



Starting a Special Needs/Disability Ministry In Any Sized Church!!

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Why is a Special Needs/Disability Ministry Important?

- **90%** of individuals with special needs don't attend church.
- **Largest unmet people group in the US.**
- The main concern families have is that the staff and volunteers at the church will not be able to adequately care for the needs of their child, or they just don't feel accepted. Families are concerned that they will be a burden to the church.

Special Needs Statistics:

- 2022: 1 out of every 6 children in the US has special needs (**17.5%**); 1:4 adults in US are affected by some form of disability; Autism: 1:44 births (Apr 2022 data). 7.2 Million children ages 3-21 are receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or 15% of all children in public education. (2022 CDC)
- Hidden Disabilities: Mental health: 1:5 (**20%**) children ages 13-18 have a serious mental illness; 1:5 adults in the US experience a mental illness; 1:25 adults in the US live with a serious mental illness (10 Million!). Half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; 3/4s by the age of 24. **18%** of US Adults live with anxiety disorders, and almost **7%** live with major depression.
- Divorce rate for families with special needs: **90% (estimated)**; if medical issues are present = **95%**.
- Parenting a child with special needs is a stressful, 24/7/365 job without ever having a break!

Biblical Facts on Special Needs:

- **75%** of Jesus' miracles were done on those with disabilities! Jesus was the first Special Needs Pastor!

- Every individual with special needs is still created in the image and likeness of God.
- **Luke 14:12-14** (NKJV) ¹² Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite *the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.* ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”
 - We are called to bring those with disabilities into the church
 - The church needs those with disabilities just as much as those with disabilities need the church. The whole reason why this passage says you will be blessed.
 - This was a great model of inclusion!
 - **If your church really wants to be more like Jesus, you will minister to those with special needs.**
- **1 Corinthians 12:23** ...the parts of the body that **seem to be weaker** are **indispensable**, and on those parts of the body that **we think are less honorable** we bestow the **greater honor**...

What is a Special Needs/Disability Ministry?

- Special needs ministry exists to impart the Word of God in the heart of all individuals in an engaging and understandable manner and to teach them to love, to know, and to honor God.
- The **church needs to be a place of refuge for families with special needs** where the parents know that their child is loved on and taught the love of Jesus.
- Definition of special needs in regards to ministry and the church:
 - Any need a family member may have that requires some forethought in order to ensure that the family's church experience is meaningful and safe. This includes severe allergies, medical issues, or cognitive differences.
 - A special needs ministry is actually a ministry to the ENTIRE family, not just the individual with special needs!
- **3 GOALS OF A SPECIAL NEEDS/DISABILITY MINISTRY:**
 1. Open the door to share the Gospel with families affected by special needs and introduce them to a personal relationship with God
 2. Integrate those with disabilities into the life of the church and give them opportunities to actively serve God
 3. Enable the church to serve as a witness to the community by meeting the spiritual, physical, and social needs of families affected by special needs.

How Do You Start a Special Needs/Disability Ministry?

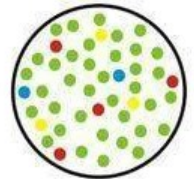
- **Start Small!!!!**
 1. **Start with what you have!** Meet your current needs before you worry about adding more areas of ministry. If you currently have a couple individuals with special needs, focus on meeting their needs effectively before adding more individuals. Survey your church to see what the current needs are.

2. **Designate a Special Needs Ministry Champion** – this person helps form the vision and is the major cheerleader for the ministry – THIS MIGHT BE YOU! This person doesn't need to be on staff, can be a volunteer, and can even be a parent.

How Do You Do Special Needs/Disability Ministry?

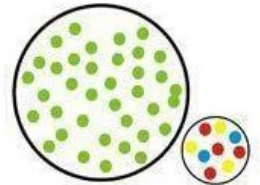
1. Define Classroom Environment: Inclusion vs Segregation vs Integration

- a. **Inclusion** - including a child/individual in a typical class with a buddy, aide or one on one person or possibly by themselves.
 - i. Inclusive classrooms are places where all students are VITAL members of the classroom, feel a connection to their peers, and have access to meaningful 'general' education curriculum, but they may need to receive additional support to succeed.



