

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON



AFFIRMING LIFE INITIATIVE

Prenatal & Postnatal Pastoral Care Resources

Practical Supports for Priests and Pastoral Workers Supporting Families
Following an Unexpected or Challenging Prenatal Diagnosis of Disability or Lethal Condition

But the LORD said to Samuel: "...Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." 1 Samuel 16: 7

*Archdiocese of Washington
Affirming Life Initiative
Mission Statement*

Our Catholic belief is that every life is a gift and has inherent dignity; every life has meaning and purpose; and every life deserves to be protected. We believe that every child, regardless of circumstances, is loved and wanted by God. Further, we acknowledge God's call to holiness, which at its core is a challenge to grow in our own capacity to love--to love as God does, without counting the cost.

However, with new technologies in prenatal testing, this dignity is being undermined. Upon receiving an unexpected prenatal diagnosis, about 90 % of women decide to terminate their pregnancies. Our goal is to reverse this trend, by providing information, resources, pastoral support and advocacy.

The Catholic Church upholds that all human beings have infinite value regardless of any medical conditions, disabilities, or length of life, and seeks to support families at all times.

Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safeguarding or healing as an individual. . . . It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence." Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2274.

**Department of Life Issues: 301-853-5318
Department of Special Needs Ministries: 301-459-7464**

The Affirming Life Initiative is a collaborative effort of the Archdiocese of Washington’s Departments of Life Issues and Special Needs Ministries and local peer ministries and service providers, in consultation with the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) and USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities. The goal of this Initiative is to reverse the alarming trend of women aborting after receiving an unexpected prenatal diagnosis of a disability or life-threatening condition.¹

The often confusing terminology of “early induction” or “medical induction” recommended by medical staff is in fact an abortion. We know from parents who have followed these recommendations that the abortion does not “erase” the pain they are experiencing. Research indicates that when honest information, compassion and resources are available, (such as those provided by our local peer ministries), that the 90 percent abortion rate drops significantly.

The Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) offers this Postnatal Care Resource Guide for information purposes only; this is not an endorsement of any office, ministry or nonprofit. The ADW makes no representations concerning the quality of medical care or level of professional skills of any specific healthcare provider. Each person is encouraged to make his/her own investigation prior to consulting for treatment. Any decision to use a healthcare professional from this Guide is the sole responsibility of the user. Information listed here is appropriate, faithful to Catholic Church teaching and accurate at time of posting. Agencies, nonprofits and other institutions can and do change their mission and their websites. Please consider this as you review these resources.

Prenatal Care Resource Guide *Support for Life-Affirming Decisions*

Practical, Time-Sensitive Guidance for Clergy, Pastoral Care Staff

Should you receive a request for advice or support from a woman/couple/family receiving an unexpected or difficult prenatal diagnosis of a disability or lethal condition, *we suggest you read this section completely before talking with them.* The preferred method is to:

1. Minister to the woman/couple/family (includes specific guidance on how to handle the conversation)
2. Understand the unique challenge
3. Connect with Local Service Providers

¹ We note that it is more life-affirming and dignifying to refer to the diagnosis as an “unexpected” prenatal diagnosis. Be prepared to hear referenced other terms, such as “poor prenatal diagnosis,” “adverse prenatal diagnosis” or a diagnosis “incompatible with life.”

1. Minister to the parents - suggestions for pastoral dialogue:²

- ***Spiritual Accompaniment.*** As Pope Francis teaches us, *In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock. (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium [EG], #169 & 171) After receiving an unexpected prenatal diagnosis, many families feel pressured into quickly following the doctor's recommendation. It is important to take time to process the shocking news. Allow for the parents to express their fears and concerns, as well as their grief for the loss of the child they were expecting. Take time to “remove your sandals” and sit attentively at the foot of their cross.*
- ***Listening-*** *One who accompanies others has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries, which no one can fully know from without...Someone good at such accompaniment does not give in to frustrations or fears. He or she invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel. Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow. (EG, #172) Each couple of individual will present themselves to you with varied spiritual, moral and psychological resources. Even with identical diagnoses, no two experiences could ever be the same. Be present to this particular person or couple in the unique spiritual hunger, doubt, question and struggle that they bring with them.*
- ***Rites and Blessings*** In 2012 the USCCB published the “Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb”. Additionally appropriate text can be found in the Book of Blessings, nn.236, 238-239. Mary Kellett, founder of Prenatal Partners for Life, suggests the following: “God hears your pain. God loves you and calls all of his children to embrace the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. He will be with you and never leave your side.”³

² We acknowledge Cubby LaHood and Nancy Mayer-Whittington of Isaiah's Promise for their suggestions for pastoral dialogue.

