



Disability Ministry Team Handbook



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Welcome to Disability Ministries

Corinthians 12:12, 22

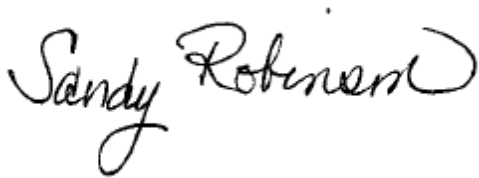
For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ....the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Including children with disabilities in our Children's Ministry is an important part of our vision at Calvary Church. As a body of believers, we are incomplete without their active inclusion in our body. They are "indispensable". As part of the Disability Ministry team you are an integral part of making this a reality.

This handbook provides you with the policies and procedures that are applicable to your ministry to children with special needs. Because we function as part of the larger Children's ministry team, you will also be given additional resources as they apply to the age group or classroom where you are serving. Please familiarize yourself with this information.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you!



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Children's Ministries Overview

Our Vision:

Helping kids pursue life in Christ!

Our Purpose:

To partner with parents in the spiritual development of their children as we inspire each child to pursue life in Christ.

Our Core Values:

Loving God

By knowing Him personally and worshiping Him collectively

Living God's Word

By learning what it means and doing what it says

Growing with God's People

By relating authentically with others for their good and my growth

Going into God's World

By extending the gospel to others right here and around the world

Investing in God's Work

As stewards of God's gifts and servants in God's plan

Message from the Senior Pastor

Dear Children's Ministries Team Members,

I want to personally thank each and every one of you for the commitment that you are making to invest in the children and the families that come to Calvary Church. On behalf of the entire Calvary staff and Elders, I want you to know that we are your biggest fans, your strongest supporters, and your trusted guides as you serve the Lord in Children's Ministries. This is a crucial part of your own pursuit of Life in Christ.

You have the privilege of being one of the first people to have a spiritual influence in the lives of these kids, and for some, the time that you have with them each week might be the only spiritual influence that they receive. One of the challenges of working with children is that you may not always see the fruit of your labor, but I can assure you that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. You are helping to lay a foundation in their lives. You are placing the anchor of the Lord Jesus deep into their hearts so that they can withstand the storms to come.

Thank you for the sacrifice that you are making to serve Calvary Church. You are an essential part of helping all of us to pursue life in Christ.

Beau Eckert

Senior Pastor of Calvary Church

Team Covenant

Every five years you will be asked to sign the Children's Ministries Team Covenant when you receive your renewal clearance packet.

By signing the covenant you are agreeing that you have or will:

Read and adhere to...

- ✓ Children's Ministries Team Handbook – Nursery, Early Childhood, or Elementary
- ✓ Calvary Church's doctrinal statement in all of your teaching and communication with children

Grow spiritually by...

1. Pursuing life in Christ which will itself manifest in your personal relationship with Him, with your family, with your co-workers, and with the Church
2. Seeking ways to be fed spiritually outside of the regular worship service of Calvary Church and to be accountable to other believers (i.e. ABFs, small groups, Bible studies, accountability partners/groups, etc.)
3. Communicating God's love to each child who is in your care, and modeling Christ-like behavior both in and out of your classroom

Work together by...

4. Being dependable in your ministry by being faithful in attendance, in preparation and in prompt arrival
5. Communicating in advance to co-workers and directors when you must be absent
6. Following the principles in the Peacemaker's Pledge when you have a conflict with a co-worker, a classroom coordinator, or one of the ministry staff

Please do not underestimate the importance of your role in this ministry. Each member of our team has a significant role in sharing God's love and the truth of His Word with our children each week. Please pray that God will use you to draw the children in your care into a closer relationship with Him!

We also encourage you to attend a Discover Calvary class to help you see how your role in Children's Ministry fits into the larger picture of Calvary Church.

Peacemaker's Pledge

Revised from The Peacemaker, by Ken Sande; 1997, Baker Books, Grand Rapids. p. 235-237

As People reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Matthew 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Galatians 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (Proverbs 27:5,6,17; Romans 8:28-29; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles.

