

7 Tips on Partnering With Parents in Special Needs Ministry

 childrensministry.com/articles/7-tips-on-partnering-with-parents-in-special-needs-ministry/

By David Jennings

7/26/2013

To make the most of any time you have with children with special needs, it's important to team up with parents.

Our thanks go out to all the leaders and volunteers in [special needs ministry](#). It's a very rewarding job, but it also has some of the most unique and challenging aspects in all of ministry. I think part of what makes it so challenging is the fact that "special needs" is such an all-encompassing label. You have developmental delays, physical disabilities, emotional trauma, and a wide spectrum of varying abilities and disorders.

To make the most of any time you have with children, it's important to [team up with parents](#). Connecting with moms and dads will let them know that you're taking an active role in growing their child's faith and you want to be there with them. Here are Tips on Partnering With Parents in Special Needs Ministry. These will be especially helpful to share with new families that come your way.

- 1. Don't be embarrassed.** Every situation is different. Let parents know that their child is welcomed just the way he or she is. Encourage them to be open about their child's needs and abilities. Ask specific questions. Rather than offending parents, you're likely to provide relief as parents realize you are willing to listen and work with them to meet their kids' needs.
- 2. Encourage parents to bring their child to church early.** Plan on coming in before most people arrive so the child can become familiar with the surroundings.
- 3. Encourage BYOS- Bring Your Own Snack.** If your children's ministry is the kind that loves snacks, make sure you talk with parents. They may want to bring their own snack to help keep the routine of what the child usually eats.
- 4. Set realistic expectations.** Let parents know what they can expect based on what resources are available at your church. Don't be afraid to be open with parents. Open communication will ensure better communication down the road and a functional ministry. Setting up realistic expectations will not only enable a smooth-running ministry, it will help your ministry provide an effective impact for kids with a wide range of disabilities.
- 5. Ask parents available.** Special situations will arise where you will need the parents' assistance. Let them know that they may be needed to provide possible solutions to those situations. Some parents may even have come across many helpful hints with their kids' teachers at school and elsewhere. Anything that's in place at school to manage the disability may also be useful in the children's ministry setting.
- 6. Stay in the loop.** Have parents give leaders a heads up when family situations or other changes will affect behavior or how their child usually responds.
- 7. Ask for prayer.** Finally, ask parents to be committed to praying for those involved in the spiritual development of their child.

When new families with children join your special needs ministry, make sure to warmly welcome them in and get as much information as you can to help your team best minister to their child. [The Pocket Guide to Special Needs](#) not only has a wonderful questionnaire for parents of kids with special needs, it also provides information and tips for

almost any situation your special needs ministry may face. I highly recommend getting one of these mini-manuals for each of your volunteers!

What challenges does your special needs ministry face? We would love to pray for you! Share with us using the comment section below!