

Building a Special Needs Ministry



What is the Big Picture and Who Benefits

Parents, Children, Church

- Families are able to go to church together
- Leaders are blessed by serving in special needs

Getting Leadership on Board with the Ministry

- Estimated 90% of special needs families don't attend church
- One in five families in the us have at least one member with a disability
- 1:59 children diagnosed with autism

Recruiting and Training Volunteers on Policies/Procedures

- Look for people with experience in special education, health care, or have family members with disabilities
- Have policies in writing – as with any children, never leave any child alone with only one buddy
- Training on behavior

Creating a Profile for Each Child

- Emergency number where someone can be contacted
- Likes/dislikes/calming techniques
- Allergy information

Create a Welcoming Room

- Sensory friendly classroom set up
- Hands on curriculum adaptation
- Soft lighting
- Picture schedules

Providing in Class Support Buddies

- Friendship/discipleship
- Ability to participate
- Positive reinforcement
- Safety

Sensory Boxes

- Sound reducing headphones
- Fabric with varying textures
- Weighted blankets/toys
- Stress balls

Partner with Parents

- Invite the parent to bring the child at a time when it is quiet so the child can learn the room and feel comfortable
- Get parents permission to speak to their teacher at school so you can be consistent on making it successful for the child

How Do You Get the Word Out?

- Respite – For special needs children and siblings to allow for parents to have a much needed break
- Parent support groups – provide discussion topics/speakers