

Starting a Special Needs Ministry



Build It and They Will Come

It is not uncommon that the responsibility of a Special Needs Ministry begins under the, already very crowded, umbrella of the Family Ministry Director. Although this may seem overwhelming and “another thing” to balance, it is an integral part of serving your community in a Christian manner.

So often, churches have provided a Sunday school program and feel they meet the needs of the children of their congregation to the best of their ability. The feeling may be:

- A) “If there is a need for special assistance, we just don’t have the resources to provide their needs – we are doing the best we can for what we have now!”
- B) “There just hasn’t been a request for special assistance.”

If either statement is near to your thoughts, then, simply stated,

You have built a barrier – preventing children with special needs and their families to come to your church.

So how do you begin to tear down that wall?

1. Pray. No ministry is ever effective unless it is drenched in prayer.
2. Talk with your church staff or missions development councils. Bring them information you have collected about the need for this ministry in your church.
3. If possible, do a survey of the congregation to find those who feel comfortable identifying special needs their family might have. Using this resources, make a list of potential persons with special needs who might be a part of your ministry.
4. Contact local agencies about the numbers of persons with special needs they serve in your community.
5. Create a ministry team – you can’t possibly “do it all, yourself!” Bring on those with a heart for serving individuals with special needs.
6. Talk to the Sunday school teachers – what do they need to build a comfort with children with special needs?
7. Recruit volunteers
8. Provide sensitivity training
9. Promote the removal of barriers
10. Visit the families of children with special needs – learn from their experiences and seek to understand their unique needs
11. Begin the ministry – start off slow and steady
12. Evaluate the ministry regularly

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13. Invite people to join your mission, whether by serving with your team, or praying and supporting your ministry in other ways
14. Celebrate and encourage your volunteers on a regular basis.
15. Tell stories. Stories help reinforce the mission and engage the Body of Christ.