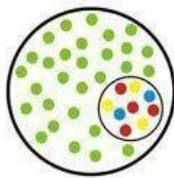
Inclusion

- b. **Self-contained (Segregation)** - having a class designed specifically for children/individuals with special needs – no peers are in the class. This environment is best suited for those individuals who do not learn well in, or benefit from the typical classroom.



Segregation

- c. **Combination (Integration) environment** – this is a mixture of both inclusion and self-contained classrooms. Self-contained instruction can be utilized during a portion of the time, tailored through typical curriculum to meet the intellectual needs of participants. They may also use the self-contained environment for a small group setting (this is especially helpful when working with middle school/high school students).



Integration

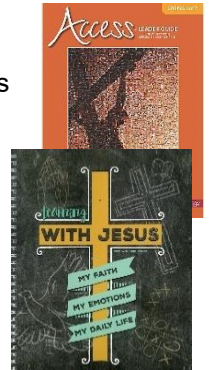
2. Curriculum: General Curriculum vs Special Needs Curriculum

- a. **General Curriculum** – Many ministries use the general Children's Ministry curriculum – especially if you have an inclusive classroom. Third grade level curriculum is effective for middle elementary through adults. You can use a preschool curriculum for preschool through early elementary.
 - i. Also possible to edit curriculum to meet your needs: simplify and repeat; adjust and accommodate; or modify.
- b. **Special Needs Curriculum** – Not a lot out there currently. But several companies are working on developing some.

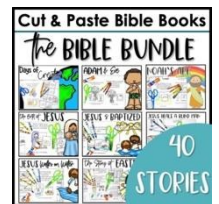
- i. **Ability Ministry:** Adult and children's curriculum. Adult curriculum currently has 6 series: Emotions, Friendship, God & Me, P.A.L.S (Pray, Act, Learn, Serve), Prayer, and Seasonal (Christmas and Easter); and a sermon: Jesus the Author of Disability. None of the curriculum is childish or animated! Perfect for teens/adults. Children's curriculum currently has 3 series: God has a Plan for Me; Generosity, and God is Real; and a VBS curriculum: The Greatest Party Ever. Curriculum is all digital and easy to download. It is good for either small group or a Sunday School class setting. Easy to use, the PowerPoint lessons include a Bible memory verse which you also learn in sign language, and discussion questions.
<http://www.abilityministry.com/curriculum/>



- ii. **Access by Lifeway:** excellent – written for adults (6th grade up). Purchase curriculum on a quarterly basis for a 5 year study plan. Places an emphasis on applying practical biblical truths to everyday life. Leader guide includes detailed teaching plans, suggestions, and study helps. Weekly ministry ideas for leaders. Large and small-group activities; options and additional ideas. Purchase one for each leader. Personal study guides include weekly Bible stories written at a simplified reading level. Teaching pictures to help with the presentation of the Bible story; Bible verse of the week; real-life stories that students understand. Purchase one for each participant. New option: A special code that enables downloading of CD-Rom contents for those who use computers, phones, tablets, or other devices without a CD-ROM drive.
<https://www.lifeway.com/en/searchpage.html?searchTerms=access>



- iii. **TheAdaptedWord.com** – Created by Laura Deeken, a Speech-Language Pathologist. This curriculum teaches simple concepts through repetitions. This curriculum is especially written for individuals with language disorders. I believe it is best suited for individuals pre-K up to Kindergarten or 1st grade. Currently offers 40 different stories to purchase from the Old and New Testament. They are a cut and paste book, where cards are laminated and place on the back page to help show the story. Very affordable – about \$3/book.



- iv. **Bethesda Ministries (Bethesda Lutheran Community)** – Time With God Devotional Series: Holidays and Celebration, Living with Jesus, Learning with Jesus, People and Stories from the Bible Vol 1 & 2; Building on the Rock Curriculum: Confirmation, Baptism, Communion, Commandments, the Lord's Prayer. All written for all ages at a 3rd-4th grade level. Adult friendly graphics.
<https://bethesdalc.org/what-we-do/faith-resources/>

- v. **Beyond Limits:** By Linda Smith - written for adults – Vol 1 based on Matthew, Vol 2 based on Mark, Luke, and John. Each volume has 52 lessons. Material comes on a USB drive and includes lessons, visuals, and handouts. Videos to go with the lessons must be purchased separately.
<https://www.beyondlimitscurriculum.com/>

