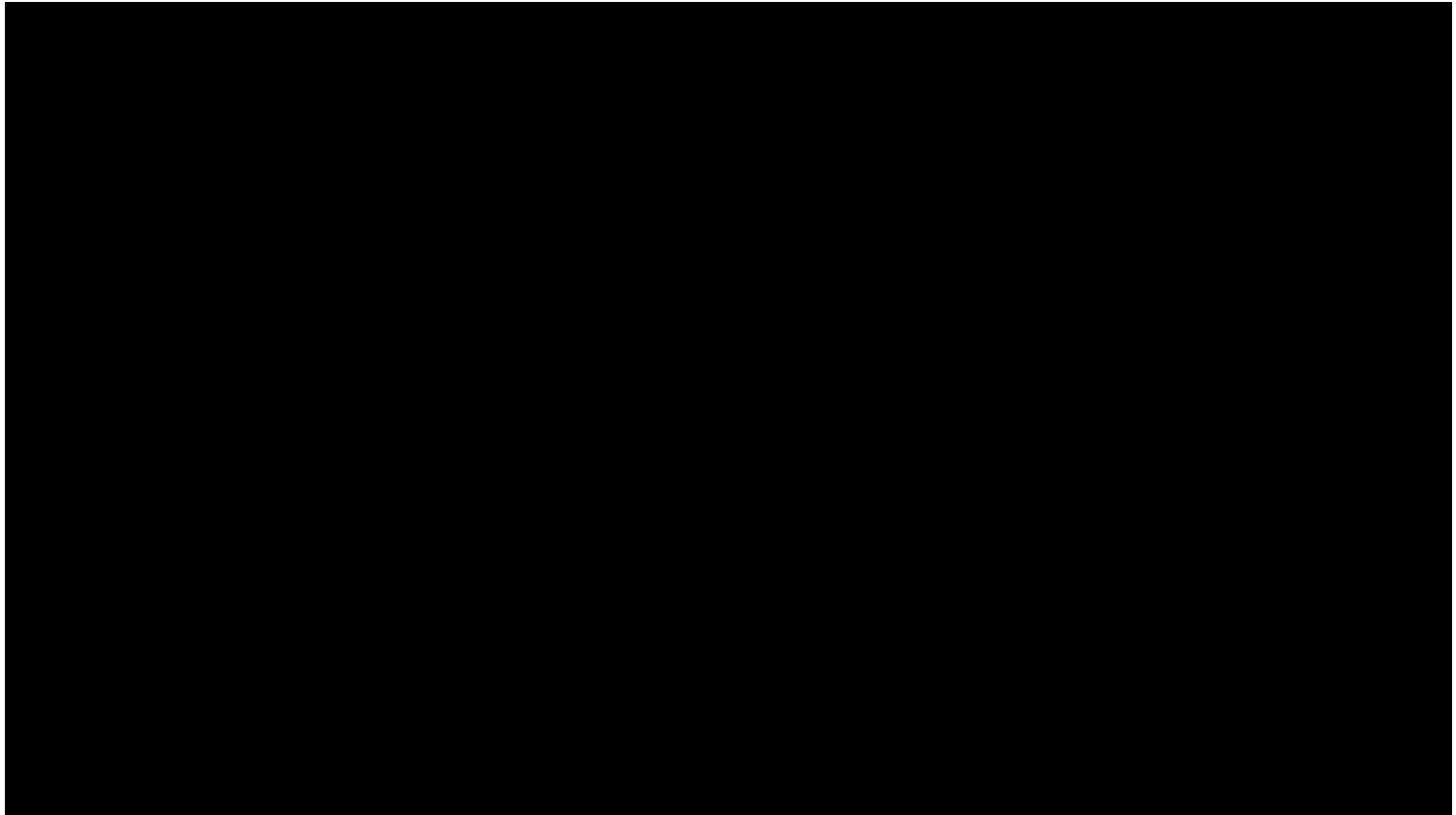
It's more about the "how" than the "what"

Special Considerations...

The Deaf and Blind Communities



Experiencing Life on the Other Side of the Window...



Planning to be a good host...

- Utilize ***captioning*** whenever possible.
- Provide materials- including Father's homily in a ***written format, in advance if possible***
- ***Looping Coils***: provide a much clearer sound for those with hearing aids.
- ***Assistive Listening Device***
- OR, a ***note taker*** can also come in handy



DRAGON
DICTATION

Planning to be a good host...

