

Starting a Disability Ministry - Ministry Structure

Creating churches that are accessible for families affected by disability starts by building disability ministries that last! The way to do this is by creating solid ministry foundations.

Today, we will look at three steps for creating a strong ministry structure.

Step 1 - Goal and Objectives

The first part of creating a strong foundation for disability ministry is identifying what it is that you want to achieve. Even if you have a broad goal, such as, "Make our church accessible to families affected by disability". In order to be effective, you have to also choose a specific, measurable problem to solve. Once you identify the problem, you can add in measurable objectives to solve it. Then you can look at your resources and see if this is a good fit, or if adjustments need to be made. This will be your foundation for everything else to come. Remember no two churches are alike. So don't compare your church to others **Examples:**

Large, Multi Campus, Church

Goal: Be more accessible for people with disabilities.

Problem: How to create systems of support for lots of people.

Objective: Launch disability ministry teams at each campus.

Resources Needed: Disability leader on staff, many volunteers, large budget.

Is this reasonable for your church?: Yes

Small Church

Goal: Be more accessible for people with disabilities.

Problem: How to support a family who is already attending?

Objective: Train a few volunteers to serve as buddies.

Resources: Two or three volunteers, no budget needed

Is this reasonable for your church?: Yes

Step 2 - Building Your Team

After step 1, you should have identified the problem you want to solve. We call this the desired outcome. Now, it's time to write down what ministry roles are needed in order to achieve that outcome. **Example:**

Desired Outcome: Have buddies available on Sunday.

Roles Needed: Scheduler, Trainer, Buddies

Starting a Disability Ministry - Ministry Structure

Step 2 - Building Your Team Cont'd

Once you have identified the roles that you need, now you will want to write down the competencies that people should possess to be a good fit for each role. **Example:**

Desired Outcome: Have buddies available on Sunday.

Roles Needed: Scheduler, Trainer, Buddies

Competencies For Each Role:

Scheduler: Responsible, Organized, Self-Starter

Trainer: Understand Disability, Good at Teaching

Buddy: Warm, Calm, and Able to Set Boundaries

When you write down each role with their competencies, it becomes easy to see what type of person you need to recruit for each role. This will help you know who you need. You can now begin recruiting by matching the right person with the right role.

Step 3 - Creating Structure

One of the most important parts of creating a strong ministry foundation is how you create it to function. Rules, guardrails, and boundaries are essential to making your ministry run smoothly. Please check out Wonderful Works 5 Questions for Ministry Planning videos - Question 3 - "Where are the Guardrails?" and Question 4 - "How do you Decide?" for more information on these.

Another important way to create an inclusive ministry is to review current church policies through the lens of disability. This will help you see if policies are still effective, need to be adapted, or if new policies need to be created. **Example:**

Church Policy: School age children may go to the restroom with one or two other students.

Lens of Disability: Would this be effective for a student who is nonverbal or who needs assistance with personal needs? Yes or No.

If the answer is no, then an adapted policy should be created for students who have disabilities.

When we look at our policies through the lens of disability, then we are truly able to create more accessible, dignifying, and safer environments for everyone.