- vi. **The Bible Box:** The Bible Box includes 14 beautifully painted ceramic objects that represent many of the key stories and Biblical truths of the Old and New Testament. It comes with a user's manual (English or Spanish) that gives lesson

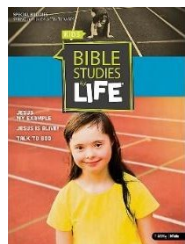
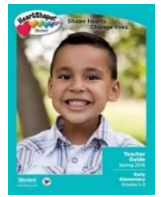
planning suggestions and scriptural references for a minimum of 23 lessons.
<https://www.bibleboxonline.com/>



- vii. **Chirp:** by Christie Priem (a speech pathologist) – written for children with cognitive and language disorders. It is highly visual. 4 units: 1. Who is God? 2. Who is Jesus? 3. Living Life with Jesus 4. The Holy Spirit Changes Me. Each lesson is a 4-week format. It is concept based and created in partnership with Mayer-Johnson Boardmaker using their icons in all of the classroom materials. Written from a child's perspective and created to help verbal learners understand biblical truths. Each lesson binder includes:
1. A quick helpful hint for volunteers - These hints are a relevant and useful training in 5 minutes.
 2. A simply worded lesson - uses concrete words to explain spiritual principles and build on each other so that complex truths can be taught in the most effective way.
 3. Appealing illustrations - Clear and compelling illustrations express the theme of each story so that children who have extremely limited language or cognitive ability can follow along.
 4. A Communication Activity - Reinforces the main idea of the lesson, and also works on skills such as labeling, describing, matching pictures to words, expressing emotions, and classification.
 5. A Motor Activity (art) –
 6. Main Idea Strips - These sentence strips show the focus of the lesson in visual format. This allows verbal children to read the strip and nonverbal children to point to the pictures. <http://www.chirpcc.com>
- viii. **Finding God:** Produced by Loyola Press – Catholic Based; designed for 1st-8th grade. Also in Spanish. Has three levels:
1. Regular: neurotypical individuals
 2. Adapted: hands on – good for special needs individuals
 3. Modified: good for those who are learning disabled
<https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/finding-god/finding-god-2013>
- ix. **HeartShaper:** By Standard; Special Needs “friendly” symbol in each lesson to mark activities geared towards special needs ages 1-12 y/o. Printed on a quarterly basis. Bible-centered classroom-based curriculum helps kids build a

relationship with God and takes children through the Bible five times before sixth grade. <http://www.heartshaper.com/>

- x. **Light & Power Company:** by Jeff McNair from their adult Sunday School Class in California - written for adults – Vol 1 = Psalms; Vol 2 = Romans; deeper level theologically <https://www.amazon.com/Lessons-Light-Power-Company-Psalms/dp/1546898670> <https://www.amazon.com/Lessons-Light-Power-Company-Romans/dp/1979599602>
- xi. **See Jesus**, by Bethesda Series; excellent – written for adults by a parent (6th grade and up). Curriculum is interactive and hands-on with the student. Currently has five lessons available (56 lessons). Titles: Compassion, Honesty, Dependence, Faith, The Passion, Hesus (Ruth). Leader and student manuals. Order online. <https://www.seejesus.net/store>
- xii. **Special Buddies: Produced by LifeWay;** 1st-6th grade level; activities are sensory based and already have built-in modifications that you see when trying to adapt traditional curriculum. Matches up to LifeWay's mainline curriculum, *Bible Teaching for Kids*. Available by the quarter – in print or digitally. Special Buddies Leader Guide is filled with user-friendly session plans, a Christ Focus statement to remind leaders how each Bible story points to Jesus, and specific ways kids can apply the concepts they have learned to their lives. Order one for each leader. Special Buddies Activity Pages engage kids in class and help parents apply biblical concepts throughout the week at home. One Conversation overview makes it easy for parents to have spiritual discussions with their kids. Order one for each student. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/shop/bible-studies-for-life/kids/special-buddies>
- xiii. **Together: By Friendship Ministries;** 5 units available (34 lessons). Online lessons geared for adults. Has two parallel tracks for study, one for neurotypical individuals and one for disability ministry – great for allowing inclusion. You pay per group member. <https://togethersmallgroups.org/>



How Do You Make A Sensory Space?

