



10 WAYS TO START A SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY AT YOUR CHURCH

By
Jill Funk
jilliankennen@yahoo.com
520-850-2430



1: Create a space

- Use the space you have wisely
- Determine the needs of your population and manipulate your space to meet those needs
- Ensure the space creates a calming environment for children with special needs
- Communicate the purpose of the space you have with the church

2: Provide Training

- Create a plan and vision for your ministry
- Communicate your vision with those who are working and volunteering in your special needs ministry
 - *Answer these questions as a team*
 - What is your end goal?
 - How do you communicate your vision with new staff and volunteers?
- Provide your staff and volunteers with training on your ministry and each child with special needs in your ministry

3: Seek Parent Input

- Parents are the experts on their child, use their expertise to get to know how to best teach their child
 - *Schedule a meeting with the family*
 - *Use the Get to Know You sheet included in the presentation*
- Share the information gathered with teachers and volunteers within the children classroom
- Remember that children are always changing so make sure you check in with families frequently

4: Establish Expectations

- Think about and be able to answer the following questions
 - *What does the team expect from children with special needs in your ministry?*
 - *What does the team expect from the teachers who have children with special needs in their classes?*
 - *What does the team expect from the volunteers working in classroom with children with special needs?*
- Have a plan to communicate these expectations with all people involved

5: Use Volunteers Effectively

- There are never enough volunteers
- Ways to effectively use volunteers to address the children with special needs in your ministry
 - *Add one more adult to the classroom to provide extra support*
 - *Pair the child with a buddy (same age or older)*
 - *When is the support needed? If only at a specific time, how can you accommodate that?*
 - *Sometimes the needs (safety/health/behavior) of the child will indicate that they would always benefit from someone with them*

6: Communicate with your Church Body

- Provide a reminder at the beginning of the children's program or put a note in the program to teach the audience about the children in your ministry
- Do your best to eliminate uninformed comments about children in the program
- Remember that parents are always listening

7: Create a Team

- Find a group of individuals who are interested in special needs ministry
- The purpose of the team is to educate, monitor and develop the special needs ministry at your church
- This team does not need to be paid
- Ensure that the team the team is a representation of the many different members of your church
- In the beginning your team maybe required to meet regularly
- It is important to maintain meetings to address the changes and needs within the ministry

8: Use Adaptations

- Use adaptations to ensure children's success
- Ensure that the adaptations being used are implemented to the best ability of the people in the classroom
- Clearly communicate adaptations with all people in the classroom
- Specific adaptation ideas are provided in the adaptation part of the presentation

9: Use Money and Resources Wisely

- Questions to consider before spending money
 - *Will this help more than one child?*
 - *Is this consumable?*
 - *Can we get this or something like this from a donation or in a less expensive version?*
 - *Will this last?*
- Consult with your team and make the decision as a team

10: Teach Children about the Love of Jesus

- The ultimate goal and most important thing in children's ministry is that we are teaching children about the love of Jesus

Contact information:

- Jill Funk
- jilliankennan@yahoo.com
- (520)850-2430