

What steps can you take to make your church a caring and inclusive place for people with disabilities?

- Pray about it.
- Talk with church leadership. The pastor and church leadership must be on board for the ministry to have a successful beginning.
- Put together a committee of interested people, including key church leadership.
- Take a survey of your church buildings to see how accessible they are.
- Survey the church membership, the community, and local agencies to see what the needs are. What is needed most? It could be a special needs Sunday School class; respite care; a parent or sibling support group; transportation; a special needs Vacation Bible School or summer camp; or a special needs choir.

Since 1981, Developmental Disabilities Ministries has provided Christian homes and training for adults with developmental disabilities. In 2008, DDM developed a Church and Community Services Department to assist churches in beginning special needs ministries for people of all ages and also to help support families affected by disabilities.

The church can be a tremendous blessing to those who so desperately need spiritual and other support, and the congregation will be blessed in return by the presence and contributions of people with disabilities.

Some Church and Community Services resources include:

- **Annual Special Family Retreat** in the Summer for families who have children with special needs
- **Annual Opening New Worlds Conference** to provide training for churches and support for parents
- **Free workshops for churches** on how to start a special needs ministry and disability etiquette

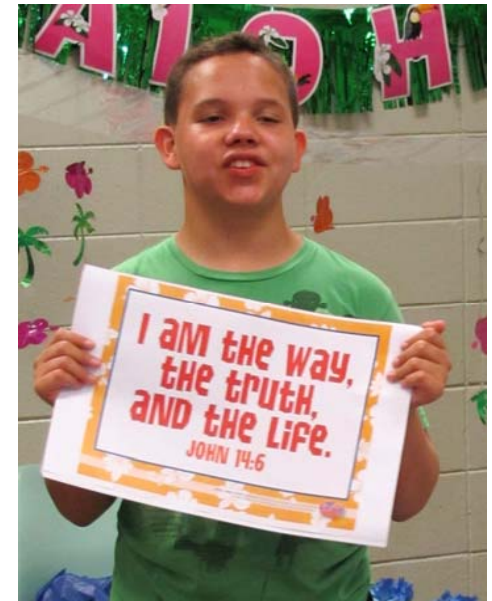
Developmental Disabilities Ministries

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*Developmental
Disabilities Ministries*

Welcoming People With Disabilities Into Your Church



Regardless of ability, people need the Lord...

Is your church missing the opportunity to minister to a population in your community that is growing at three times the rate of the “normal” population? Ten to 20 percent of your community includes people who have:

- Physical disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Visual impairment
- Learning disabilities
- Hearing impairment
- Behavior disorders
- Emotional disturbance

Fifty-four million men, women and children in the United States have disabilities. When you add their family members, you are talking about one-half of the nation’s population. Regardless of ability, people need the Lord.



Did you know:

- Eighty percent of marriages that either produce a child with a disability or include a spouse or child who become disabled will end in divorce.
- Autism is more common than previously thought in the United States, affecting one in 110 children.
- About three to seven percent of children in the United States have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and about one child in five has a Learning Disability.
- Over one-half of all families experiencing disability are outside of any organized religion.

Families of people with special needs are under a tremendous strain – usually financially, socially, and are often physically and emotionally exhausted. Some have tried to find a church home but have been turned away because of

barriers. These barriers can be physical but are often attitudinal.

Jesus spent much of His time ministering to those who were shunned by society. In Luke 14:12-14, Jesus said to his host: “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed...”

Everyone should be included at Jesus’ table!



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