- **Sensory Space:** It is an environment where individuals who need a break from typical sensory input or who need sensory input not found in a typical classroom, can have their sensory needs met so that they can continue to learn about Jesus. A sensory space could be any of the following:
 - A bag/box in a classroom
 - A corner in a classroom with a tent/chair
 - A board (even portable) that can be in a classroom or a hall
 - A sensory room – room dedicated just for sensory space for special needs.
- **Items for a sensory space:**
 - Cognitive toys
 - example: cause & effect toys (musical toys, computer), puzzles, etc.
 - Sensory toys

- example: massagers, koosh balls, light-up toys, etc.
- Fine motor toys
 - example: puzzles, blocks, legos, etc.
- Things for vestibular and proprioception input
 - example: swings, trampolines, rocking chair
- Things for social interaction
 - example: toys that take two or more people to play, games, etc.
- Fidgets
 - example: tangle toys, water filled balls, rainsticks, etc.
- Head Phones/ Earplugs –
 - Great for individuals sensitive to noise and sensory input
 - Allows individuals to remain with peers in areas where they may otherwise need to be removed due to the noise
- Miscellaneous – timers, etc.
 - example: sensory table, bubble tubes, water table, trains, cars etc.
- Check out www.SpecialNeedsToys.com

How Do You Recruit Volunteers?

- Share the **vision** and **stories** of how this ministry impacts families and volunteer to get volunteers and leaders to join you. Make it personal! Shoulder tapping – bulletins don't typically work!
- Be **passionate** when sharing volunteer opportunities
- Build a **leadership team**: At first, may only be 2-3 people. They share the vision and passion and help determine the ministry strategies and promote the ministry vision.
- **PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!** Pick a time every day for your entire team to pray together for your ministry, for your volunteers, and for your families. Pick huge God sized goals to pray for and pray through those to allow God to answer those prayers!
- Recruit the **youth ministry** – they can be your best and most faithful volunteers – offer community service hours!
- Partner with a **local university** – students pursuing degrees in special education, early childhood education, or family ministry.
- **ICNU** - Actively observe other people in your church for characteristics that would make effective volunteers or leaders in your area and then share with them... I see in you (ICNU) someone who has a gift of... (your observations about their giftset) and then ask them to pray about serving with you and talk with them in a week or two about it. This is the most effective way to get volunteers and these are the ones who stick and stay for the long haul! Examples of this include:
 - “I see in you (ICNU)...”
 - “I think you would be great at”
 - “Would you be willing to pray about serving as a and talk more about what that might look like in a week or two?”
- **Ministry visibility** – have participants of the ministry serve in the church and increase the awareness of the ministry.

- Partner with **local high school groups** and **organizations**: National Honor Society, leadership groups, sports teams, etc. are often looking for community service hour opportunities.
- Encourage **volunteers to recruit their friends** to serve with them!
- **All volunteers should go through an application, background check (if over 18 y/o), and training prior to serving. Safety and security is a MUST for your ministry!**

How Do You Retain Volunteers?

- **Appreciate**: Find ways to appreciate your volunteers – kind words, birthday cards, some simple volunteer appreciation gift each month (i.e., graham cracker, marshmallow, Hershey chocolate in a baggie with a note “We need ‘smore’ volunteers like you!”) Regularly thank your volunteers for serving!
- **Become a Family**: Treat volunteers like they are part of the family, ask how their week was, their vacation, how the big test went. When they know you really care about them, they will buy into the ministry.
- **Match skills and passions**: When recruiting and assigning volunteers, find a role that fits their skills and passions instead of fitting them into a “hole” in your ministry. This creates volunteers who are passionate about what they do with a lower likelihood of burnout.
- **Value volunteers like people, not like a number!** Also let them use their head and heart, and YOU handle all of the hard stuff!

Why is Training Volunteers Important?

- Give them techniques to be successful and not to be fearful.
- Help people realize that they do not need experience with special needs to serve, just a heart to serve! “Can you be a friend?”
- Use case scenarios for train; this allows volunteers to learn by working through real scenarios they will experience on the weekend.
- Check out some of SOAR’s training videos on YouTube: SOARSpecialNeeds

Who Needs Training?