Glorify God

Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on his wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying his commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude. (Psalm 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 4:2-9; Colossians 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12)

Focus on Understanding

Instead of focusing only on our perspective, we choose to honor others by listening carefully and ensuring we understand their perspective and their needs before we respond. We choose to actively seek reconciliation, understanding that conflict is an opportunity for personal and relational growth. (Proverbs 18:2; 18:13; James 1:19; Ephesians 4:29-30)

Get the Log out of Your Own Eye

Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused. We take others' concerns before the Lord asking Him to examine us and our ways and guide in our response. (Psalm 119:23-24; 139:23-24; Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Colossians 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9)

Go and Show Your Brother His Fault

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner. If the conflict or offense is still unresolved after the involvement of a few others, we will request the help of the elders in the church with the goal of bringing reconciliation. (Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:49; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:9)

Go and Be Reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences. (Matthew 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; Philippians 2:3-4)

Respect and Prize Differences

Recognizing that God has designed the body of Christ so that it includes many different parts, we choose to respect the differences of others. Since God has designed these differences for the mutual edification of the body, we choose to prize these differences, recognizing their value to us as individuals and the whole church. (Proverbs 27:17; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 3:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

By God’s grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an assignment, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God’s eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love. (Matthew 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19)

Social Media

It is Calvary Church’s desire to create an atmosphere of connection and community among our members and regular attendees. We know that a sense of identity and belonging to a smaller group within the church will enable an individual to feel a part of the whole body.

Guidelines for Church Volunteers

1. ***What you write is public.*** You should always assume that it will be read by your boss, co-workers, parents, children, spouse, and the attorney for the person who doesn't like you. Ask yourself if you are comfortable with all of these people reading what you plan to post.
2. ***Write as yourself.*** Use your real name. If you choose to identify yourself as a volunteer of Calvary Church or to discuss anything related to the church, be clear about your role.
3. ***Be accurate.*** Ensure that you have all the facts about your subject. If you make a mistake, admit it and be quick to correct it. Be careful that what you write would not impair your ability to serve the Lord or represent Him in the community. Remember that frustrations are best expressed in person. Sarcasm does not usually translate well.
4. ***Respect your audience.*** Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity or engage in any conversation that would not be acceptable in front of the Lord.
5. ***Choose your topics wisely.*** There are some ideas that are best discussed in person rather than a public forum. Don't allow your posts to hinder someone’s spiritual growth.

Remember that what you post, even if retracted, will always be available online.

Privacy Issues

Don't post the names or contact information of individuals without their permission. Don't post pictures of others that are inappropriate or that they would not appreciate.

Please remember to consider the safety and effectiveness of our Global Partners and therefore use extra caution when commenting to or about those serving overseas—particularly limited access countries. If you have questions, contact the Global Ministries office first.

Maintain Confidentiality

Ask permission before reporting on conversations or meetings that are meant to be private. Online conversations and postings are not private. Know that what you post online may be around for a long time and potentially shared with others. Therefore, be considerate and loving: Avoid identifying and discussing others, including church members and visitors—*especially* details such as hospitalizations and health concerns or information gleaned in personal counseling. Do not disclose health information on behalf of others. ***Seek to build up not to tear down (Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:29)***

Relational Boundaries

One of the components of a balanced Children's Ministry is developing strong youth-adult partnerships within the intentional and safe community of our ministry. The vast number of communication possibilities and the speed of technology require that adults working with children and students be aware of the need to maintain appropriate relational boundaries regardless of the communication medium.

Group Identity

Facebook and other social media communication networks can help create a group identity, assist in planning for group activities and encourage students. These mediums provide powerful modes of connecting with youth, and for youth to connect with each other and should be channeled as such. Communications on Facebook are most appropriate when conducted through a group.

Adults must recognize the public nature of social networking sites and see themselves as representatives of God and Calvary Church. Thus adult volunteers agree not to post any material that could be deemed inappropriate or explicit. So doing will be in violation of Calvary's values and expected code of conduct. If an adult advisor is in doubt about the appropriateness of any ongoing or new forms of communication, they should consult with a ministry staff member for guidance.

Photography & Video

We want our members and regular attendees to understand that we will, as a regular practice, take pictures and videos of all our events and ministries at some point in time.

We will provide parents and volunteers the opportunity to complete a general opt-out form for all events if they do not want their image used. A failure to turn in a completed opt-out form constitutes consent for you and your families' pictures or video footage to be used. We will seek to honor opt-out requests for images of individuals or small groups, but cannot ensure that the request can be adhered to for pictures or videos of large group events.

Anyone who sees their picture posted on the church website and would like it removed, can send a written request to the church office (please indicate where the picture is located).

The Calvary Church Photo/Video Opt-out Form is available at any Connection Center.