³ See Project Rachel Ministry Manual 2009 edition, page 84, Appendix A: “The Role of the Priest with Those at Risk of Aborting Due to an Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis” at <http://hopeafterabortion.com/projectrachelmanual/>.

- **Psalm 139-** *“You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb.^e I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth.^{*} Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down,^f my days were shaped, before one came to be. How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them!”*
Assure the parents that God is with them in the midst of this trial. Affirm the love they have shared with their child since learning of the pregnancy. Encourage the parents to be open to child that God has sent them, for whatever time they will have with their child. Grief is a natural response to loss. Allow room for that process, acknowledging their grief and sadness.
- **“You’ve been asked to do the difficult thing”.** (Dan LaHood, St. Joseph’s House) It is important also to acknowledge that it is not an easy road ahead. Supports are available. Many of which are laid out in this document. You may also refer to our videos which can be found by following this link: <http://adw.org/affirming-life/>
- **Person-First language:** We affirm that every human being IS a person *first* ---not a diagnosis; so we will strive to use *people first* language in all our efforts. For example, we would say, a baby with Down syndrome, not a “Down syndrome baby.”

2. Understand the challenges

Prenatal testing can sometimes lead to difficult issues for parents, medical professionals, clergy and pastoral ministers. Parents may be misinformed about authentic, life-affirming options available to them when they receive information that their unborn baby is likely to have a disability or a life-threatening condition.

Below, you will find resources that can help you to navigate these complex and sensitive conversations.



<https://youtu.be/8tq2vhAgyd4>



**Used with permission from the USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities*

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2015/upload/Supporting-Families-Who-Receive-a-Prenatal-Diagnosis-Eng.pdf>

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2015/upload/Supporting-Families-Who-Receive-a-Prenatal-Diagnosis-Span.pdf>

You might also suggest that society’s attitude toward disability has changed over the years. Society at large and our Church in particular views persons with special needs as having gifts to share, gifts that the Church and society needs. The Church has led the way in proclaiming the essential belonging of all baptized persons in the Body of Christ, that all are made in the image and likeness of God. A person with a disability is a person first, and a decision about the worth of their life cannot responsibly be made on just one characteristic discovered through prenatal testing. Of course, you should acknowledge that challenges may be part of the experience of carrying to term and raising a child with a disability. Yet we know from working with parents of a child with a disability that both trials and joys are combined in nearly equal measure with the experience of raising more typical children. We note that not all disabilities involve active “suffering” but do require supports for the person to participate more fully in the life of the Church and society in general.

3. Connect to Local Service Providers:

Time is a critical factor in these cases; encourage them to slow down and get in touch with experienced peer ministry counselors.

Suggested Response:

“We have a network of peer ministry providers that will support you in sorting through all you are facing.”

“As your pastor/priest/deacon/parish staff, I am glad you came to me and I’ll stay in touch with you as you get connected to a member of the peer ministry network.”

If you are meeting the woman/couple/family in person, continue with:
“We can call the peer ministry together while you are here so you don’t have to remember to call later or call them when you are alone.”

You could then call on speaker phone and introduce the woman/couple/family you are helping. If you get voice-mail, you might introduce yourselves over the phone and ask them to leave their name(s), phone numbers and email, and request a return call from the peer ministry. (Emails are effective tools, as parents can connect at a time and place of their choosing.)

If your first contact is with the woman or man is by phone, suggest a conference call with the peer ministry provider. Be sure to get contact phone numbers and ask permission to give it to the peer ministry provider.

Make a plan to follow up within 24 hours in person or on the phone.

Rely on the peer ministers to handle the specifics, but stay in touch as the family may need spiritual or sacramental support (baptism, or possibly burial). **We affirm that parents should prepare a birth plan, and that this plan includes providing basic care for the infant, namely food and water.**

Call the peer ministry provider as well, to make sure contact has been made and whether there are any other concerns, such as a request for an interpreter or translator.