- Security, church greeters, information desk volunteers (whoever may be in contact with first time visitors)
- Children’s Ministry and Student Ministry volunteers/teachers
- Special Needs Volunteers/Buddies

What Does Training Include?

- Ministry vision and goals
- Role of the buddy

- How to handle behaviors: Crisis Prevention Techniques
- Comprehensive – ongoing – after initial training recommend at least a bi-annual if not quarterly training for your volunteers – prevents vision leak! Make them **Volunteer Gatherings** – focus on the fellowship and community as well, you will increase your attendance!

Crisis Prevention Techniques:

- **BE PROACTIVE – ACT BEFORE THE BEHAVIOR IS OUT OF CONTROL**
- **Be empathetic:** pay attention (get down on their level and talk in a calm quiet voice)
- **Clarifying messages:** repeat what they are expressing to show that you understand how they are feeling
 - Ask them to tell you what they want or show you what they want
- **Sensory stimulation:** the individual may need a sensory break (deep pressure, swing or spinning, quiet/sensory room, take a walk)
- **Set and enforce reasonable limits:** set limits clearly and give choices (if/then or first/then statements)
- **Ignore challenging questions:** redirect the individual when possible
- **Avoid overreacting:** remain calm (walk with the individual or try distracting them/re-engaging them)
- **Use physical techniques as a last resort:** call for help first! Use the least restrictive method of intervention possible – used only when there is threat of harm to themselves or others
- **Reminder of reinforcement:** if they are “working” towards something (something they want or like)

3 Steps to Supporting Individuals with Special Needs:

1. **Plan to include:** modify the work of the student so they are able to be included with the other students, if they need assistance give it to them.
2. **Ask and listen:** ask the individual/parent what kind of support that student needs – this allow the student and parents to feel respected – it’s better to ask than assume!!
3. **Step back:** allow the students to be independent when they can – allow them to do activities with their peers

How Do You Engage and Partner with Church Staff and Other Organizations?

- **Engage church leadership.** When ministry leaders understand and support the vision of your program, it is more likely to thrive. When pastors see the value and become actively involved in a special needs ministry, it tends to flourish. Get your church leadership on your team.
- Promote your ministry to your congregation and to your fellow staff members. The families that you serve are a vital part of the body of Christ. Keep them – and your ministry – in front of people all the time.
- You and your church leadership are on the same side of the battle to advance the kingdom of God. Our role is to call each other to greater levels of commitment in that battle—not to fight against one another.
- Serve your leaders by providing them with helpful and accurate information on a variety of topics, over time. This requires an ongoing process.
- Your church leadership and congregation will likely rely on you to provide them with continuing education as a step in transforming your church into a welcoming place for people with disabilities and their families. Offer it to them at a pace that they can handle, and with a sense of perspective that disability ministry is not the only ministry of the church that is attempting to educate the congregation and its leaders.
- **Network with other churches** already doing special needs ministry – Kansas City Special Needs Ministry Network – Able to learn from others and share resources!
- **Network with other special needs organizations:** Down syndrome Guild; Autism Society, Easter Seals, etc. All of these organizations can share your ministry as you grow with their families and for great partnerships!

How Do You Become an Inclusive Church?

- **Inclusive Church:** Basically what that means is that we want all of our individuals with special needs to feel that they are valued and as important as every other individual that comes into your church.
- **Create a culture of acceptance** – give disability visibility in church events. Allow it to be seen from the stage or from the pulpit.
- No one ever ages out of your special needs programming.

How Do You Partner With Your Families?

- Make them part of your vision
- Meet them where they are at
- Create programs that meet their needs, not your dreams
- Do what you would want if YOU were the parent!

Remember! Every Special Needs/Disability Ministry is Different?

- Do what is right for your church
- You don't have to do everything
- Do things that are sustainable for a church of your size and resources.
- Find what works for your church and do it to the best of your ability!

Resources:

- **Books:**

- *Leading A Special Needs Ministry*; Amy Fenton Lee, 2016
- *Special Needs Smart Pages*; Joni & Friends, 2003
- *Every Child Welcome*; Katie Wetherbee & Jolene Philo, 2015
- *Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship*; Barbara J. Newman, 2015
- *Autism and Your Church: Nurturing the Spiritual Growth of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder*; Barbara J. Newman, 2015

- **Websites:**

- SOARSpecialNeeds.org
- Irrestiblechurch.org (Joni & Friends) Also download books!
- KeyMinistry.org
- Joniandfriends.org
- Pure-ministries.com
- AbilityMinistry.com

Special Needs/Disability Ministry Notes:

- Please see attached copies of SOAR's Plan of Care and Consent for families and diagnosis sheet/description for volunteers – feel free to use these in your ministry!

