

Kids' Ministry Training Video 10: Children with Additional Needs

All kids are unique and have varying needs as they journey through childhood and adolescence. They may feel awkward and different at times, insecure and challenged by situations beyond their control. Some kids have 'identified' or 'diagnosed' additional needs including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

ASD is a developmental condition which affect kids in two main areas:

- Communication and social interaction
- Behaviour, interests and activities

Helpful Tips for supporting children with additional needs

- Welcome the child
- Get informed
- Follow through

Supporting Children with ASD in Church Services

- Help families find a seat away from bright lights, speakers and loud music which may overstimulate.
- Provide a copy of the order of service before church begins so that the child can follow along.
- Advise families in advance if something very different is going to be happening in the service.
- Look for opportunities for the child to help serve. There are a number of ways that children with ASD can assist, either alongside their parents or another person in the congregation.
- Consider setting up a "Buddy Program" so that children with ASD can remain with their age group. Ensure the child knows who their adult buddy is going to before they arrive at church. If your service begins with children in church, encourage the buddy to sit with the family during this time.

Supporting Children with ASD in Kids' Programs

- Ask parents for information about the child – strengths, interests, triggers and what calms them.
- Simplify directions, and preface personal instructions with their names.
- Use predictable routines to reduce stress, and give warnings and visual support for transitions.
- Use visual aids wherever possible, as kids with ASD are often visual learners. E.g. show props when telling a story, show the finished craft before starting an activity.
- Be consistent & calm, with clear rules and expectations. Use their special interest to motivate them.

To find out more about what ASD looks like, helpful resources for your kids' ministry, and a step by step guide to setting up a buddy system, visit our website: baptistcfm.org.au. Our thanks goes to Caringbah Baptist Church for their input into this training.

Further Reading

Video Training <https://nswactbaptists.org.au/product/ministering-to-children-with-special-needs-seminar/>

Resources <http://baptistcfm.org.au/children-and-families-at-church/children-with-special-needs/>

CBM Luke 14 Ministries <https://www.cbm.org.au/get-involved/church/>

MODULE FOUR: SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Questions for Your Team

- How well do we understand the specific needs of children with special needs in our church?
- How can we better support parents in practical ways in church services?
- Would a buddy system work in our context? Who could be involved?
- What changes can we make to our kids' ministry program to better support these children?