

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH

Basic Steps And Considerations

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WHY?

COMMON BARRIERS

- Architectural
- Mode of communication
- Attitudinal

ACCESSING THE NEED

.Determine the need within the church and community, spending much time in prayer, using:

Disability awareness events

Pulpit announcements

Surveys

Letters

Focus groups

Network with other professionals, parents, and church leaders

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Church leadership
- Under what ministry
- Staff person or lay lead
- Set up steering committee (including parents, professionals, and persons with disabilities)
- Determine funding or budget issues
- Develop a plan

PHYSICAL SPACE AND CLASSROOMS

- Secure classroom space
 - Look at geographic location
 - How accessible is the space
 - Size of the room
 - Bathrooms and sinks in rooms or close by
- Childproof rooms- safety concerns
- Additional equipment or furniture
 - Therapy mats
 - Mini trampolines
 - Bean bags or billowing cushions
 - Strollers and restraining chairs

DETERMINE CHURCH-BASED OR COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

·As a ministry, your church should be inclusive to all individuals within the church and community. Consider a blend of church-based and community outreach programs when developing your special needs ministry.

Church-based programs tend to appeal to those that are currently attending. Set on events, weekly meetings or classes, these programs provide an opportunity for those attending to grow in fellowship and learn more about the word of God. Examples include Sunday school, Bible studies, and VBS

Community-based programs are open to all persons in the community, regardless of their beliefs or religious backgrounds. Their focus is to provide services and outreach that support families where local or state programs may fall short. Examples include respite care programs, support groups, family events, and educational seminars.

PROGRAM MODELS

The following are program models for a disability ministry. The model chosen by your church will depend on the unique needs and feedback provided from church attendees and the community at large.

Full Inclusion - Welcoming individuals into all programs, regardless of disability type. This format ensures persons with disabilities will participate shoulder-to-shoulder with able-bodied attendees.

- Benefits

 - Increased awareness and sensitivity

 - Friendships

 - Modeling appropriate and social skills

- Challenges

 - Additional classroom supports and staffing

 - Programmatic design for wide range of cognitive

abilities

 - Existing staff and volunteers need additional training

PROGRAM MODELS CONTINUED

- **Partial Inclusion** - The model in which the student or participant with disability is included in a portion of the program, and the remainder of the time in a more specialized setting.

- **Benefits**

 - Allows for some flexibility for attendee

 - Some interaction with typical peers

 - Additional supports in specialized classroom

- **Challenges**

 - Transitional issues

 - Possible disruption in program flow

PROGRAM MODEL CONTINUED

Specialized or Self-Contained - This model creates special programs or classrooms for persons with disabilities. Typically they are smaller class sizes, higher staff-to-student ratios, and taught by professionals, such as special educators.

- Benefits

 - More classroom support

 - Smaller class size

 - Program and materials adapted to cognitive ability of students

- Challenges

 - Limited exposure to able-bodied peers (unless a **reverse inclusion model** is implemented)

BASIC ADAPTATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

- **Size** - Adapt group size or items to be completed
- **Time** - Adapt time allotted for learning or task completion
- **Level of Support** - Increase amount of personal assistance (assign peer buddy, teaching assistant, cross-age tutors)
- **Input** - Adapt the way instruction is delivered (use visual aids, hands-on activities) and design lessons to be more interactive
- **Difficulty** - Adapt the skill level, simplify instructions, or change rules
- **Output** - Adapt how the student can respond (instead of always verbal, acting it out, sign language, eye gazes, etc.)
- **Participation** - Adapt the extent to which the learner is involved; for example, hold the picture up or clean the blackboard
- **Alternate** - Adapt the goals or outcome expectations while using the same materials
- **Substitute curriculum** - Provide different instructions and materials to meet students' goals

SAFETY CONCERNS AND ISSUES

- Liability insurance
- Safety and medical guidelines
 - Emergency plan
 - Behavioral plan
 - Sickness policy
 - Parent notification systems
- Program policies
- Medical professionals on site and expectations
- Volunteer process
 - Application/ background check
 - Orientation
 - Ongoing trainings