Local Peer Ministries

Isaiah’s Promise is a free, local support service for women and families who wish to carry to term. The founders are two Catholic women who have experienced their own unexpected prenatal diagnosis and decided to carry to term. **Isaiah’s Promise: 301-681-5784;**
www.Isaiahspromise.net

Holy Cross Hospital “Never Alone” Program: 301-754-7672

Education

Resources:

Faithful Church Teaching on Prenatal Diagnosis

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, ¶ 2274

Evangelium Vitae [The Gospel of Life], Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, 1995, ¶ 14.

Donum Vitae [Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and On The Dignity of Procreation – Replies to Certain Questions of the Day], Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1987, § I, 2.

Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERD's), Fifth Edition, USCCB, 2009, Part Four, #50.

National Catholic Bioethics Center, Early Induction of Labor Position Paper:

<http://www.ncpd.org/sites/default/files/NCBC%20STATEMENT%20ON%20EARLY%20INDUCTION%20OF%20LABOR%20March%2011.pdf>

Other National Resources:

Embracing Grace - Affirming Life Ministry - peer ministry of the Diocese of Richmond.

<http://www.cdrcmfl.org/embracing-grace-affirming-life/>

Facebook: Prenatal Diagnosis and Disability: A Catholic Response

NCPD.org (National Catholic Partnership on Disability) Catholic teaching on prenatal diagnosis, training materials and resources: 202-529-2933. www.ncpd.org

NCBCenter.org: National Catholic Bioethics Center can provide clergy resources and parent information: 215-877-2660

Prenatal Partners for Life.org: prenatal diagnosis website and support information

Service

Medical Services

- Tepeyac Family Center: Catholic OB/GYN in Fairfax, VA; perinatal hospice center. 703-273-9440. www.tepeyacfamilycenter.com
- Providence Hospital Center for Life: Services in English & Spanish: 202-269-7074; www.provhosp.org/centerFLife.htm
- Holy Cross Hospital *Never Alone* Program: 301-754-7672.

Pregnancy Resource Centers: Pregnancy centers offer life-affirming options to a woman facing an unintended pregnancy. Most centers offer tangible services such as free pregnancy testing, and material assistance (baby items, and maternity clothing). Additional services may include: support, referrals for housing, food, advocacy, information on fetal development, chastity education, etc. Some centers have converted to medical clinics offering fetal viability sonograms and STD testing. Services are free.

- **Birthright of Montgomery County:** 12247 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring, MD; 301-946-3339. Services in English only
- **Birthright of Prince Frederick:** 301 Steeple Chase Drive, Ste 405, Prince Frederick, MD; 410-257-1402: Services in English Only

- **Bowie Crofton Pregnancy Center:** 4375 Northview Drive, Bowie, MD; 301-262-1330: English Only
- **Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center:** 713 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC; 202-546-1018; www.capitolhillpregnancycenter.org: Services in English Only
- **CareNet of Southern Maryland:** 21562 Thames Avenue, Lexington Park MD; 301-737-4604: www.carenetsomd.org: Services in English Only
- **Catherine Foundation:** 3065 Old Washington Road, Waldorf, MD; 301-870-4912: Services in English Only
- **Centro Tepeyac:** 1315 Apple Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Services in English & Spanish: www.centrotepeyac.org; 301-587-9516
- **Forestville Pregnancy Center:** 3611 Branch Avenue, Marlow Heights, MD; 301-423-0063; www.forestvillepregnancycenter.org : Services in English only
- **Laurel Pregnancy Center:** 415 Main Street, Laurel, MD; 301-776-9997: Services in English only
- **The Northwest Center Pregnancy Center:** 2702 Ontario Rd. NW, (lower level), Washington, DC 20009; 202-483-7008: www.northwestcenter.net : Services in English Only
- **Rockville Pregnancy Center:** 12730 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville, MD; 301-770-4444: Services in English Only
- **Shady Grove Pregnancy Center:** 16220 S. Frederick Ave, Ste 118, Gaithersburg, MD; 301-963-6223: Services in English only

Other Pregnancy Support Programs/Services

- **The Gabriel Network**, shelter, education & support in Maryland and DC areas: 301-262-9011; www.projectgabriel.net : Services in English and Spanish
- **St. Ann’s Infant and Maternity Home** provides comprehensive residential services for infants and young children and for young, single, pregnant and parenting women, as well as an affordable daycare: 4901 Eastern Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20782; 301-559-5500.
- **Catholic Charities, Sanctuaries for Life:** assists vulnerable pregnant women secure affordable prenatal and labor/delivery care and offer referrals to other services available through programs of Catholic Charities and to other social services. Eligibility is determined during a phone assessment: 301-441-1472: Services are English and Spanish.
- **The Northwest Center Maternity Home:** 2702 Ontario Rd. NW, Washington, DC 20009. 202-483-2857.

