SOUTH CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Disabilities Ministries Webpage
“Promoting equal access, full inclusion and full participation”

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“Including all...omitting none”

Welcome to Disabilities Ministries’ Webpage.

Thank you for stopping in. We hope you will visit us often for information we trust will be a blessing to you. We are delighted to have your interest. We hope you will send your family, friends, and associates to visit as well. Together, we can make a difference in social justice for people with disabilities.

Disabilities Ministries is committed to equal access, full inclusion and full participation for people with disabilities.

Our mission is to educate and sensitize church members to the challenges faced by people with disabilities, and to remove attitudinal barriers.

We promote equality for people with disabilities in our churches. We advocate for them to have the same rights and privileges as any other member.

This is accomplished through Disabilities Awareness Sabbaths and disabilities education. These two variables lead to disability sensitivity.

We seek to dispel myths about disabilities and replace it with truths. The myth is, a person’s disability is caused by sin. The truth is, the works of God is manifested through people with disabilities (John 9: 1-3). They are equal—not inferior; their abilities by far, out-number their disabilities; they deserve respect and not pity; they cherish their independence and do not desire unsolicited assistance as though they were helpless; they deserve social inclusion without being stared at or overlooked; they have the right to be acknowledged for their humanity, and they have a right to the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Since there is a thin line between righteous and unrighteousness in our Christian beliefs, the ministry educate to prevent sins of omission and commission committed subconsciously in our relationship with people with disabilities. This is important to make our hearts, minds, and
actions congruent with the will of God; and to follow His example. We want to see people with disabilities made perfect in the earth made new, and we want many of them to be individuals we have ministered to in this life.

**DISABILITIES AWARENESS SABBATHS:**

South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists promote an Annual Disabilities Awareness Sabbath in each church or church district. This is necessary to educate, sensitize, and encourage church members to love their neighbors as themselves, which is the second most important commandment that we obey to glorify God. It leads Christians to grow closer to people with disabilities as they grow closer to Christ. *Disabilities test of our character; and, it manifests the condition of our hearts.*

Disabilities education is a part of everything that is done on Disabilities Awareness Sabbaths. From early-morning prayer sessions, to Sabbath school, to morning worship, to evening programs and to vespers, the emphasis is on disabilities education for awareness.

**DISABILITIES WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS:**

Disabilities Ministries Department of South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has at least two major workshops/seminars, yearly. One is held at camp meeting and another at Officers’ Training Convention. Disabilities educational workshops are given at churches within the conference’s territory.
Disabilities education is also accomplished through prayers for people with disabilities, discussions about disability needs--how to meet them, short disabilities stories, songs of hope, intentionality as it relates to care and love of people with disabilities, sermons addressing disabilities issues, the suffering nature of disabilities, and disabilities awareness for children during children chapel and youth hours. A full day of disabilities emphasis makes for better Christians worthy of God’s love, and greater blessings for those who support it.

Pastors facilitate disabilities education and disabilities sensitivity when they preach about disabilities in the gospel. When disabilities coordinators have the opportunity to spotlight the ministry, it advances the ministry; and church members are blessed. Pastors encourages support of Disabilities Coordinators and spotlights of the ministry as they walk in Jesus’ footsteps.

**PLANNING A DISABILITIES AWARENESSS DAY OF EDUCATION:**

**First,** the Disabilities Ministries Coordinator requests a date for a Disabilities Awareness Sabbath from the pastor and church board. This date is then placed on the church calendar.

The coordinator meets with the disabilities ministries team to plan a program. The team is comprised of Friends of People with Disabilities, the safety officer, head deacon, and the coordinator who chairs the meeting. He or she may want to select a program committee to select program participants.

The Sabbath school superintendent on this day can be the disabilities coordinator or his or her designee. The teachers can be disabilities coordinators from other churches for collaboration and support.
Ask the pastor if he would bring a disabilities awareness sermon or ask him/her if you may have permission to suggest another speaker.

Have members in the church with disabilities to be program participants. Encourage and allow them to use their spiritual gifts in service for God. This raises awareness and allows people without disabilities to focus on a person’s “ability” rather than a person’s “disability”. Have the person who does children’s chapel to engage the children in disability education or tell them a story about a person or persons with a disability.

Search the world-wide-web for stories about people with disabilities that are educational, inspiring, and uplifting. Show a video that has potential for education and that builds capacity for sensitivity.