General Guidelines

Approved Team Members

Only **approved** team members may work in Children's Ministries. Team member requirements:

- ✓ Attendance at Calvary Church for **at least six months** is required.
- ✓ An Application for Service must be on file including a criminal background, a child abuse check, and either FBI fingerprinting or a signed affidavit and National Background check.
- ✓ Membership at Calvary Church is required to be in a leadership position, including a Bible Teacher in Elementary.

There must always be **adequate supervision** to ensure the safety of the children.

- **Two approved team members**, one being an adult, need to be in the classroom at all times.
- Children should never be left unattended.
- A single volunteer should never be alone with a child in a classroom, bathroom, or hallway. There should always be another approved worker within view.

Help Needed

When Children's Ministries is in need of additional volunteers, **#999** will be displayed on the screens in the auditorium. Please go to the West Connection Center to find out where you can serve.

Identification

You will need to wear your volunteer photo ID badge any time you are serving. If you forget your badge, go to a Check-in Kiosk to print a temporary badge. Please do not ask our checkpoint volunteers to make an exception for you. They have been instructed to not allow any adult into the hallway who does not have a proper ID.

Modesty

As Children's Ministries leaders, our goal is to help children focus their attention on God. One of the ways we can accomplish this is by dressing modestly. Appropriate dress does not draw attention to the vessel, but allows both children and adults to focus on the truths being taught.

We want all aspects of our Children's Ministries to be honoring to God. Our purpose is not to present legalistic standards, but to be good role models, to be encouraging to all, and to be a stumbling block to no one. (Romans 14:13-18)

Remember, a child's perspective is different from ours. They see us from behind and from a different level when we bend over. Test yourself in front of a mirror and notice what others will see when you bend over.

Children

There is to be no corporal punishment of children. Touch is to be appropriate so that all appearance of evil is avoided. Specific guidelines are given later in this handbook for proper bathroom conduct when necessary.

Children should remain on church property and not go on unauthorized trips with team members.

Team members should only use activities and materials which are suitable to the age of the child and are appropriate in meeting the educational and spiritual goals of the church. Our curriculum has been designed with the age and abilities of the children in mind.

Mandated Reporters

According to PA state law all volunteers that work directly with children are considered mandated reporters. Video training found at www.calvarychurch.org/mandatory-reporting explains the requirements of your position.

Instructions for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect. There is a file in your classroom with the needed forms and a copy of these instructions.

1. **Make a report** to Childline using the following phone number **1-800-932-0313**
2. **Inform** the staff person who leads the ministry in which you serve that you have reported suspected abuse.
3. **Fill out** the CY-47 form, giving as much information as you can. You will not have answers for all the questions.
4. **Make 2 copies** of the CY-47.
5. **Mail or fax** the original form CY-47 to the Lancaster Children and Youth Agency **within 48 hours** of making the phone call. Give one copy to the staff person who leads the ministry in which you serve. Keep the other copy for your records.

Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency
900 E. King St. Lancaster, PA 17602
FAX: 717 299-7929

Allergies - Nut-Free Zone / Epi Pens

All of Children's Ministries is a **NO NUT** and **NO PEANUT BUTTER** zone. No peanuts or nut products will be allowed in any classroom or at a Children's Ministry event. This restriction is in place even if another group is using the room as minute particles of peanut residue can trigger an allergic reaction in highly sensitive individuals. It's just not worth the risk.

Some children may require the presence of an **Epi pen** to use in the event of an allergic reaction. If one is needed, the parent will bring it and inform you of it. When you receive an Epi pen, make sure it is in a sealed plastic bag and labeled with the child's name. Place it in the red emergency bag on the wall. If the child has a severe allergic reaction, one class leader should administer the Epi pen, and another leader should call the Medical Team to tell them you have an emergency and contact the parents. Training in Epi pen use will be provided if needed.

Emergencies

Windows on classroom doors should be unobstructed and clear. Blinds must remain up at all times except during a lock down emergency situation.

The **first aid kit** is located inside the red emergency backpack. In the Nursery and Early Childhood classrooms, this backpack is hanging on a hook near the door. In Elementary classrooms, this backpack is hanging by the check-in desk. Adult team members may clean up minor scrapes and apply band aids and icepacks as needed.

Whenever you **leave the room as a class**, take the emergency backpack with you so that you will have all of your first aid supplies readily available if needed! If you find the first aid kit running low on any supplies, please let the director know right away so that supplies can be replenished. In Elementary classrooms, extra supplies can be found in the Generic closet; please let the director know when this closet supply runs low.