Holy Cross “Never Alone” Program: Services for families wishing to carry to term (CTT) following unexpected prenatal diagnosis. 301-754-7672.

Kristen Anderson Perinatal Hospice Program: Service for families who wish to continue their pregnancy with a child who is likely to die before or shortly after birth. Contact Tepeyac Family Center, Fairfax, VA at 703-273-9440; http://www.divinemerccare.org/news/issues/kristen_anderson_perinatal_hospice_program/

Providence Hospital Perinatal Program: Service for families who wish to continue their pregnancy with a child who is likely to die before or shortly after birth. 202-269-7000
<http://www.provhosp.org/Perinatal.htm>

Postnatal Care Resource Guide *Supporting the Pregnancy and Beyond*

Pope Benedict XVI shared these thoughts while meeting with young people with disabilities and their families during his apostolic visit to New York in 2008:

“God has blessed you with life, and with differing talents and gifts. Through these you are able to serve him and society in various ways. While some people’s contributions seem great and others’ more modest, the witness value of our efforts is always a sign of hope for everyone.

Sometimes it is challenging to find a reason for what appears only as a difficulty to be overcome or even pain to be endured. Yet our faith helps us to break open the horizon beyond our own selves in order to see life as God does. God’s unconditional love, which bathes every human individual, points to a meaning and purpose for all human life. Through his Cross, Jesus in fact draws us into his saving love (cf. Jn 12:32) and in so doing shows us the way ahead - the way of hope which transfigures us all, so that we too, become bearers of that hope and charity for others.”

The following resources are grouped according to these categories: Education, Service, Community, Worship and Administrative, in alignment with the Archdiocese of Washington’s Indicators of Parish Vitality.

Education

1978 Pastoral Statement of US Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities: theological foundation on access to faith issues, explaining how all baptized persons are part of the body of Christ, with gifts to share and obligations to serve; a forerunner to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

<http://www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/policy/church/bishops/pastoral>

NCPD.org: Catholic teaching, resources from the National Catholic Partnership on Disability

NCBCenter.org: National Catholic Bioethics Center can provide clergy and parent resources: 215-877-2660

For the Love of Angela written by Isaiah's Promise co-founder, Nancy Mayer-Whittington, about her own experience of carrying to term following prenatal diagnosis of a lethal condition.

Available at www.thebooks.org/product/for-the-love-of-angela-by-nancy-mayerwhittington-1039.cfm

"A Life Like Yours" DVD, 2010 Archdiocese of Washington, YouTube site: Story of young Catholic woman with Down syndrome, her achievements and her belief in God

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op2PygEu5Fk> and at www.ncpd.org

Facebook: Archdiocese of Washington Life Issues

Facebook: Faith, Deafness & Disabilities: Archdiocese of Washington

Facebook: Prenatal Diagnosis and Disability: A Catholic Response

"Helping Parents Cope with a Poor Prenatal Diagnosis" by Michelle Martin, Our Sunday Visitor, December 5, 2010: <http://www.osv.com/tabid/7621/itemid/7217/Helping-parents-cope-with-poor-prenatal-diagnosis.aspx>

"Daughter with disabilities took woman down unexpected path" Catholic News Service article in *The Tidings Online*: <http://www.the-tidings.com/2010/073010/disabledside.htm>

"The New Eugenics: Eliminating the "Undesirable" by Prenatal Diagnosis, by Marie Hilliard, JCL, PhD, RN

<http://www.ncpd.org/sites/default/files/Eugenics%20and%20prenatal%20diagnosis.pdf>

"Moral Convictions" by Emily Brennan, *America*, February 22, 2010:

<http://www.americamagazine.org/content/culture.cfm?cultureID=98>

"Parents-Be-Not-Afraid" by Kathryn Jean Lopez, *NRO* January 2010

<http://article.nationalreview.com/422510/parents-be-not-afraid/kathryn-jean-lopez>

"Coming to Terms" by Julia Duin, *Washington Times* May 2009

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/may/10/mothers-choosing-not-abort-children-disabilities/>

Service

Post Abortion Support

Project Rachel Ministry: We know that some parents in the past have not received timely and appropriate support and information, and that they made a decision to schedule an early induction (in reality an abortion).

