



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

Disability Concerns

Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.

Most churches are very good at helping people through short-term crises such as accidents and illnesses. But churches have more trouble dealing with someone who is not going to “get better.” People get “compassion fatigue” toward people with disabilities and their families, or they are repulsed by physical disfigurement, or they just don’t know how to help. Likewise, churches tend to exclude people with disabilities from ministry because they focus on the *disability* rather than on the ability of the person.

The staff of Disability Concerns (paid and volunteer) helps churches to include all of God’s people in their life and ministry so that all members know that they belong and can use their gifts fully. A full-time director as well as administrative assistants working part-time in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and in Burlington, Ontario comprise the paid staff. Their work is multiplied by a network of hundreds of volunteers—Church Advocates, who serve their congregations, and Regional Advocates, who serve entire classes.

Disability Concerns subcommittees support the consultants in Canada, in northern Illinois, and in west Michigan. The Canada committee holds a training conference every spring in Ontario, and the west Michigan committee co-sponsors an annual conference every fall. Disability Concerns also cooperates with Friendship Ministries in their ministry to people with cognitive impairments in the United States and Canada.

Quick Facts

- Disability Concerns communicates with churches through its network of volunteers, and through its newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, website, and Network pages.
- The services of Disability Concerns are offered to churches free of charge.
- Individuals and special church offerings support one-third of our budget. The other two-thirds comes from ministry shares.
- Studies by the U.S. Census and Statistics Canada indicate that about 17 per cent of their populations live with at least one disability. That translates to over 46,000 Christian Reformed people, or 17 out of every one-hundred people in your church, who live day in and day out with the struggles of a disability.
- Funded by ministry shares, regional advocates receive annual training to better serve the churches.
- CRC Disability Concerns works closely with the Disability Concerns ministry of the Reformed Church in America on our newsletter, conferences, volunteer training, and more.

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Disability Concerns is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). To learn about the CRC’s work in North America and around the world, visit www.crcna.org