Call the conference disabilities director for assistance, if needed; and for supplies, such as brochures that are appropriate for an awareness Sabbath. Call (615) 226-6500 or (205) 482-5496. If you do not reach the Director, please leave a message and your telephone number, as your call is important to us.

For evening service, you may want to bring in a speaker with expertise in disability education from your community or a community agency. You may want to have a panel of experts within the church or outside of the church to answer questions about disabilities. The panel can be comprised of people with disabilities, even the ones in your church. Community experts can suggest resources to address unmet needs of people with disabilities and their caregivers. Always, use people with disabilities whenever possible.

Throughout the year, disseminate literature or brochures that can be downloaded from a website for continuing education and disabilities awareness. Ask the conference director of disabilities ministries for literature and brochures.
There are calendar months dedicated to disability groups. During these months, the coordinator should put information in the church bulletin to raise awareness, to educate, and to sensitize church members.

**Disabilities Planning Resources:**
- Your pastor and your church board
- Your conference disabilities ministries director
- Members with disabilities in your church
- Disabilities testimonies and short stories
- Websites on disabilities
- Professionals in your church and your communities

**Disabilities talent shows**
**Disabilities workshops**
**Disabilities panels**
**Songs, solos about love & faith**
**Disabilities video**
**Disabilities sermons and speeches**

**DO’S AND DON’TS WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**

**Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Do acknowledge the presence of a person with disabilities with respect.
Do treat them as you want to be treated.
Remember that people with disabilities are made in God’s image and that they are highly favored by Him.

Do not speak in a condescending way to people with disabilities.
Do not say a person is “deaf & dumb”. Just say he or she is “Deaf”.
Do not say a person is retarded. Say he or she has a *cognitive disability*.
Do not say a person is handicapped. Say the person has a disability. Always let the word person come before disability; because the person is more important than the disability.

**Esteem others higher than yourself.**

**WHAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DO NOT LIKE:**

- They do not like people starring at them.
- They do not like being ignored.
- They do not like people violating their space.
- They do not like probing questions about their disability.
- They do not like it being said that the disability was caused by sin.
- They do not like the assumption that they need help without first asking.
- They do not like public humiliation due to lack of access.
- They do not like being excluded especially in church.

_Equal access and full inclusion are very important to the social and spiritual wellbeing of everyone; particularly, those with a disability. South Central Conference has special seating allocated during large convocations for individuals with visual and hearing impairments._
WHAT DO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WANT?

They want to be acknowledged as equals in humanity.  
They want equal rights in worship, church activities, and church opportunities.  
They want equal access to church entrances and parking spaces.  
They want to be remembered in the prayers of church leaders.  
They want respect and affirmation of their worthiness.  
They want God to save them, and they want to come to a church where people love them.  
They want unconditional acceptance and inclusion.

WHAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW:

They did not choose to be disabled.  
They did not want to be disabled.  
They accept their disabilities and have found contentment in God’s love.  
They want you to be content. They do not want you to be uncomfortable in their presence.  
They are vessels through which God’s works are manifested in His power and His glory.  
Disabilities are not contagious.  
A person will not become disabled by fellowshipping with others who are.  
You do not prevent disabilities from happening to you by marginalizing people who are disabled.  
Disabilities is not a personal choice, but God uses the person to glory to Him.

God’s children manifesting His works, power, and glory
DISABILITIES MINISTRIES' INITIATIVES:

1. SCC - Friends of People With Disabilities:

Friends of People with Disabilities is a coalition comprised of church member in each church working synergistically with the Disabilities Ministries’ Coordinator and the Pastor to meet the needs of church members who have a disability.

Friends of people with disabilities make home visits to give love to someone in need of a word from God. They give Bible studies to people with disabilities who do not make it to church due to a number of reasons. A friend has the fruit of the Spirit and shares it with a person who is disabled. A friend is a peacemaker, a servant of the Lord, and one who will do anything within his/her power to help a person with a disability feel loved and included. They send greeting cards, take gifts to show love, and make telephone calls to them.

Union Springs SDA Church, Union Springs, Alabama
Where everyone is included and where everyone belongs and serves
A Disability-friendly Church
Elder Micah Mickens, Pastor
2. SCC - A Disabilities Coordinator In Each Church:

A Disabilities Ministries’ Coordinator in each church requires the support and cooperation of the pastoral team to advocate for social justice and disabilities rights in South Central Conference.