- Provide written material in alternate formats as needed: ***large print, Braille, audio, or electronic files.***
- ***Assistive courtesy***
- ***Describe and identify*** as needed

Not all alike...

- *A well-lit but non-glaring* environment
- *Handrails* on both sides of stairs
- *Contrasting colors* marking the edge of each step.

Identify who is missing...

- Search your parish boundaries... look for Assistive Living Facilities, nursing homes, group homes or institutions.
 - ***Personal outreach*** (volunteers?)
 - Offer companions, and perhaps transportation for Mass and other gatherings
- Utilize the Special Needs network!
- Be patient and keep trying

Planning With the Person

- Relationship...
- Creativity and Willingness...
- Having some basic questions to ask- especially in a children's religious education program.

www.ncpd.org

***National Catholic Partnership
on Disability***

- Information, tips and resources ***for various special needs***
- Free large print Roman Missals
- YouTube channel with free informational videos
- Resources, Webinars and presentations which can be purchased



www.ncod.org

***National Catholic Office
for the Deaf***



- Videos, sacramental preparation curricula.
- ‘Vision’ quarterly magazine
- Yearly Conference: Pastoral Week

www.xaviersocietyfortheblind.org

Xavier Society

- Braille and audio library
- They will consider special requests
- Audio, Braille and Large Print Mass Propers
- Hosting events



<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu>



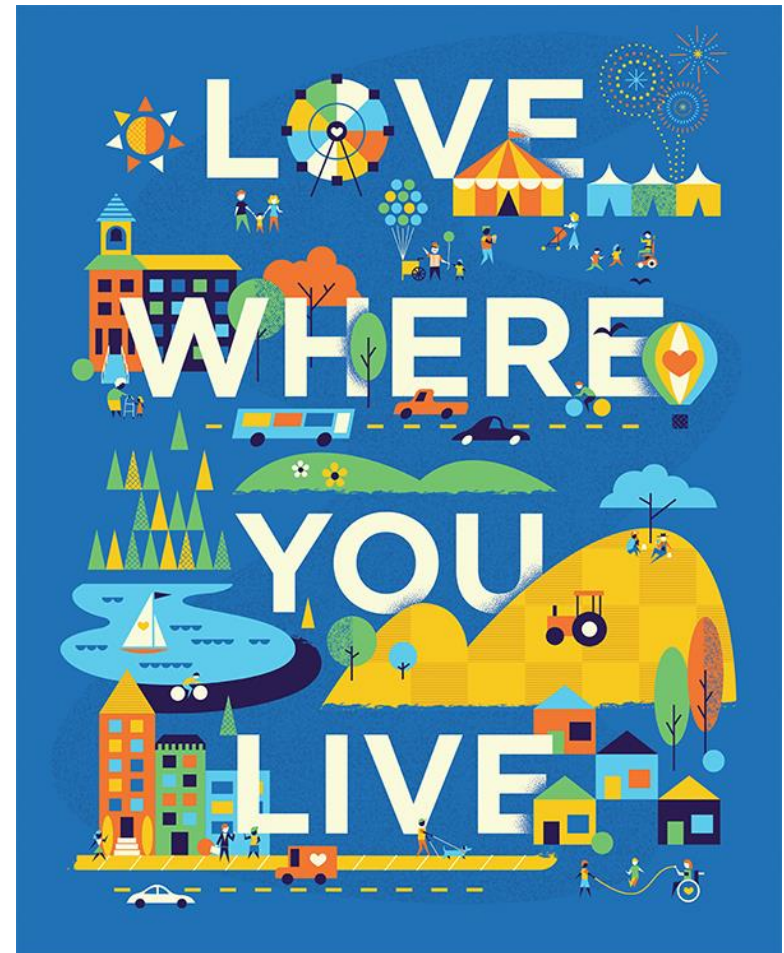
***Indiana Resource Center
for Autism***

- Free webinars
- workshops
- Helpful visual supports, for school and home, articles
- Resource room at IU
- Lending library

<http://www.in.gov/gpcpd/>

Indiana Governors Council for People with Disabilities

- Awareness and education
- Advocacy
- Program support
- Conference
- Good tool for local questions and resources



Small Group Session #2

1. What is already in place at your parish to help you identify and reach out to persons who have special needs? (i.e. ministries or committees that already exist, people?)
2. If time and money were no object, what is it you would MOST like to see in place at your parish? If nothing is currently in place, what would you see as a good start?