

The Church Welcome Audit

For pastors, elders, staff & ministry teams



A friendly, honest walk-through of your church, from the parking lot to the pulpit, through the eyes of a family that includes someone with Down syndrome, autism, or another disability. Score each area, celebrate what's working, and leave with a realistic action plan.

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START HERE

How to use the Welcome Audit

This isn't a test you pass or fail. It's a way to see your church the way a visiting family sees it, so more people can meet Jesus face-to-face in your community.

1. Walk it

Your team walks the building on a normal Sunday (or just before), with this audit on a clipboard. Start in the parking lot.

2. Score it

Mark each question **Ready**, **Getting there**, or **Not yet**. Be honest. "Not yet" is where the growth is.

3. Act on it

Pick 3 quick wins for this month and 1-2 bigger goals for this year. Then share what you learned.

BUILD YOUR AUDIT TEAM (4-6 PEOPLE)

- A person with a disability, or several. Their experience is the heart of the audit.
- A parent or caregiver of a child with Down syndrome, autism, or another disability
- A staff member or elder who can make decisions
- Someone from facilities or operations
- A kids' ministry leader
- A teen: youth groups can do the Welcome Walk from the 13+ church guide

TIPS FOR A GREAT AUDIT

- Try it: push a stroller or wheelchair, wear headphones, or read the bulletin without glasses.
- Walk in as a first-time visitor: where would you go?
- Take photos of spaces (not people) to remember.
- Ask families directly: "What's one thing that would make Sundays easier?"
- Celebrate the "Ready" answers too!

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many families of people with disabilities say they've stopped going to church because they didn't feel their family could fit. Small changes, like a greeter who knows what to say, a quiet room, or a buddy, can make the difference.

A note on the law: In the U.S., religious organizations are generally exempt from the public-accommodations rules of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This audit isn't about legal compliance. It's about hospitality. Local building codes still apply to construction and renovation, so check with your facilities team or a qualified professional before making physical changes.

Church: _____

Audit date: _____



1. Before they arrive

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Our website says we welcome people with disabilities, and names a contact person.	☐	☐	☐
The website has a “What to expect” page with photos of the entrance, rooms, and kids’ area.	☐	☐	☐
Our kids’ registration form asks, “What helps your child thrive?”	☐	☐	☐
Families can tell us about needs before they visit (email, phone, or online form).	☐	☐	☐
Service times, length, and style (loud/quiet) are clearly listed.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: _____



2. Parking & entrance

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Accessible parking spaces are close to an accessible entrance and clearly marked.	☐	☐	☐
There’s a drop-off spot near the door.	☐	☐	☐
At least one main entrance is step-free (ramp or level) and easy to find.	☐	☐	☐
Doors are easy to open (automatic, or a greeter holds them).	☐	☐	☐
Paths are smooth, well lit, and clear of clutter, snow, and ice.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: _____



3. Greeting & check-in

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Greeters are trained to welcome families of people with disabilities (see Greeter guide).	☐	☐	☐
There’s a calm, quieter check-in option for kids who find crowds hard.	☐	☐	☐
Greeters can hand out sensory bags (headphones, fidgets, visual schedule).	☐	☐	☐
Signs are clear, large, high-contrast, and use pictures as well as words.	☐	☐	☐
Someone can walk a new family to their rooms instead of just pointing.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: _____



4. Worship space

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Wheelchair spaces are spread throughout, not only in the back or front, so people can sit with family.	☐	☐	☐
Aisles, the stage, and the front are reachable without steps (ramp or lift).	☐	☐	☐
There's a quieter room or space to step out to that can still hear or see the service.	☐	☐	☐
Movement and sounds during worship are okay here. Our culture says so.	☐	☐	☐
We give a heads-up before very loud or bright moments (fog, strobe lights, loud music).	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: —



5. Communication & media

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Large-print bulletins, song lyrics, and Scripture are available.	☐	☐	☐
Slides use big, high-contrast text, and videos have captions.	☐	☐	☐
Our sound system has an assistive listening option (hearing loop or receivers).	☐	☐	☐
ASL interpretation is available on request (or we know how to arrange it).	☐	☐	☐
The livestream or recording has captions, for anyone who can't attend in person.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: —



6. Kids & youth ministry

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
We have (or are starting) a buddy program for kids who'd benefit.	☐	☐	☐
Leaders are trained in disability inclusion (see Volunteer training).	☐	☐	☐
There's a calm corner or sensory room with headphones and fidgets.	☐	☐	☐
Lessons use visuals and hands-on activities (see the Adapted Editions).	☐	☐	☐
Kids with disabilities are placed with their peers, with supports, whenever possible.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready — Getting there — Not yet — Top idea: —



7. Restrooms, Fellowship & Food

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
There's at least one accessible restroom, clearly signed, with grab bars and room to turn a wheelchair.	☐	☐	☐
There's a private space for changing older children or adults (a changing table or private room).	☐	☐	☐
Fellowship areas have seating, reachable tables, and room to move.	☐	☐	☐
Food is labeled for common allergens, and softer/alternate options are available.	☐	☐	☐
Events are held in accessible spaces, with an accessible option listed on the flyer.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready ☐ Getting there ☐ Not yet ☐ Top idea:



