Vision Statement

OPWDD, in partnership with faith communities and other interested parties, will develop opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to make choices that help them to:

- **Believe:** Individuals will have their faith acknowledge and respected.
- **Belong:** Individuals will have opportunities to attend a house of worship based upon their faith and choice.
- **Become:** Individuals will receive supports and assistance that will allow consistent access for faith community integration.

Goal:

OPWDD will expand opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to become valued members in the house of faith of their choice; respecting their beliefs; supporting their right to belong to the faith community of their choice, and assisting them in growing and participating fully in the spiritual aspect of their lives.

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Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

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Faith Based Initiative

Believe, Belong, Become.

(866) 946-9733 | www.opwdd.ny.gov

At OPWDD, our motto is “putting people first.” With that in mind, we are committed to providing a variety of supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. This brochure offers information about our Faith Based Initiative, which provides people a choice with respect to belonging to a faith community. This, and all other OPWDD services, is designed to give individuals and their families high quality, individualized support.

Kerry A. Delaney, Acting Commissioner

People with developmental disabilities want to be active participants in their community; they want and deserve opportunities to grow spiritually, enjoy community life, and have meaningful relationships.

Strategies for inclusion

Faith Based supports:

- To assist individuals with developmental disabilities who make faith choices to have their Individualized Service Plan (ISP) reflect their choices.
- To provide training and resource materials to state and voluntary agency employees that will help them create and sustain opportunities to support individuals with developmental disabilities who choose to belong to the faith community of their choice.
- To assist OPWDD regional offices to provide spiritual supports to individuals with developmental disabilities who do not reside in the community.
- To work with faith leaders and congregants to integrate individuals with developmental disabilities into the faith community as valued members.

Community relationships:

- To partner with houses of faith to create opportunities for community connections.
- To promote disability awareness forums in the community facilitated by advocacy groups.
- To partner with federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to promote community accessibility.

Who is served?

- Individuals with developmental disabilities who desire to grow spiritually and enjoy meaningful relationships in a faith community. Any individual who wants sustainable supports and regular opportunities to become a valued member of his/her community to be included in his/her ISP.
- Parents who want to find a faith community that will welcome them and their family member with a developmental disability.
- Faith community leaders who want to support individuals with developmental disabilities as valued members of their congregation.
- Provider agencies who want to engage faith communities to support individuals with developmental disabilities who seek to find spiritual well being in their community.
- Community based organizations who want their community to be reflective of and grow based upon the interests of all of its members.

How do I participate?

Individuals with developmental disabilities, families, and those who support them should contact their medicaid service coordinator or active treatment coordinator and discuss how to add faith inclusion to an ISP or a comprehensive functional assessment (CFA).

Provider agencies and faith community leaders interested in supporting individuals with developmental disabilities to become integrated in community life should contact their regional OPWDD office.