

# Belonging in Faith Communities: Individuals with IDD

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# Introduction

- Currently, the U.S. is home to more than 6 million Americans with intellectual developmental disabilities and more than 300,000 churches.
- People with IDD are much less likely to attend religious services than people without disabilities.
  - Spirituality and religious involvement can hold an important place in the lives of people with significant disabilities.
  - Faith is no less relevant or important because someone has a disability.

# Faith Leaders and IDD

- It is common for faith leaders to not have a full understanding of how to best serve those with IDD.
  - They often feel a strong call to serve all people inclusively.
  - Less comfortability ministering to a specific person with an intellectual or developmental disability.
  - May see individuals with IDD just as their needs, not their positive traits and strengths.

# Faith Communities and IDD

- Faith communities have been uneven in the extent to which they have supported the presence and participation of individuals with significant disabilities and their families.
- Faith leaders and communities may rely on AAIDD to build awareness of the importance of individuals with IDD.
  - Stigma may still exist when such voices are not present in the local community.

# Belonging

- “Belonging is rooted in relationships. Having people in our lives who know us, like us, accept us, need us, miss us, and love us is at the heart of our wellbeing.”

Carter, E. W. (2022). A place of belonging: Including individuals with significant disabilities in faith communities. *Inclusive Practices*, 1(1), 6-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2732474520977482>

- This is bigger than just being included.
  - Relationships
  - Reciprocity
  - Affiliation
  - Community

# Relevant Literature

- 10 Key Themes of Belonging:
  - Present
  - Invited
  - Welcomed
  - Known
  - Accepted
  - Supported
  - Cared for
  - Befriended
  - Needed
  - Loved
- These 10 dimensions of belonging provide points of reflection—and areas of potential response—for congregations wondering how to welcome well.



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# Research Question & Aims and Objectives

- How do places of worship in CT foster a sense of belonging for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- The aim of this study is to look at senses of belonging and the perception of how individuals feel and are treated in places of worship in CT.
- A qualitative survey will be used to assess this.
  - Survey will focus on 10 dimensions of belonging.



# Data Collection

- Data collection from every faith community in CT
- 1,598 total communities:
  - Protestant (35%)
  - Evangelical (13%)
  - Mainline (17%)
  - Historically Black (5%)
  - Catholic (33%)
  - Judaism (3%)
  - Islam (1%)
  - Buddhist (1%)
  - Hindu (1%)

# Participant Characteristics

- **Age:** Adults aged 18+
- **Ethnicity:** Individuals of all ethnicities are invited to participate
- **Gender:** Individuals of all genders are invited to participate
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Adult participants over the age of 18 who have knowledge of accommodations their specific place of worship in CT
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Individuals under the age of 18 and who do not have knowledge of accommodations in their specific place of worship in CT.

# Results

- Data is currently being collected
- Last Update: over 50 responses

# Resources

- Carter, E. W. (2022). A place of belonging: Including individuals with significant disabilities in faith communities. *Inclusive Practices*, 1(1), 6-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2732474520977482>
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- Sango, P. N., & Forrester-Jones, R. (2018). Spirituality and social networks of people with intellectual and developmental disability. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 43(3), 274–284. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2017.1310820>
- Special Olympics. *What is Intellectual Disability?* <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/intellectual-disabilities/what-is-intellectual-disability#:~:text=Approximately%206.5%20million%20people%20in,16.41%20in%20every%201%2C000%20people>