Emergency 911 calls:

1. Team members are to call 911 directly, if a child or an adult is:
 - Unresponsive
 - Not Breathing
 - Has No Pulse
 - Has Excessive Bleeding
 - Is Having a Seizure.
2. After you have called 911, call Calvary Church's Medical Team so they can come and assist until the emergency team has arrived. The Medical Team's extension can be found next to the phone in every classroom.

For all other first aid needs, call the Medical Team. They will come to you or ask you to bring the child to them, depending on the injury.

Evacuation Procedures

Calvary Church Children's Ministries has plans in place for multiple emergency and/or evacuation situations. Training on these protocols will be done in person and will not be posted on-line or printed for mass distribution. See your ministry leader for more details. Review procedures periodically throughout the year.

Tape Use

Using the wrong tape on the wrong surface can cause extensive damage. Please use the different colored tapes as instructed on the card stored with the tape in each classroom.

- Drywall - White colored tape only
- Concrete - Clear 3M packing tape
- Carpets and Floors - Red tape or black gaffers tape

Sickness

In an effort to provide a healthy and safe environment for everyone, we ask that **children and adults** not be in our classrooms if they have any of the following symptoms or illnesses:

Active Chicken Pox	Lice
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	Measles
Diarrhea (for any reason)	Mumps
Fever within the past 24 hours	Rash
Infection of any type	Vomiting (within the past 24 hours)

In addition for **Nursery** or **Early Childhood** Classrooms:

- Cold
- Coughing
- Runny nose (clear drainage is allowed but not encouraged)

If a child is being treated with antibiotics, he/she should be on the medicine for at least 24 hours before coming to any of the Children's Ministries classrooms.

If any of these symptoms are noticed in a child, please promptly locate the parents and ask them to remove their child from class. For the health and safety of all our children and staff, there will be no exceptions to this policy. If you have any questions about the symptoms you notice, please talk with your room coordinator or with one of the Children's Ministries Directors. Calvary Church's Medical Team is always available to help in confirming any of the symptoms; they are located in the Medical room on the 300 level in the lobby.

Lice:

If you discover, either through the parent or through conversation with other adults, that a child has been exposed to, or is being treated for lice, please make sure that your director is informed.

Please do not talk with others about the matter. We do not want to cause any harm to the family that has been dealing with lice or cause other people to panic.

Thank you for helping us to provide a safe and healthy environment for each of our children and every worker. We appreciate your cooperation and courtesy.

Incident Reports

An Incident Report documents an incident or injury and is a means of communication between the team member, the parent, and the director. In addition, it provides proper documentation to the insurance company in the event a claim is filed.

- This form is to be a record for any incident or injury which occurs during any Children’s Ministries event, on-site or off-site.
- The form should disclose only the name of the child for whom the incident is being reported. If the incident involves two children, then two separate forms will need to be filled out, with the other child being referred to as “another child.” i.e. “Billy bumped his head with the head of another child while playing.”
- Teachers should inform parents of any incidents, and a copy of the form should be offered.
- All incident reports must be turned in to the director on the day it occurs.
- A member of the Medical Team must be notified immediately in the event of any head or serious body injury. (The Medical Team is available to assess any injury or illness at any time during ministry hours.)

Location of Blank Incident Reports

- **Nursery:** in a file at the Nursery Checkpoint Desk.
- **Early Childhood:** in the wall pockets by the door inside each classroom.
- **Elementary:** in the check-in desk filing drawer.
- **Conquerors:** in the wall pocket by the door.
- **Kings Kids:** 5th and 6th graders’ forms are kept on the shelf outside of the King’s Kids Director’s office. For all other ages/grades see Early Childhood and Elementary locations above.
- **Medical Room:** located on the 300 level off of the lobby next to the Usher’s Station.
- **Connection Centers:** in the main filing drawer under the label Incident Report.

INCIDENT REPORT

Please Check Ministry Area:

<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood
<input type="checkbox"/> Calvary Preschool	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary
<input type="checkbox"/> Study and Share	<input type="checkbox"/> King’s Kids

Name of Child: _____

Date of Report: _____ Time of Report: _____

Date of Accident: _____

Describe how and where the incident occurred: _____

Describe any and all injuries to the child: _____

Was First Aid given? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, by whom: _____

Explain what aid was given: _____

Were the child’s parents notified of the incident? Yes ___ No ___

In person ___ Over the phone ___

Time: _____ Date: _____

Whom did you speak with: _____

Response from parent or guardian: _____

Was the parent offered a copy of this form? Yes ___ No ___

Did you give the parent a copy or did they want a copy mailed to them?

