

# Establishing a Buddy System

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A “buddy” is an adult or responsible teen that comes along side a person with a special need. Below is a list of guidelines when setting up a buddy system.

- Look for volunteers who are interested in special needs issues and have the spiritual gifts of mercy and shepherding. They should be good at working with children and young adults and they need to be flexible and imaginative.
- Have a job description – make sure everyone knows the extent and limits of their responsibilities.
- Not all children with a disability will need a buddy. Some may be quite independent and able to participate with only a little additional support from a group leader.
- Try for consistency of the same buddy each week for the child. If a substitute is needed, try to get the same substitute for that child each time.
- Allow new team members to sit in on Sunday morning session in order to get to know the child and understand his/her specific needs.
- Have information on the child’s dietary and toileting needs in writing.
- Wherever possible, keep children with special needs in their age appropriate classes, adapting the materials to suit their needs and abilities.
- Communicate with the Sunday school staff, regularly, so that they are aware of the child’s needs and understand the role of the Buddy.