- a. This is the 90% mentioned earlier as having an abortion after receiving a prenatal diagnosis of disability or lethal condition.
- b. These are the people you are meeting in confession and/or sitting in your pews.
- c. Helpful Hints and Tips on where to begin the dialogue:

- a. Extend your sincere condolences for their loss, and offer support for their healing.
- b. Connect them with Project Rachel Ministry
 - i. Make sure to tell them Project Rachel Ministry has a specific Day of Prayer and Healing for couples who aborted due to a prenatal diagnosis.
 - ii. They may associate Project Rachel Ministry as being only for women who had an abortion at a clinic and their situation was “different.”
- c. Read or review any portion of the manual: “Project Rachel Ministry: A Post-Abortion Resource Manual for Priests and Project Rachel Leaders” 2009 Edition compiled by the USCCB, at <http://hopeafterabortion.com/projectrachelmanual/>
- d. Stay connected with them as they heal from this pain
 - i. Project Rachel Ministry is available to help you as you minister to those experiencing this pain.
 - ii. Project Rachel Ministry can refer the woman our couple to another priest, who works more regularly with post-abortion issues.
 - iii. The family may request you offer a Mass for their child, after doing some one-on-one work in spiritual direction, professional counseling and/or a Day of Prayer and Healing.

D. Project Rachel Ministry serves mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, as well as abortion providers. There are referrals for one-on-one care with a priest or deacon for spiritual healing and with a professional counselor for emotional and psychological healing. There are also group healing events: Day Retreats, Mornings of Reflection and Support Groups. There are specific Days of Prayer and Healing for parents who had a difficult prenatal diagnosis and aborted their child. All of these services are available in English by contacting Julia Shelava at ProjectRachel@adw.org and in Spanish by contacting Luz Menjivar at ProyetoRaquel@adw.org or by calling the bi-lingual helpline at 301-853-4565.

National Project Rachel Ministry Website: <http://www.HopeAfterAbortion.org>

Lumina: Hope and Healing post abortion; experience with prenatal diagnosis post abortion support; has days of reflection, retreats for mothers, fathers, grandparents and siblings.
www.postabortionhelp.org Helpline: 1-888-456-HOPE

Special Needs Child Care

St. Joseph’s House provides respite and day care for multiply disabled children and teens, located in Silver Spring, MD. www.saintjosephshouse.net Generally, St. Joseph’s House is full and accepts new children infrequently. They may, however, be able to refer you to other resources. 301-681-5784.

Kennedy Institute Child Development Center (CDC) supports children as young as six-weeks-old to three-years-old who are with and without developmental delays, and are taught in an inclusive day care

and early intervention setting. The CDC provides Individual Family Service Plans (ISFPs), nursing services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, developmental assessments, and pediatric/physician assessments. <http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/find/services/index.php?id=113>
202-281-2705 or 202-281-2705.

Kennedy Institute Pre-K Program supports children ages three and four with and without developmental delays in an inclusive day care setting. Children receive early childhood education services as well as access to all therapies and services listed under the CDC, above. Must be residents of the District of Columbia. Early morning and early evening care also available and is available to non-DC residents. <http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/find/services/index.php?id=113>
202-281-2705.

Other Direct Services:

HSC Pediatric Center: Washington, DC. Provides rehabilitative and transitional care for infants and children, 202-832-4400; www.hscpediatriccenter.org

Children's Hospital Neurodevelopmental Clinic

The Neurodevelopmental Clinic of CHMC covers developmental and behavioral concerns that families have from birth to 21 years of age. The clinic includes comprehensive neurodevelopmental evaluations of children who might have developmental delays including suspected mental retardation or autism spectrum disorder. In addition the clinic evaluates children with conditions or suspected conditions such as, ADHD, learning disabilities, speech and language delay, and behavior problems. A focus of the program is on early identification of developmental delays in children birth to five in order to provide early intervention.

[http://www.childrensnational.org/DepartmentsAndPrograms/Default.aspx?Type=Program&Id=198&Name=Neurodevelopmental Clinic&DeptId=&DeptName=](http://www.childrensnational.org/DepartmentsAndPrograms/Default.aspx?Type=Program&Id=198&Name=Neurodevelopmental%20Clinic&DeptId=&DeptName=)

301-838-8787 or 571-226-8380.