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Autism

Definition

A specific type of developmental disorder that causes many various language, social, and behavioral problems for affected infants and children. It is often described as a tendency of the child to withdraw into oneself, ignoring much of what goes on in the environment. Asperger's Syndrome is high functioning autism.

Common Characteristics

- Moderate to severe speech problems (unusual speech volume, rate or pitch, speaking in monotone, repetitions)
- No imaginative play
- Problems making friends or interaction with others
- Making unusual, repeated movements (spinning, head banging, rocking, etc.)
- Becoming attached to a specific object
- Often some intellectual disability, from mild to severe; some have average or above average intelligence but have some distortions of thinking

Considerations

1. If physical contact upsets the child, avoid touching him
2. Allow child to have favorite object
3. Encourage good behavior by providing a reward such as a favorite food treat or a desired privilege
4. Don't force child to play with others but encourage them awareness of and interaction with others as he is able
5. Don't expect the child to participate when imagination is required
6. Social interactions are difficult; don't take it personally if there is a lack of "connection" or warmth

Cerebral Palsy

Definition

A group of various disorders that cause problems for individuals in the areas of posture and movement; which results in abnormal muscle tone and poor coordination in these individuals. Individuals may be wheelchair bound.

Common Characteristics

- Poor Posture and movement (trouble walking, running , and sitting up)
- Trouble with eating, speaking, and drooling
- Vision and hearing problems
- There may be some degree of intellectual problems also
- Problems with daily activities and self-care (bathing, dressing, etc.)

Considerations

1. Assist the child with movement and keep him safe from falling or injury (no rugs or toys or other objects left on the ground, use caution with steps or uneven ground, etc.)
2. Help the child with eating as needed
3. Find out the child's self-care limitations and help him with these activities as needed
4. Encourage the child to participate in activities he is capable of doing
5. Help the child to "fit in" and to be accepted by other children
6. Speak clearly and allow him to see your face if he has hearing problems

Developmental Disabilities

Definition

Any physical or mental condition which causes an infant or child to develop more slowly in the areas of language development, thinking, personal, social or movement skills. The delay may be severe or mild and may be in one area or several. Specific examples in each area include delays in movement skills (such as standing, walking, holding), language, (talking) personal and social (interacting normally with other people), and/or self-help (brushing teeth, dressing, etc.).

Common Characteristics

It is unusual for the child to have challenges in feeding and eating, toilet training, language, development, behavior, hearing, vision, muscle strength or coordination, and socialization.

Suggested Helps

1. Ignore temper tantrums
2. Praise good behavior
3. Teach skills through playing with toys and games
4. Provide opportunities to use all 5 senses and to use more than one sense at a time
5. Provide play which involves the higher functioning senses of the individual child

Down syndrome

Definition

A genetic disease also called Trisomy 21 that is caused by having one extra chromosome (group of genes)

Common Characteristics

- Low muscle tone (muscles are relaxed and “floppy”)
- Eyes that slant upwards and have small skin folds on the inner corners (can have problems with vision)
- Tongue that protrudes from the mouth
- Flattened nose
- Only 1 creased-line on the palm
- Soft, fine, sparse hair
- Medical problems with the heart and bowels are common
- Some degree of intellectual disability
- A social and friendly nature

Considerations

1. Focus on the child's strengths and not weaknesses
2. Find tasks and activities in which the child will be able to succeed to reduce frustration
3. Help the other, 'normal' children to accept the Down Syndrome Child
4. Help the child's development of physical abilities by involving him or her in games that practice running, skipping, jumping or arts and crafts with painting, drawing, and cutting (with blunt scissors)
5. Encourage play opportunities with other children

Fragile X Syndrome

Definition

A genetic disease with a mutation on the X chromosome.

