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 continuing emerging 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: 301-853-4500
Department of Special Needs Ministries: 301-853-4560
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.\footnote{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. Minister to the parents:

\footnote{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.”}
Support for families can begin with these key concepts listed below.

- **Listen carefully** and fully.
- **Help them reconnect** with the baby inside them; ask them if they have thought of a name for the child; use the baby’s name or gender if known.
- **Encourage them to slow down**; take time to be fully informed
- **Let them know they are not alone; that there are experienced support counselors and resources available to them.** See “Peer Ministries” listed in this document.
- **Pray and bless the child by name in the womb.** Remind the woman/couple/family that their child is alive right now and safe within the womb; help them honor this time they have been given to love, hold and cherish their child; provide a blessing to the child & family.
- **Create a communication strategy.** Consider setting up a way for the woman/couple/family to be in contact with you. Remember that establishing safe and appropriate boundaries is a prudent measure as you provide this ministry.
- **Be willing to meet with individual or families over a period of time.** This support cannot be provided in just one session.

**Additional suggestions for pastoral dialogue:**

- **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

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

- **Psalm 139**  “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. 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; the 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: [https://adw.org/living-the-faith/marriage-family/family/affirming-life/](https://adw.org/living-the-faith/marriage-family/family/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.”

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See our videos for examples of conversations between parents and clergy:

https://adw.org/living-the-faith/marriage-family/family/affirming-life/
2. Understand the challenges

As you provide pastoral care to these parents, reflect on the circumstances they have just encountered. During what was to be a routine office visit, a normal pregnancy and plans for a lifetime have been turned upside down---fear and despair have replaced hope and promise. Though their child is still alive inside the womb, the diagnosis becomes all-consuming and highly technical.

When this happens, parents report that the medical focus then shifts away from the baby for whom there may be no treatment or cure. Instead, a purely clinical approach can take over, in which the pregnancy itself is viewed as the condition requiring intervention. These parents come to you in a confused state of grief, shock and ambiguity; suddenly their child has been deemed disposable, even “incompatible with life,” and their own roles as parents called into question. Recognize that in this terrible moment, you may be one of only a few with whom they have chosen to share the details of this circumstance. Make time to meet face-to-face, if possible, and encourage both parents to attend.

You might 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 www.isaiahspromise.net

Holy Cross Hospital Never Alone Perinatal Palliative Care Program: 301-754-7619


Education

Resources:
Faithful Church Teaching on Prenatal Diagnosis

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, ¶ 2274


**Other National Resources:**


**Facebook page:** Prenatal Diagnosis and Disability: A Catholic Response

**National Catholic Partnership on Disability** - Catholic teaching on prenatal diagnosis, training materials and resources: 202-529-2933 or [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org)

**National Catholic Bioethics Center** can provide clergy resources and parent information: [https://www.ncbcenter.org](https://www.ncbcenter.org) or 215-877-2660

**Prenatal Partners for Life**-prenatal diagnosis website and support information: [http://prenatalpartnersforlife.org](http://prenatalpartnersforlife.org)

**Service**

**Medical Services**

- Tepeyac OB/GYN: Catholic OB/GYN in Fairfax, VA; perinatal hospice center. 703-273-9440. [https://tepeyacobgyn.com](https://tepeyacobgyn.com)

- Holy Cross Hospital *Never Alone* Program: 301-754-7619.

**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 Prince Frederick**: 301 Steeple Chase Drive, Ste 405, Prince Frederick, MD; 410-257-1402. Services in English Only [http://www.birthrightpf.com](http://www.birthrightpf.com)

- **Bowie Crofton Pregnancy Center**: 4341 Northview Drive, Bowie, MD English Only [http://www.pregnancyclinic.org](http://www.pregnancyclinic.org)

- **Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center**: 713 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC; 202-546-1018; [www.capitolhillpregnancycenter.org](http://www.capitolhillpregnancycenter.org): Services in English Only

- **CareNet of Southern Maryland**: 21562 Thames Avenue, Lexington Park MD; 301-737-4604: [www.carenetsomd.org](http://www.carenetsomd.org): Services in English Only

- **Catherine Foundation**: 3065 Old Washington Road, Waldorf, MD; 301-932-8811 Services in English Only [http://catherinefoundation.org](http://catherinefoundation.org)

- **Centro Tepeyac**: 12247 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring MD Services in English & Spanish: [www.centrotepeyac.org](http://www.centrotepeyac.org); 301-946-1022

- **Forestville Pregnancy Center**: 3611 Branch Avenue, Suite 102, Temple Hills MD; 301-423-0063; [www.forestvillepregnancycenter.org](http://www.forestvillepregnancycenter.org): Services in English only

- **Laurel Pregnancy Center**: 415 Main Street, Laurel, MD; 301-776-9996: Services in English only [http://laurelpregnancycenter.org](http://laurelpregnancycenter.org)

- **The Northwest Center Pregnancy Center**: 2702 Ontario Rd. NW, (lower level), Washington, DC 20009; 202-483-7008 Services in English or Spanish [http://www.pregnancyhelpdc.org](http://www.pregnancyhelpdc.org)