Given ___ Need to mail ___

Parent’s signature _____

(If face to face conversation occurred, parent’s signature indicates that he/she was informed of this incident.)

Other Comments: _____

Incident handled by: _____

Was Children’s Director notified? Yes ___ No ___

Signature of Ministry Director: _____ Date _____

Disability Ministry Overview

Inclusive Programming

Buddy Teams (for children infant – 6th grade)

Buddy teams are one way we offer support to children with disabilities. The team consists of the disability ministry coordinator, parent/guardian, the child and his/her “buddies”. The team works together to develop a plan for inclusion in the age and ability-appropriate ministry environment from the nursery through elementary age. Buddies walk alongside a child, one-on-one, giving support at the level needed to help him/her participate, learn, grow and serve along with their peers. We aim to support families affected by disability by providing a way for every family member to worship, knowing their child with special needs is being well cared for. Inclusion with buddy support is available on Sunday mornings and during other ministry hours/days as volunteers are available.

Mentor support (for teens and young adults)

Mentors are available for students in our middle and high school environments. Mentors provide support on a one-on-one basis if needed but more often function as a coach or mentor. We support students on Sunday mornings and as volunteers are available, for student groups and student ministry activities.

Specialized Classes

Conquerors Class (for children Kindergarten - 6th grade)

Conquerors class is our self-contained ministry environment for elementary aged children that meets during the 11:00 hour on Sunday mornings. Children with special needs are taught in a small group setting with curriculum and accommodations that best meet their specific learning needs. Our desire is for each child to be able to see and hear about Jesus in a way that is meaningful and understandable to them. The small group environment gives us the ability to do this. Typical children are also included in this classroom to give additional support to our students with disabilities and to foster meaningful relationships. An adult teacher, assistants (both adults and teens) volunteer each week to provide a safe, nurturing and FUN environment for the students.

Shepherds Class (for youth through adults)

This self-contained ministry environment is for those with developmental disabilities. This class is geared toward the specific learning needs of those who attend. The students enjoy music, a visualized Bible lesson, Bible memorization, a missionary story, review games and a snack. Caring volunteers are available to support the individual needs of the students. This class meets during the 9:15 & 11:00 ministry hour on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday evening during the school year.

Classroom Staffing

You are a valuable part of the team!

Arrival Times

When you consistently arrive on time parents feel that their children are well cared. They know the buddy will be there waiting to help their child make the transition into the classroom.

Sunday School

You should arrive in the classroom ready to pray with your team at 8:55. The children will begin arriving at 9:00. As a buddy, it's important to arrive on time to make a connection with the other staff and be prepared to meet your student and connect with their parents for any relevant needs. Our families often run into delays that typical families don't encounter. Please plan to stay at least 20 minutes past the official start of class. Contact the Disability Ministry Coordinator if you have any questions.

When Sunday School is finished, please wait with your student until the parents arrive, the 2nd hour buddy arrives or you leave to take your student to the Conquerors class. Please note that Conquerors staff arrives at 10:40. If you are finished earlier, please plan to take a short walk on the way to class.

Conquerors Class

Teachers and assistants should arrive at 10:40. Buddies will bring children from their Sunday School classes so students can arrive by 10:40 or earlier. Let's work together as team by being on time and ready to help the students make the transition.

Discovery Clubs

Plan to arrive at 6:15 to gather and pray with the classroom team. Children will begin arriving at 6:20.

Attendance

Buddies are assigned to a "team" designated for each child/family. This team includes parents, buddies, the Disability Ministry Coordinator, and the child. Parents and buddies will receive a team list with contact information at the beginning of each ministry year (August). Parents are asked to communicate with the Disability Ministry (DM) Coordinator if they know they will not be attending church on a particular day. Although this is our goal, often families affected by disability have "too many balls in the air" to remember to contact us about their attendance. Let's strive to offer grace to our families in this situation. If your student is not able to attend on a Sunday you are scheduled it would be helpful if you would be willing to serve with another child if there is a need that morning; the DM Coordinator will contact you.

If **you** have a time when you cannot serve, please plan ahead as much as possible. First try to trade weeks with another member of your buddy team. **Alert the Disability Ministry Coordinator of the trade.** If you cannot work out a trade with the other team member, please alert the DM Coordinator and a sub will be put in place. If you are ill or have an emergency, please contact the DM Coordinator, as soon as possible.

