

"Questionnaire Helps Church Meet Needs of Parents"

(This article was reprinted with permission from the newsletter of the CCPD, the Christian Council for Persons with Disabilities, a national network, Fall 1997)

If your congregation includes families of children with disabilities, how and where do you begin to help them meet their needs? For those who do not know where to start, Chaplain Bill Van Dyken of Hope Haven in Rock Valley, IA, has developed a questionnaire based on ideas expressed by a panel of parents.

The introduction to the document states:

"This questionnaire is a tool for you to use in seeking the assistance you need from the Christian community in meeting the special needs of your children with disabilities. It is also a tool to help us, your church, identify in concrete ways the assistance we should give to you and your family.

"We hope you will feel the warm affection and concern of your congregation for you and your children as you fill out this questionnaire. We hope you will pray about these questions, and we hope you will take as much time as you need to give your answers. We, too, are praying about our responsibility to give you the care you need from us.

"Listed below are suggestions for assistance that could possibly help you and your family with some basic needs you might have in caring for your children with their special needs. These are questions parents like you helped to formulate when they were asked what their church should do to help them. We, your church, stand ready to help you, too in any possible way, and so we ask that you think about your needs and check off the items that would give you relief and us a chance to serve you."

1. Can we assist you with respite care?

- Time away with your spouse
- Time with other family members
- Time for some of your favorite hobbies
- Time to sit in church together as a family
- Time to serve others, using your gifts
- Time for your child to have social outings with others
- Other? Please list.

2. Can we assist you with household chores?

- General house-cleaning duties
- Outside chores, lawn mowing, leaf raking, etc.
- Meals brought in, how often?
- Baked goods brought in, how often?
- Grocery shopping
- Other? Please list

3. Can we assist you with transportation?

- Transportation for medical appointments
- Help with car maintenance
- Transportation to recreational or other social events
- Rides to church functions
- Other? Please list.

4. Can we assist you in the following ways?

- Someone to inquire for you regarding medical opinions
- Someone to help you with insurance issues
- Someone to help you write letters seeking state/federal aid
- Someone to give you spiritual support during doctor appointments
- Someone to be your advocate, to visit you. How often?
- Regular visits from the deacons. How often?
- Other? Please list.

5. Can we assist you with financial support?

- Annual payments to help defray disability expenses
- Payment for your child at a camp for disabled children
- Equal contributions to all church families who have children with disabilities
- Professional estate planning
- Others? Please list.

6. Can we assist you to become more involved in church life?

- Serve on a committee
- Teach Sunday School
- Help with nursery? Is the nursery adequate to meet your family's needs?
- Join a Bible study group, couples group, etc.
- Would you need respite care to do any of these?
- Others? Please list.

Please comment on any other assistance your church should give.

What is parents' greatest need?

"Our congregation really wants to help and has given us a list of people willing to aid us. But, not everyone on the list can help when we need them, so we often have to make many calls to find someone who is free. After awhile you just give up!"

These words summarize a major need parents often mention in calls to the CCPD office: someone to make those difficult, time-consuming calls for them.

(ADNet note: The church can consider choosing one individual to serve as the coordinator for the various services. They can do the calling rather than the family having to do all the asking. ADNet offers a booklet, *Supportive Care in the Congregation* that presents a model for providing a supportive care network for persons who are disabled or dependent. It can be ordered by calling toll free 1-877-214-9838.)



Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet)

PO Box 959
Goshen, IN 46527-0959
Office: (574) 535-7053
Phone/Fax: 1-877-214-9838
Email: adnet@adnetonline.org
Website: www.adnetonline.org