Community

Faith-Based Support Groups for Parents: Two support groups for parents of children with disabilities are available to parents who speak Spanish. Other support groups are being formed. Contact the Department of Special Needs Ministries at 301-459-7464.

Potomac Community Resources, Inc. provides social, therapeutic and recreational programs for teens and adults with developmental differences, at locations in Montgomery County and Washington, DC. Contact at: 301-365-0561 or www.pcr-inc.org

Special Olympics, the world's largest sports organization, provides sports opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics DC: <http://www.specialolympicsdc.org/>

Special Olympics Maryland: <http://www.somd.org/>

Best Buddies provides opportunities for one-to-one friendship, integrated employment and leadership development.

Best Buddies Maryland:

<http://www.bestbuddiesmaryland.org/site/c.eoJLIWOCirH/b.1380133/k.BD5E/Home.htm>

Caring Bridge is a free social network tool for parents who have children with medical challenges:

www.caringbridge.org

Sibling support: Sib shops provide support to brothers and sisters of persons who have special health care needs, have developmental disabilities or have a mental health challenge.

<http://www.siblingsupport.org/> Local trainings and events.

Catholic Professional Counselors: www.catholictherapists.com

Adoption Services

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington

(serving Prince George's County, MD and Montgomery County, MD)

Pregnancy and Adoption Services

924 G St., NW, Washington, DC 20001

Phone: 202-772-4300

Fax: 202-772-4408

Bethany Christian Services: Local branch of one of the largest Christian adoption agencies.

2130 Priest Bridge Dr. Ste 9, Crofton, MD 21114-2457

Phone: 410-721-2835

CHASK-Christian Adoption and Special needs Kids. CHASK provides family to family support helping families raise their child with special needs. Loving homes are waiting to adopt these special babies if the birth moms and dads are not able to parent. www.chask.org

Housing Support for adults with disabilities

Bethlehem House provides local housing for adults with developmental disabilities in a Catholic setting. Contact Dolores Wilson, Director at bhmdwilson@hotmail.com or 202-526-3222.

Rosaria Communities, Inc. is a non-profit subsidiary of the Archdiocese of Washington that operates housing services for adults with developmental disabilities. Their first home was opened in 2009 at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Gaithersburg, MD. More parish-based Rosaria Homes are in planning. Contact: Thomas Welch, President, Rosaria Communities, Inc. at 15400 Calhoun Drive, Suite 125, Rockville, MD 20855.

Many other groups provide housing, including:

- Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute of Catholic Charities: 202-281-2705
- L'Arche Greater Washington, DC: www.larchewashingtondc.org
- Jubilee Association of Maryland: www.jubileemd.org
- Jewish Foundation for Group Homes: www.jfgh.org

Worship

We welcome all persons to our faith, and recognize that in baptism that “all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God, and have the same divine calling.” (*Sacramental Guidelines*, General Principals, #1.) The *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* were developed in 1995 by the US Catholic Bishops to implement the 1978 *Pastoral Statement*. The *Guidelines* explain how persons with disabilities may receive the sacraments:

<http://www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/policy/church/bishops/sacraments>

Access to faith is essential, and expected. “...all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to people with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together.” *Pastoral Statement*, paragraph 23

The Archdiocese of Washington’s Department of Special Needs Ministries provides interpreted Masses throughout the region; sacramental preparation and lifelong faith formation for persons who are Deaf and persons with disabilities, and opportunities for worship at the annual White Mass in October and at other regional liturgies.

A number of parishes in the Archdiocese have dedicated ministries to persons who are Deaf and persons with Disabilities. For more information, contact Mary O’Meara, Executive Director of the Department of Special Needs Ministries, at 301-459-4764 or at omearam@adw.org.

Faith and Light is an international prayer community with over 1600 prayer groups in 81 countries made up of people with developmental disabilities, their parents and friends. Several local groups meet monthly for worship as a community, and in small groups for friendship during the month. Contact the local Faith and Light leader, Dolores Wilson, 1401 Lawrence St. NE, Washington, DC 202-526-3222; E-mail: bhmdwilson@hotmail.com.

Administrative

The Archdiocese of Washington’s Department of Special Needs Ministries provides resources, technical guidance and specialized expertise for priests, parishes and individuals, on a range of issues from spiritual supports to social service issues. For more information, contact Mary O’Meara, Executive Director of the Department of Special Needs Ministries, at 301-459-4764 or at omearam@adw.org