Disabilities Ministries’ Coordinators assist pastors in caring for the needs of people with disabilities. This is accomplished, best, in churches with a vibrant ministry supported with a disabilities ministries’ budget. **Funds sacrificed and allocated for disabilities ministries will never be missed, because God blesses and multiplies what is left in the treasury or in one’s pocket.** The coordinator and friend of people with disabilities take most of the responsibility of meeting the needs of people with disabilities in our church congregations. This affords the pastor more time to address spiritual and administrative matters of the church.

![A few of South Central Conference’s Disabilities Ministries Coordinators](image)

Top Row: Nettie Henderson, Jacqueline Richards, Carlena Barker, Brenda Vacter, Rachel Jones, Myrtise Spraggins, Gloria Traylor, Barbara Barnes, Rachel Jones, Juanita Rogers (center) and Pastor Mickens

SCC Disabilities’ Coordinators are trained to be effective in their work with people with disabilities. A Disabilities Ministries Coordinator’s Manual was developed by the Departmental Director to alleviate any fears a person might have about the ministry, and to help them to be prepared to do the work.

![Church members in Mississippi holding their Disabilities Coordinators’ Manual](image)

The Director of Disabilities Ministries respectfully request all 2015 elected Disabilities Ministries Coordinator to call the office at (615) 226-6500 and give their name, telephone numbers and email addresses to Ms. Lizzette Churchwell, secretary for Disabilities Ministries.
Your email address is needed to defray cost of mailing information to you. It expedites communication; and you will be notified regarding information of importance via email.

Friends of People with Disabilities and Elders who support Disabilities Coordinators

Disabilities Coordinators and Friends of People with Disabilities

Disabilities Coordinators at seminar.

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$Seniors and Disability Fitness$

First SDA Church, Huntsville, AL
Brenda Vactor, Disabilities Ministries’ Coordinator

First SDA Church, Huntsville, AL
Addressing the physical, educational and social needs of people with disabilities
3. SCC - Disabilities Escort Services:

South Central Conference Disabilities Escort Services is one that has received rave reviews. Individuals using the services have been most appreciative for it.

The service is rendered by dedicated safety officers, disabilities ministries’ coordinators, friends of people with disabilities, pathfinders, deacons, and others who desire to show love to people with limited mobility. Escorts give individuals with decreased endurance a ride in wheelchairs, golf-carts, disabilities accessible buses, and cars.

The services are free and cannot be paid for with money or gifts. Only prayers for the ministry are acceptable.

Disabilities Escorts render their services at large convocations where worship and workshops are widely scattered requiring long distance walking; and at camp meetings and camp grounds.

If you would like to become a Disabilities Escort, please let the Disabilities Ministries Coordinator in your church know or call your conference Disabilities Director at (615) 226-6500 and leave your name and telephone number. The ministry’s aim is for disabilities escorts to be present and active in each church.

Disabilities Escorts are trained in safety techniques and risk management which includes patience and understanding. Escorts are required to be in uniform when on duty. Please see your conference director for the uniform, which is a safety vest identifying you as a disabilities escort. Please do not hesitate to give service to a person with a disability, when you are not in uniform, if it is needed. A Disabilities Escort is covered with the righteousness of Jesus’ blood. The service lets people know that South Central Conference is a disabilities friendly conference.
4. SCC - Disabilities Parking Space Identification and Revitalization At All South Central Conference’s Properties: Churches and Schools.

South Central Conference’s properties are moving in the direction of 100% disability accessibility. The ministry encourages heartfelt welcome for people with disabilities; and disability parking is evidence that the church or school is a disabilities-friendly and disabilities accessible facility.

Parking lot spaces for people with disabilities clearly identified with proper signage and fresh paint is encouraged by the ministry. The rule of provision is one disability parking space for every 50 church members or students.

Deacons and school board members are encouraged to revitalize faded disability parking spaces. This service does not cost very much. It shows love and respect to people with disabilities, good stewardship of God’s properties, and brings greater spiritual rewards for workers and facilities beyond compare.

