

Best Practices

- Start small, do it well, expand
- Consider "what is the parish doing well? What are areas that can be improved upon? What are next practical steps?"
- Schedule meetings same time each month and promote that anyone can attend anytime
- Keep main portion of meeting to one hour, start/end on time
- Consistent format of meetings:
 - opening prayer
 - discuss current tasks/projects
 - new business
 - next steps
 - sharing time (building relationships and providing support)
 - Closing prayer•
- When the agenda is full, close meeting on time and then have shared time for anyone able to stay
- Send out minutes to all contacts
- Honor each person's commitment -some will not formally attend meetings but can influence others by sharing work of group
- Support individual's initiatives
 - Ex. One mother's desire for her 8th grade son to have a meaningful confirmation led to Bishop Rhoades celebrating a low-sensory bi-lingual confirmation mass for 10 teens from parishes across the diocese
- Form subcommittees
- Invite individuals from other parishes to participate and spread word

Forming a parish "Belonging" Ministry

Supporting children & adults
with disabilities
and their families
in your faith community



www.diocesefwsb.org/belonging

Where to begin?

Whether you are one person or part of a group wanting to make a difference in your parish ...

Ask your pastor:

- for a meeting to discuss intentions
- permission to proceed

On your own?

- Contact your parish office and ask the secretary (and other staff) if they know of individuals/families that might be interested
- If they are unable to give out their contact info, ask if they would be willing to contact the individual(s) and give your name/contact info
- Ask to speak for a few moments at all masses one weekend
- Contact diocesan staff in Belonging

Building a Core Team

- Personally invite people
- Encourage individuals you ask to extend invitation to others
- Collect contact information
- Set an agenda so there is structure to each meeting
- Set meeting date, time (1 hour) location (consider accessibility needs) and send agenda
- Designate one person who will serve as the contact
- Designate a person who will take notes

Initial Meeting

Agenda

- Opening Prayer/Welcome
- Purpose (organizer shares reason for creating this ministry)
- Introductions (ask people to share reason for attending)
- Discussion of mission, goals, group name (consider parish name/logo with Belonging logo for continuity)
- Ask for volunteers to assist you with taking notes, respond to calls/emails sending agenda and minutes from meetings
- Next Steps
- Closing Prayer
- Date and location of the next meeting

Between Meetings

- Send out meeting notes to all contacts
- Encourage contacts to forward meeting notes to others and invite them to the next meeting
- Welcome requests for new business items to be added on next agenda

Ongoing Promotion

- add info under "ministries" on parish website
- weekly bulletin
- parish social media
- personal social media
- Posters

Inviting Parish Community into Conversation

Two suggested formats: "Mass & Mingle" or "Meet & Greet"

Ask your pastor to attend and schedule around what works for him.

"Mass & Mingle"

- Pastor celebrates mass (regularly scheduled weekday/evening)
- Addresses need of creating awareness and providing support for individuals with disabilities in his welcome, homily, petition
- Invites all to attend the "mingle" part of the event

or

"Meet & Greet" (If celebrating mass is not an option)

Agenda

- Pastor offers the opening prayer, welcome, and pledges his support for children & adults with disabilities
- Ministry leader shares purpose for gathering
- Introduction of core team and reason for being involved
- Invite all to share their positive experiences of individuals, programs, etc., that have impacted them or a loved one with a disability
- Ask for input on areas of concern that can be addressed
- Have a follow-up meeting already scheduled to invite anyone interested to work on next steps