Team

You are part of an awesome team. This is not only your student's buddy team and parents but the classroom team where your student is included. The classroom staff will look to you for guidance as they include your student. Remember, you are the model for that interaction!

Be sure you are facilitating a relationship between the classroom staff and your student. This will help him / her be included in the same way as any other typical child. Have a dialogue with the other classroom staff about ways that inclusion can be improved. Make suggestions (at the appropriate times) for ways that could help your student.

Communication

You play a critical role in communicating with parents on a week by week basis. All parents enjoy hearing encouraging words about their children! And no parent wants to hear months down the road that you've had a concern about their child that wasn't addressed with them.

At times, you may need to talk to a parent about a concern you have with your student. In all discussions with parents, remember the following:

✓ **Don't Wait**

Be candid with parents if they ask about their child's behavior or if you've recognized that their child has had a difficult day. If there is a serious and/or ongoing behavioral concern, please contact the disability ministry coordinator DURING the ministry hour to come to the classroom to assist and to be available to talk with parents.

✓ **The Whole Picture**

Do your best to refrain from jumping to conclusions about the heart of a child. You may not know that there are other things going on in his life that are affecting his behavior at church.

✓ **Speak Privately**

Never begin a conversation with a parent concerning their child's behavior in the presence of the child or others. If, after speaking to the parent alone, you wish to bring the child into the conversation, feel free to do so.

✓ **Seek Assistance - Don't Accuse**

Tell the parents what you have noticed and ask them if they have any insights to share that might help their child in class. Assure them that you love their child and want his/her experience in your ministry to be as enjoyable and profitable as possible.

✓ **Every day is a New Day**

God's mercies are new every morning....and so ours should be! Greet each child with a loving smile each and every week. Give them the opportunity to try again.

Terminology

Your words emphasize a person's worth.

Why worry about terminology? Because, our words carry a great impact! Although it is more important to emphasize inclusion over politically correct language, we want to be aware that some people are sensitive to language. We communicate that we care for families affected by disability when we are willing to learn a new language. No one wants to be labeled. We always want to show grace and kindness, because our actions and words will have a bigger impact than we may know. Let's take some time to read and reflect on the suggestions given below.

Let your words **emphasize a person's worth and abilities** not their limiting condition.

Think of the person first; and the disability second. **Take the parents' lead**, using their same terminology when talking with the family or introducing them to others.

Always use Affirmative Phrases	and avoid Negative Phrases
Jane has special needs or a disability .	Jane is disabled or handicapped .
Fred has autism spectrum disorder or Asperger syndrome .	Fred is autistic .
Chris has learning disabilities ; he learns differently .	Chris is learning disabled .
Todd has a physical disability .	Todd is crippled, lame, or feeble .
Sue has a seizure disorder .	Sue is epileptic .
Mary has down syndrome .	Mary is a downs child or a mongoloid .
Bill has speech delays or communication delays .	Bill is mute, dumb , or has a speech impediment .
Pat has a congenital disability .	Pat has a birth defect .
Beth has a chronic illness .	Beth is sickly or unhealthy .
Jon is Deaf or hard of hearing .	Jon is deaf and dumb, hearing impaired , or "suffers" a hearing loss.
Mike uses a wheelchair .	Mike is confined or restricted to a wheelchair .
Jess is paralyzed .	Jess is an invalid or paralytic .
The Smiths are a family affected by disability .	The Smiths are a special needs family .
Matt is a child without special needs or "typical child" .	Matt is normal or healthy (this implies people with a disability are not normal or healthy).

Safety, Security, & Hygiene

*We want to provide the safest environment possible for our children.
Your actions determine our effectiveness!*

Bathroom Procedures

Always accompany your buddy to the bathroom. Do not let them go unattended.

If your student needs assistance in the bathroom you must either have a 2nd person from the classroom accompany or use a bathroom near a check point where that person can stand in the doorway to monitor as the 2nd adult. When possible, men should help boys and women should help girls. Teens may assist with bathroom if necessary. **No one should ever be alone with a child.**

If your student uses diapers, please use the following procedure. (Teens should not be asked to do the diaper changing.)

General Steps to Changing a Diaper:

1. Wear gloves.
2. Place soiled diapers and wipes in a plastic bag before throwing them in the trash. This will prevent unnecessary odors from gathering in the rooms.
3. Wipe the changing table with a disinfecting wipe and allowing it to air dry.
4. Wash both your hands and the child's hands thoroughly.
5. Place any soiled clothing in a plastic bag for the parents and be sure to let them know.
6. Handle an accidents as discreetly as possible. If your students does not have an extra set of clothing, contact the disability ministry coordinator for assistance.

Allergies

Children's Ministries is a **NO NUT** and **NO PEANUT BUTTER** zone. Other allergies that your buddy may have are listed on their "Get to Know Me" sheet. When a snack is provided during class, we will try our best to have an alternate for children who have allergies.

Drop Off / Pickup

Parents are responsible for dropping off and picking up their child. Please check the parent receipt to make sure the security code matches the number on the child's name tag. This should be done until you can confidently identify the parent with the child. Please do not allow your buddy to leave the classroom unattended for any reason.

Taking a Break

When taking a break with your buddy, please be sure you are in public rooms and hallways and not alone in any room. You may go to the outside playground. If there are other classes in the gym you may also go there but be sure that your buddy's presence is not interrupting an on-going class' participation in their gym time.

If your student needs a quiet or sensory friendly environment, you may use the Conquerors 2 – sensory room. Rocking chairs, beanbags and sensory activities are available. If there is no one in the classroom, call the West Connection center – ext. 247 and ask for a guest services volunteer to come down to join you in the classroom.

Including Your Buddy

How can I BE a good support for my buddy?

Be Alert for Transitions

Is drop off time always difficult? Maybe it's the transition from small group to large group. Look at some of the possible reasons why...too much confusion/noise, not engaged in an activity, talking to parents too long, moving to a non-preferred activity, etc. Work on solutions based on the reason for the behavior.

Be Attentive & Flexible

Your ministry as a buddy will often times involve some detective work. Many of the children won't have the ability to communicate like their typical peers. But their behavior is always communicating something important to us. Don't automatically jump to "disobedience". Think...tired, bored, hungry, over-stimulated, under-stimulated, dysregulated. Know the warning signs that precede a meltdown. And remember, what works this week may not work next week. Be ready to try something new.

Be Balanced

As a buddy your role is to give "as much or as little support as needed" for the child to be successfully included in the classroom. Sometimes that means **stepping back** because the child is able to be successful with no extra support. Sometimes it means **stepping in** and staying close by your buddy to give the maximum level of support. It can also mean **stepping out** with your buddy for a break.

Be Ready for a Break

Being included in a large classroom of kids is not easy. There may be times when your student needs a break. There also may be times when the other kids and classroom staff need a break. Please be sensitive to Bible teachers, small group leaders and other classroom staff who may be struggling with a disruption your student may be making. Be sure to have a conversation about any problems that arise so that we're all on the same page in our efforts to include kids. If your student needs a break, be sure it's something that will match their need. They may need to go to a quiet area, take a fast walk, do a "heavy" activity like pushing against the wall, or find a place to talk about what's happening. Our goal for a break is always to get back to the main classroom activity—keep that in mind for timing and choice of activity.

Be Ready for the Teachable Moment

Many of our kids are in situations where the Bible lesson is academically beyond their level. But the Holy Spirit is still working—be ready to emphasize something that may hit home with your student. Don't be afraid to do the small group activities in a slightly different way if needed.

Be Praying

Pray for your buddy and their family. We have the awesome privilege of coming along side families to support their child for an hour or so each week. Remember that the other 167 hours of the week, the parents are doing this. Pray for them!

Resources

HELP is on the way!

We have a variety of resources available to help you as you include your student in their typical Sunday School classroom. Because you are on the front line—interacting with your student on a regular basis, you will know what can be most helpful for their successful inclusion.

Visual Schedules

Does your student have trouble with transitions? A visual (picture) schedule might help. We have very simple schedules available (FIRST, NEXT, LAST) or more detailed schedules that show each of the classroom activities in the order they occur. These can be adapted to be interactive for kids who need to know what's finished and what's still to come.

Curriculum Helps

Do you think your student could benefit from some added visuals for the classroom Bible lesson? Would their own picture Bible help them to stay more engaged? Do they need worksheets or activities simplified? If you have an idea that would make the Bible lesson better match your buddies learning level, please contact the Disability Ministry Coordinator to talk through accommodations that can be made available.

Physical Accommodations

Does your student have a hard time sitting in a chair? We have some weighted lap pads and other tools that might help. Does your child use a wheelchair? Use a clip board for activities where they can't easily access the table.

Fidgets

Is your student having trouble paying attention or seem to always need to be touching something or playing with something? They may have a sensory need that needs to be satisfied in order to help them pay attention. A fidget may be the answer. Fidgets are anything that can help to regulate a child's sensory nervous system. A fidget may be some sort of plastic object, squishy item, something that requires tactile manipulation or just something that has a sensory quality that is appealing to a child. Holding this object helps to distract their brain in a good way so that the child can concentrate. If you think this might help, check out our "Fidget Box" in the Conquerors Room.

Incentive Charts

Do you find yourself constantly correcting a child's behavior? Is there a particular behavior that you are struggling to manage in the classroom? An incentive chart may help. We have a variety of ways to implement this, depending on your student's need.

Please contact the Disability Ministry Coordinator if you think any of the supports listed would be helpful to your student. If you have another idea, pass it along and we'll try to make it work.

Strategies and Ideas

Be Ready! Fill your toolbox with ideas to make inclusion successful.

Transition Strategies

- Have a consistent schedule from week to week. This will help children know what to expect.
- Use a consistent signal for transition (bell, clapping, singing).
- Give advance warning if needed (ie., “In one minute I will ring the bell. It will be time to move to the large group for...”).
- Let the child bring something with them to the next activity (ie. Bring their “HOOK” activity page to finish during the large group or even a small toy or fidget).
- Bring the activity to the child (ie, bring the craft to the large group area, then encourage the child to go back to the table to finish up).
- Use a picture schedule to show the child what is next. (will be provided if needed)

Behavioral Strategies

- Take time to really look at the behavior and try to understand why it is happening. Is the child bored, hungry, tired, over stimulated, doesn't like the activity? This may help you create a solution.
- Use positive directions (ie. Instead of “stop yelling”, try “use a quiet voice”).
- When giving a specific direction, get down to the child's level and use their name. Use simple language and give directions one at a time. Allow TIME for the child to respond before repeating the directions. Model the behavior if it is appropriate. Reward compliance immediately using something meaningful to the child. A high five, sticker or even a small treat can be used. Try out a few ideas to see what works and change it up as needed.
- Use a TRY AGAIN strategy regularly to teach appropriate behavior. When a child exhibits inappropriate behavior ask them to repeat the action in an appropriate way. Guide them in whatever way is needed. (ie. If a child is running down the hall, stop, go back and walk with them down the hallway.) Praise positive behavior.
- Use a picture symbol or predetermined sign (like “thumbs up”) to encourage positive behavior. Point to the picture or use the sign without using words to encourage the appropriate behavior. Limiting verbal input may be helpful.
- Use a distracting activity if a child is having a tantrum. Try clapping, whistling, turning the lights on and off briefly. If the child will cooperate, give them a drink of water through a straw. The goal is to break the tantrum cycle so the child can gain some control.



Small & Large Group Strategies

- Define a child's space at the table by using a tray or masking tape. Put the material for that child only in that space.
- Seat a child in a place where they don't feel confined (at the end of a row) and can have access to leave if needed. Being too close or crowded could be a problem. If they sit on the carpet during the Bible lesson be sure the children have a defined space. Use carpet squares or a mouse pad. Even if all the children are on the carpet, your student can sit in a chair if needed.
- If using all the blocks or crayons are too stimulating, give the child his/her own smaller basket of items to play with.
- Allow a child to bring a white board, pencil and paper or fidget to the group Bible lesson if needed. Be sure a buddy or other adult is monitoring the use of these items.
- Use as many visuals as you have available to you.
- Give an active child a job or responsibility to carry out to encourage them be included and engaged.
- Physical presence of an adult near a child can be helpful. A gentle touch on the shoulder may also help.

Sensory Strategies

- Explore the use of a fidget. Fidgets can help regulate a child's sensory system. They can be some sort of plastic or squishy object a child holds, distracting them and their brain so that the child can concentrate (we have a variety available to try)
- Utilize a sensory break to use a proprioceptive activity. This can help a student orient their body in space.
 - Active—"heavy work" (ie. pushing or carrying something heavy, pushing against the wall, using a thera-band on chair legs).
 - Passive—weighed lap cloth or weighted sock across the neck, carry a "heavy" back pack, (limit weighted items to 10 minutes—use infrequently) therapy seat cushion or ball.
- If a child shows tactile defensiveness, a child can use gloves to touch "messy" things. The "messy" items from the activity can also be put into plastic baggies.
- Use a hula hoop or masking tape to mark off personal space.
- Help your student take deep breaths. Have him/her use their arms in an up and down motion as they breathe. Or use a straw or bubbles to blow out. Blow some things across a table.



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