Ephesus SDA Church in Birmingham, AL recently had a disabilities parking lot constructed. It is beautiful and very inviting to people with disabilities. May God bless the church for providing equal accessibility for people with special needs.
5. SCC - Annual Disabilities Inclusion Celebration:

An Annual Disabilities Inclusion Celebration is held each year at Camp Meeting in South Central Conference. During this time, people with disabilities are recognized for their spiritual gifts and faithfulness in the use of their talents for Jesus; and a Disabilities Coordinator is honored for his or her commitment to disabilities ministries. He or she is recognized and celebrated with the prestigious George & Flore Hamilton Disability Inclusion Leadership Award. The celebration is graced with the presence of our President, Dana Edmond. He is a strong supporter of disabilities ministries. He welcomes our special guest speakers and people with disabilities to the celebration. Others awards are given in several categories, such as, Disability Friendly Church Award, Disabilities Friendly Pastor Award, Disability Children or Youth Award, etc.

George and Flore Hamilton Disabilities Leadership Award was established to honor the services they provided to SCC. It inspires disabilities ministries coordinators to exhibit exceptional leadership, as they did in their ministry to people with disabilities.

The Inclusion Celebration is one of the ways South Central Conference gives back to people with disabilities and holds them in high esteem as Christ did. Everyone belongs, and we practice—“including all and omitting none”.

A guest speaker well versed in disabilities issues, struggles and needs, such as equal access, inclusion, and disability rights is invited each year. Our 2012 speaker was Dr. Charlotte Thoms, NAD Disabilities Ministries’ Coordinator. Our 2013 speaker was James R. Mason, Committee Chairman of Disabilities Consumer Advisory Council, Huntsville, AL. The 2014 speaker was Dr. Preston Scaber. Lunch is served, gifts are presented, and people with disabilities have good fellowship with their peers and friends of people with disabilities.
6. SCC - Disaster Preparedness For People With Disabilities:

Disaster preparedness is taught to South Central Conference (SCC) members with a disability. SCC’s Disabilities Director, in partnership and cooperation with SCC’s Adventist Community Services and Disaster Response Directors, is intentional about preparedness for people with special needs.

The Director of Disabilities Ministries gives Disaster Starter-kits to individuals with disabilities to encourage them to be intentional about preparing for disasters. The kits are backpacks with disaster supplies in them given as compliment of South Central Conference.

People with disabilities are asked to fill out a short Survey Form to help the director of disabilities ministries to have an idea of the number of people with a disability in SCC’s churches. This information also helps disabilities coordinators to plan educational and supportive programming that meet their needs.

There are people in our congregations who are challenged with cognitive issues, depression, mental health issues, caregiving issues, mobility problems, access issues, and attitudinal issues. Sometimes, they feel like they are not included. When people with these problems are known to the disability coordinator, who has a budget and is given an opportunity to regularly address these disabilities issues from the front of the church, healing begins with happiness and joy restored. One pastor said, “If it is God’s will, it is God’s bill”. Releasing funds for disabilities ministries yield more funds exponentially from God. One cannot beat God’s giving. Trust and obey. There is no other way.
7. SCC - Disabilities Prayer-line:
People with disabilities come together for prayer each Sunday, at 7:00 P.M. (Central Standard Time) to have a little talk with Jesus. We celebrate the seventh day of the week with praise and worship on the Sabbath. On the first day of the week, we boldly come before Jesus to give thanks, and to petition the throne of God for blessings that we need. We ask for His love and protection to keep us through another week.

We pray for a closer walk with Jesus, health and temperance, our children, and other family members, all people with a disability, our conference leaders, our churches, the sick, and those who are bereaved.

We pray fervent prayers from our hearts, and we pray with faith believing God will answer us. If you know the benefits of prayer and have faith that God can do anything, that we have not because we ask not, please join us on SCC’s Disabilities Prayer-line. The number is (712) 432-1500, Access Code is 475995#. The prayers of saints availeth much.

8. SCC - Disabilities Training Institute:
Disabilities Ministries’ Director was inspired to train individuals to minister to those who are Deaf in South Central Conference’s (SCC) church congregations. The need for someone to interpret for the Deaf is great. Therefore, SCC Disabilities Institute was established. At the first Disabilities Institute, there were more than 30 students in attendance. They were eager to learn sign language and did not want it to end. Their enthusiasm continues. An interpreter is needed in all of our churches. We seek to remove all barriers to the Word of God being heard by all.

Disabilities Ministries brings competent instructors with years of experience to teach American Sign Language. We have had some of the best of them to come to the campus of Oakwood University to train future interpreters. They were Elder Thompson Kay and Rachel Jones. They train to bless those who are deaf to receive the Word of God during Sabbath school, our worship services and other church activities. Disabilities Training Institute provides classes during a time when people can best receive the most for their time and money.
To God Be the Glory, Great Things He Has Done

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