Common Characteristics

- Speech delay or disturbance
- Intellectual disability — most males and one third of affected females, mostly mild to moderate but can be severe.
- Learning disabilities
- Co-ordination and motor problems, low muscle tone
- Physical Characteristics (often subtle and can be overlooked and less evident in women)
 - Large or prominent ears, long face
 - High broad forehead, high palate, prominent jaw
- Attention-deficit disorders, often with hyperactivity, distractibility, impulsiveness and poor concentration
- Hand mannerisms – hand or wrist biting, hand flapping
- Speech pattern disturbances
- Shyness, social avoidance, poor eye contact
- Autistic-like stereotyped behaviors, pre-occupation with objects, echolalia
- Aversion to touch, bright lights, loud noises, strong smells
- Emotional instability – outbursts of anger and aggression , especially in post-pubertal males

Considerations

1. Focus on the child's strengths and not weaknesses
2. Avoid overstimulation with noise, lights, and smells.
3. Praise good behavior
4. Help the child with eating as needed
5. Find out the child's self-care limitations and help him with these activities as needed
6. Remember that the child might not respond to his name or to simple requests (be patient)
7. Don't force child to play with others but encourage them awareness of and interaction with others as he is able
8. Speak clearly and allow him to see your face if he has hearing problems
9. Social interactions are difficult; don't take it personally if there is a lack of "connection" or warmth (be patient)
10. They succeed in highly structured activities and following routines – find out from parents what his normal routine is.

Sensory Integration Disorder

Definition

Sensory integration describes the brain's ability to process information from the senses (touch, smell, taste, vision, hearing and movement). In the condition known as Sensory Integration Disorder, the brain and the senses cannot connect in the normal manner. It may be compared to a traffic jam in the brain, where some of the sensory information gets stuck in traffic, and the brain does not get the information it needs to function correctly.

Common Characteristics

Sensory Integration Disorder involves very complicated parts of the brain that control coordination, attention, emotions, memory and higher level functions. All of these areas may be affected, making it difficult to form a list of symptoms. The more common problems include: distractibility, hyperactivity, uninhibited behavior, sensitivity to light or sound, playing repetitively, clumsy behavior, asking about sounds that most people ignore (refrigerator hum, fan, distant airplane, etc.), difficulty with sleeping patterns, inability to calm or control themselves when worked up, mood swings, an abnormal response to sound or touch, and movement difficulty (not wanting to climb up steps or stand on uneven ground)

Considerations

- Remember the child can be awkward – try to keep him from falling (no rugs or toys laying on the ground)
- Don't touch the child if he dislikes being touched, or learn the method of touch that is comfortable to the child
- Remember that the child might not respond to his name or to simple requests (be patient)
- Help the child to regain control if he starts to lose it (suggest a time out, talk to him calmly, remove him from the situation)
- Try to keep the environment free of excess noise and odors; turn down the lights if they are too bright
- Expect mood swings and irritability (again be patient)



SOARly Needed R&R (Refuel & Refresh) – Respite Care Program

Plan of Care

*=required to answer

*Date of Application _____

*Individual's Full Name _____ Preferred Name _____

*Date of Birth _____ *Age _____ *Sex _____

*Race White/Caucasian Black/African American Hispanic/Latino Asian

American Indian/Alaska Native Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

Other I prefer not to respond

*Parents/Caretaker Full Name: _____

*Address _____

*City, State, Zip: _____

*Home Phone _____ *Cell Phone _____

*Email: _____

Check this box to agree to be added to the SOAR email list to be informed of all upcoming events

How did you hear about SOAR? _____

*What is wonderful about your child? _____

Siblings (w/o special needs) who may attend SOARly Needed R&R

	Name:	Sex	Birthday
1.	_____		
2.	_____		
3.	_____		
4.	_____		
5.	_____		

In the event of an emergency and we cannot reach you, the following person may be called and is authorized to pick up my child. (Positive ID must be provided before your child will be released.)