8. Belonging & leadership

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
People with disabilities serve here: greeting, ushering, reading, worship team, tech, prayer.	☐	☐	☐
Our photos, slides, and website include people of all abilities.	☐	☐	☐
Leaders use respectful language (person-first, or the person's preference).	☐	☐	☐
Small groups and classes are open, and leaders know how to adapt.	☐	☐	☐
We ask people with disabilities and their families for input ("nothing about us without us").	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready ☐ Getting there ☐ Not yet ☐ Top idea:



9. Safety & care

QUESTION	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET
Our emergency plan includes how to help people with mobility, sensory, or cognitive needs evacuate.	☐	☐	☐
Volunteers know where to find each child's care notes (allergies, medical, calming).	☐	☐	☐
Our child-safety policy covers personal care (bathroom help) with dignity and two-adult rules.	☐	☐	☐
We have a care team that can support families with meals, rides, or visits.	☐	☐	☐
We check in with families after a hard Sunday, with kindness and without blame.	☐	☐	☐

Area score: Ready ☐ Getting there ☐ Not yet ☐ Top idea:

ADD IT UP

Your scorecard

Count the answers in each area. Shade the bar to see where you're strong and where to grow.

AREA	READY	GETTING THERE	NOT YET	SHADE 1 BOX PER "READY"
1. Before they arrive				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
2. Parking & entrance				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
3. Greeting & check-in				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
4. Worship space				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
5. Communication & media				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
6. Kids & youth ministry				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7. Restrooms, Fellowship & Food				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
8. Belonging & leadership				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
9. Safety & care				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
TOTAL (out of 45)				

35–45 Ready

You're a welcoming church! Share what you've learned with other churches, and keep listening to families.

20–34 Ready

Great foundation. Pick your lowest area and choose 3 quick wins to start this month.

Under 20 Ready

You're at the start of something beautiful. Begin with greeters, a quiet space, and inviting one family to advise you.

OUR BIGGEST STRENGTHS

OUR BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT FAMILIES TOLD US

START SMALL

21 quick wins under \$100

Small, visible changes that tell families, “We thought about you.” Check off the ones you’ve done, and circle 3 to start this month.

1	Name a disability contact person and list them on your website and bulletin.	☐ Free	2	Add a line to your website: “Everyone is welcome here. Tell us how we can help.”	☐ Free
3	Add “What helps your child thrive?” to your kids’ registration form.	☐ Free	4	Reserve 2 seats with open space next to them in several rows.	☐ Free
5	Train greeters with the Greeter guide in this toolkit (15 minutes).	☐ Free	6	Announce: “Movement and sounds are welcome here.”	☐ Free
7	Mark a quiet room where the service can still be heard.	☐ Free	8	Put a heads-up in the bulletin before loud moments or special effects.	☐ Free
9	Add photos of the entrance and kids’ area to your website.	☐ Free	10	Invite a person with a disability to greet, read, or pray on 3.21.	☐ Free
11	Print 10 large-print bulletins each week.	☐ Under \$10	12	Turn on auto-captions for your livestream and videos.	☐ Usually free
13	Make picture signs for restrooms, kids’ rooms, and exits.	☐ Under \$25	14	Put together 5 sensory bags (headphones, fidgets, schedule).	☐ Under \$75
15	Set up a calm corner in the kids’ area.	☐ Under \$100	16	Print visual schedules for kids’ classrooms (Adapted Editions).	☐ Under \$10
17	Buy a portable ramp or threshold ramp for a small step.	☐ Varies	18	Add signs that point to the accessible entrance.	☐ Under \$50
19	Label allergens at fellowship events.	☐ Under \$10	20	Start a buddy sign-up for teens and adults.	☐ Free
21	Hold a Rock Your Socks Sunday on 3.21!	☐ Free			

Costs are rough estimates and will vary.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Action plan

Turn your audit into real steps. Every step needs an owner and a date.

This month: quick wins

Pick 3 from the quick-wins list.

ACTION	OWNER	BY WHEN	DONE?

This year: next steps

Training, a buddy program, a sensory room, captions...

ACTION	OWNER	BY WHEN	DONE?

Dream big: 1–3 years

Renovations, a ramp or lift, a sensory-friendly service, an adult ministry...

ACTION	OWNER	BY WHEN	DONE?

We'll check our progress on: _____ Audit lead: _____

TELL YOUR CHURCH

Share your results

When your congregation knows what you learned, and what you're doing about it, welcome becomes everyone's job.

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT OR NEWSLETTER NOTE

"This month, a team from our church, including members with disabilities and their families, walked through our building and our Sundays asking one question: **Is there room for everyone here?**

We found a lot to celebrate: _____. We also found some ways to grow. Over the next few months, we're going to _____.

Scripture tells us that in the body of Christ, 'the eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you' (1 Corinthians 12:21). We need every person. If you or someone you love has a disability, we'd love to hear from you. Contact _____."

WAYS TO SHARE

- A 2-minute update from the pulpit
- Your newsletter or email
- A "We're growing" bulletin board with before-and-after photos (of spaces)
- Your website's accessibility page
- A thank-you to the audit team on Rock Your Socks Sunday

KEEP GOING

- Redo the audit every year, around 3.21.
- Add a disability-ministry update to leadership meetings every quarter.
- Keep one family advisor on your team.
- Sign the **Proud Celebrate 3.21 Church** pledge (in this toolkit).
- Tell other churches in town what you learned.

"Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full."

Luke 14:23 · BSB

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain.