

## Special Needs Ministry

The Children's Ministry Department ("CMD") of FCC exists to support every child and parent that walks through our doors. Recognizing that every child comes with unique abilities and challenges, and that God loves each of His children, we devote special care to those with special needs.

As is said in Psalm 139:13-14,

*"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fear-fully and wonderfully made."*

Since God individually makes each person unique, the Special Needs Ministry accepts and focuses on the unique abilities of each individual child and strives to allow each child to participate in the regular Sunday School class as well as they are able. It is our goal that everyone working in Children's Ministry will have a greater understanding and compassion for these children.

### Who is a Child with Special Needs?

Anyone who struggles to participate in the regular Children's Ministry program. It could be a child with a physical impairment, developmental delay, Autism, or a milder need such as ADHD, learning / language deficits or behavior issues. We want to support any child in the classroom and will seek to support them to the best of the ministry's abilities.

### What Does the Ministry Look Like?

Our workers serve as "Buddies" to children identified in the special needs program and operate within the Children's Ministry Department. They work one-on-one to maximize a child's engagement and help them interact with the whole class to the best of their ability.

Buddies operate in any classroom anywhere they are needed, whether that be Children's Worship or any of the grade level classes; they work with the main classroom teacher to help the student connect to the classroom teaching and with other students.

### Five Basic Guidelines:

1. Remember all children are unique.
2. Avoid misconceptions (such as "a physical disability must mean a cognitive disability").
3. Remove preconceptions.
4. Look for the abilities of the individual. Allow children to be as typical as possible, and let them do what they can do.
5. Look for interactions between typical kids and kids with disabilities.

### 15 Steps to Teaching a Disability Ministry through *Influencing*:

1. Parents are #1. Learn to communicate with the parents; call them by name, be interested and ask questions.
2. Learn all you can about the child. Intake form – "Let us know about your child."
3. Always be honest with parents, but be careful of verbiage. Sandwich the message between positives. "Teach me to help your child."
4. Learn what calms the child (as an individual).
5. Incorporate the use of buddies.
6. Always know where the parent can be contacted.
7. Continually adapt.
8. Stand up to disgruntled parents of typical children. Help to navigate them.
9. Communicate with the other children in class. Help them to understand and accept the challenges facing the child with special needs.
10. Incorporate everybody's talents. Look at abilities, not disabilities.
11. Ask for help.

12. Mainstream whenever possible. Kids will learn more.
13. Be flexible. Don't overreact, just roll with it.
14. Stay connected with parents. Keep the positives coming.
15. Be in the know. When is the child's birthday? What has happened this week or recently in the family?

**When Things Go Wrong:**

1. Remove to a safe place.
2. Stay calm because they can detect your tension.
3. Offer a sidetrack or a distraction.
4. Make adjustments, adapt to situations.

Work with the hall monitors if you need assistance. Access the sensory bags.

**Other Considerations:**

Bathrooming

In the case of diapers – family only.

If they can use the bathroom and pull up and down their own pants, they can be taken to the restroom in same manner as our other Sunday School children. Make sure you stay in full view of others and that fasteners are done in front of another adult.

Feeding

If there is a feeding tube or if student is not able to eat finger snack, then family only should provide food.

In Case of a Runner

Use code word to call for help on the walkie-talkie or when calling a hall monitor.

**The Buddy's DAILY GREETING to their Child's Parent:**

- "How can I help your child have a successful day?"
- "We want today to be a great day for your child and your family!"