- **Rockville Women’s Center**: 12530 Parklawn Drive, Suite 170 Rockville MD 20852; 301-770-4444: Services in English Only [https://rockvillewomenscenter.com](https://rockvillewomenscenter.com)

- **Shady Grove Pregnancy Center**: 16220 S. Frederick Ave, Ste 118, Gaithersburg, MD; 240-779-1585: Services in English only [https://www.pregnancy-options.org/index.shtml](https://www.pregnancy-options.org/index.shtml)

**Other Pregnancy Support Programs/Services**
• **The Gabriel Network**, shelter, education & support in Maryland and DC areas: 301-637-3223; [https://www.gabrielnetwork.org/home](https://www.gabrielnetwork.org/home) 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. [https://www.stanns.org](https://www.stanns.org)

• **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. [https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/sfl/](https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/sfl/)


**Holy Cross “Never Alone” Program**: Services for families wishing to carry to term (CTT) following unexpected prenatal diagnosis. 301-754-7619.

**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 OB/GYN at 703-273-9440; [https://tepeyacobgyn.com/services/perinatal-hospice-care/](https://tepeyacobgyn.com/services/perinatal-hospice-care/)
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.

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**Education**


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

[https://www.ncbcenter.org](https://www.ncbcenter.org) : National Catholic Bioethics Center can provide clergy and parent resources: 215-877-2660

“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: Archdiocese of Washington Special Needs Ministries

Facebook: Prenatal Diagnosis and Disability: A Catholic Response

“Coming to Terms” by Julia Duin, Washington Times May 2009

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.”
   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.
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 French at ProjectRachel@adw.org and in Spanish by contacting Maria Tirado at ProyectoRaquel@adw.org or by calling the bi-lingual helpline at 301-982-2008.

**National Project Rachel Ministry Website:**  [http://www.HopeAfterAbortion.org](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](http://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.  [http://www.saintjosephshouse.net/home.html](http://www.saintjosephshouse.net/home.html)  707-239-6149

**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.  [https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/childdevelopment/](https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/childdevelopment/)  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.  [https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/childdevelopment/](https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/childdevelopment/)  202-281-2705.

**Other Direct Services:**

**HSC Pediatric Center:** Washington, DC. Provides rehabilitative and transitional care for infants and children, 202-832-4400; [https://hschealth.org](https://hschealth.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.
https://childrensnational.org/departments/neurodevelopmental-pediatrics
202-476-2327

Community

Community Resource Programs

Potomac Community Resources, Inc. provides social, therapeutic and recreational programs for teens and adults with developmental differences, at locations in Montgomery County. Contact at: 301-365-0561 or www.pcr-inc.org
Upcounty Community Resources
Variety of social, recreational, & job training programs for older teens and adults with developmental disabilities in the upper Montgomery County area.
https://www.ucresources.org or 240-614-0444
Southern Maryland Community Resources
Provides social, therapeutic and recreational programs for older teens and adults with developmental differences at locations in St. Mary’s and Calvert counties.
https://somdcr.org or 301-997-8143
Comunidad de Recursos Hispanos (Hispanic Community Resources)
Recreational and workshops for children, youth, and adults living with disabilities from Spanish speaking households.
Facebook page: Comunidad Recursos Hispanos or 240 -706-0093 (English or Spanish)
Prince George’s Community Resources
Programs and life skills training opportunities for older teens and adults living with developmental differences in Prince George’s County.
https://pgcr.org or 301-442-3708

Special Olympics, the world’s largest sports organization, provides sports opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities.
Special Olympics DC: https://specialolympicsdc.org
Special Olympics Maryland: https://www.somd.org
**Best Buddies** provides opportunities for one-to-one friendship, integrated employment and leadership development.

**Best Buddies Maryland:** [https://www.bestbuddies.org/maryland/](https://www.bestbuddies.org/maryland/)

**Caring Bridge** is a free social network tool for parents who have children with medical challenges: [www.caringbridge.org](http://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. [https://www.siblingsupport.org/about-sibshops](https://www.siblingsupport.org/about-sibshops) Local trainings and events.

**Catholic Professional Counselors:** [https://www.catholictherapists.com](https://www.catholictherapists.com)

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**Adoption Services**

**Bethany Christian Services:** Local branch of one of the largest Christian adoption agencies.  
2142 Priest Bridge Court, Suite 1, Crofton MD 21114  
Phone: 410-721-2835  
[https://bethany.org/locations/us/maryland/crofton](https://bethany.org/locations/us/maryland/crofton)

**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. [https://www.chask.org](https://www.chask.org)

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**Housing Support** for adults with disabilities

**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.  
[http://www_rosariacomunities.org](http://www_rosariacomunities.org)

Many other groups provide housing for adults. Contact the organizations regarding funding requirements.

- L’Arche Greater Washington, DC: [https://larche-gwdc.org](https://larche-gwdc.org)
- Jubilee Association of Maryland: [www.jubileemd.org](http://www.jubileemd.org)
- Jewish Foundation for Group Homes: [www.jfgh.org](http://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. These Guidelines were updated in 2017. The Guidelines explain how persons with disabilities may receive the sacraments: http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities.cfm

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 301-853-4560 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, bhmdwilson@gmail.com or 202-957-1090

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 301-853-4560 or at omearam@adw.org