Name _____ Relationship _____

Phone _____

***Diagnosis: Please check all that apply & circle degree of severity:**

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------|----------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Autism | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cerebral Palsy | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cystic Fibrosis | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Developmental Delay | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Down syndrome | Mild | Moderate | Profound |

- | | | | |
|--|------|----------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Disability | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fragile X Syndrome | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impaired | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Disability | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disability | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Handicaps | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muscular Dystrophy | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Handicaps | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physically Disabled | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rett Syndrome | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seizure Disorder | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourettes Syndrome | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visually Impaired | Mild | Moderate | Profound |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please describe: | | | |

***Seizures:**

- None Controlled Uncontrolled

Frequency: _____

If seizures occur, please describe: _____

***Communication Needs:**

- Predominantly Non-Verbal Predominantly Verbal

Check all that apply:

- Speaks clearly Requires prompts/cues to initiate
- Vocalizations not always understood Requires prompts to interact
- Can express basic needs and wants by:
- Eye contact
 - Gestures – Give examples: _____
 - Signs – Give examples: _____
 - Assistive Technology (picture boards, books, talkers) _____
 - Other, please describe: _____

- Able to read
- What level? _____
- Able to write
- What level? _____

***Sensory needs:**

- Likes noise Sound Sensitive

***Mobility needs:**

- Walks independently Uses cane/crutches Uses walker
- Uses wheelchair
- Power chair
- Manual Chair
- Other _____

***Dietary/Feeding Needs:**

List all diet restrictions: _____

Food allergies: _____

Snacks/foods child enjoys: _____

Please check all that apply:

- Eats by mouth Independent with set-up NPO (Nothing by mouth)
- Eats by G-tube Feeds self with prompts Uses special utensils/cup
- Requires supervision/physical assistance while eating

List any special equipment or positioning needed for feeding: _____

Medication/Medical Information:

****If you have a medical plan of care for emergencies, please attach a copy. The same plan that you have for school or daycare provider is acceptable.**

Health Insurance Co. _____ ID# _____

Hospital Preference: _____

Please indicate your child's height _____ and weight _____

Please list medications that are taken on a regular basis.

	Medication	When Taken	How administered
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____

Allergies to medications:

	Allergy	Severity of Reaction	Action Steps
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

Environmental Allergies: _____

*Please list any medical or special precautions for managing the following concerns and check any that apply and explain:

- Seizures _____
- G-Tube _____
- Trach _____
- Positioning _____
- Respiratory _____

***Toilet/Hygiene Needs: Check all that apply**

- Uses toilet independently Uses toilet with supervision
- Needs transfer assistance. Explain _____
- Follows schedule. Explain _____
- Wears diapers/pull ups. Explain changing instructions _____
- _____

List signs or gestures that may indicate their need to be changed or go to the bathroom:

***Behavior Management:**

*Behavior Concerns:

Please share any behaviors we should be aware of (i.e. aggressive behavior, tantrums, wandering):

*Behavior Modification Plan:

Please explain in detail the behavior management plan being used at home and school to modify inappropriate behavior that may be exhibited. Our goal is to maintain consistency in the implementation of this plan:

*Activities my child likes: (music, stories, coloring, physical games, independent play, group activities, reading, being read to, etc.) _____

*My child becomes upset or angry when: _____

*My child needs encouragement to: _____

*My child does not enjoy: _____

*Personal goals for my child at SOAR: _____

*Other things I'd like you to know about my child _____

Please share with us any information about your other children attending SOARly Needed R&R (i.e. what activities do they enjoy participating in) _____

I agree to have my cell phone on while your child is at SOARly Needed R&R/Camp

*****Please update this plan of care yearly or if any significant changes occur in your child's (children's) status.**

Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Mail application to:

SOAR Special Needs

12201 W 88th St

Lenexa, KS 66215

Or email to info@soarspecialneeds.org

www.SOARspecialneeds.org

816-782-SOAR (7627)



Declaration of Consent

Please indicate your consent to each item by signing below each statement.

Emergency Medical Treatment Consent

1. I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ give permission to the medical personnel selected by SOAR Special Needs to order hospitalization, treatment, anesthesia, and surgery if necessary, in case of an emergency when parents cannot be reached.

Signature

Date

Photograph Release Consent

2. I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ give SOAR Special Needs permission to use my child's name and/or picture in presentations, media releases, newsletters and marketing materials solely for the purpose of promoting the SOAR Special Needs.

Signature

Date

Waiver of Liability Consent

3. I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ agree to release SOAR Special Needs and event host facility and all staff and volunteers from all liability for any additional illness or injury to my child, and for any accidental damage or destruction of my child's property during the provision of respite care services.

Signature

Date

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact Kristina Bundy, SOAR Activities Director, 816-782-SOAR (7627).

info@soarspecialneeds.org