

Disability Services

The Texas Catholic Conference *supports services that provide care and dignity to Texans with disabilities.*

As pastors of the Church in America, we are committed to working for a deeper understanding of both the pain and the potential of our neighbors who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded, emotionally impaired, who have special learning problems, or who suffer from single or multiple physical handicaps—all those whom disability may set apart. We call upon people of good will to reexamine their attitudes toward their brothers and sisters with disabilities and promote their well-being, acting with the sense of justice and the compassion that the Lord so clearly desires. (*U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities*)

A Texas Bishop Speaks:

"Individuals and families are often not prepared for the struggles of living with a disability. Our community is called to offer ongoing support and services to allow persons living with disabilities to thrive and contribute to the community."



-Bishop Douglas Deshotel, Diocese of Dallas

Church Teaching

- ★ A society that made room only for its fully functional, completely autonomous and independent members, would be unworthy of the human being. Discrimination on the basis of effectiveness is just as disgraceful as racial, gender or religious discrimination. A subtle form of discrimination is also present in politics and educational projects that seek to conceal or deny the deficiencies of disabled people by proposing lifestyles and objectives that do not correspond to their reality and turn out to be unjust and frustrating. Indeed, justice calls for continual and loving attention to the lives of others and a response to the special and different needs of every individual, taking into consideration his or her abilities and limitations. (*Pope John Paul II, International Symposium on the Dignity and Rights of the Mentally Disabled Person*)
- ★ Defense of the right to life implies the defense of all other rights which enable the individual with the disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, and in health care, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities and services. (*USCCB, Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*)
- ★ These fundamental duties can be summarized this way: basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons. The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings. (*USCCB, Economic Justice for All*)

Resources

- ★ **National Catholic Partnership on Disability** (NCPD) works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society. (www.ncpd.org)
- ★ **Disability Issues** resource page of the USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat (www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/disabilities/index.shtml)
- ★ **National Catholic Bioethics Center** (www.NCBcenter.org)
- ★ **Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services** (www.dads.state.tx.us)
- ★ **Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services** (www.dars.state.tx.us)

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

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What are developmental disabilities?ⁱⁱ

Developmental disabilities are severe, life-long disabilities attributable to mental and/or physical impairments which manifest themselves before the age of 22 years and are likely to continue indefinitely. They result in substantial limitations in three or more of the following areas:

- self-care
- comprehension and language
- skills (receptive and expressive language)
- learning
- mobility
- self-direction
- capacity for independent living
- economic self-sufficiency
- ability to function independently without coordinated services (continuous need for individually planned and coordinated services).

Persons with developmental disabilities use individually planned and coordinated services and supports of their choosing (e.g., housing, employment, education, civil and human rights protection, health care) to live in and to participate in activities in the community.

It is not enough merely to affirm the rights of people with disabilities. We must actively work to make them real in the fabric of modern society and to guarantee that people with disabilities have the opportunity to enjoy full lives of independence, productivity and self-determination. The Texas Catholic Conference supports:

- Prohibiting the use of comparative effectiveness standards, which could diminish existing insurance coverage for people with disabilities. Many such standards have an inherent bias against disabling conditions, and thus their use would diminish insurance coverage for people with such conditions.
- Access to education, employment, housing, public accommodations, facilities, and services, for individuals with disabilities, as well as protection against discrimination of the unborn.
- Decent, personalized care and human support as well as access to the pastoral services of the Christian community for individuals who are institutionalized.
- Providing community-based alternatives to institutionalization for people with disabilities when possible, and recognizing that such services and supports advance the best interests of all Texans.
- Recognition in advance directives statutes that people with disabilities should not be equated with people who are terminally ill.
- Efforts to increase the public's sensitivity toward the needs of people with disabilities and support their rightful demand for justice.

(Last updated August 10, 2010, 82nd Legislative Session)

ⁱ "USCCB - Pro-Life Activities - Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities." *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. 1978. Web. 11 Aug. 2010. <www.usccb.org/prolife/personswithdisabilities.shtml>.

ⁱⁱ "ACF Office of Public Affairs (OPA): Fact Sheet - Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD)." *Administration for Children and Families Home Page*. 30 July 2010. Web. 12 Aug. 2010. <www.acf.hhs.gov/opa/fact_sheets/add_factsheet.html>.