



DEVELOPING A DISABILITY MINISTRY TEAM AT YOUR CHURCH

As your ministry to families with disabilities grows, at some point you will likely want to organize your volunteers into a ministry team. Developing and training leadership is the next step in expanding ministry. By passing on some current responsibilities, you will have time to focus on new ministry initiatives.

Ministry teams should have members who are diverse in skills, background, training, and personalities. It is important to include families living with disability on the ministry team. You want to hear firsthand the desires and challenges of families trying to navigate church life.



1 Define the team's purpose. Your team's purpose relates to how it will serve the church and your families. You need to know how the team will function and serve before asking people to join.

- Is your team's primary responsibility to be a think tank for ideas and plan the next steps?
- Will the team be your main group of volunteers?
- Will your team designate a leader for each ministry area? For example, one volunteer responsible for children's ministry, one for fellowship meals, one for choir, one for worship, etc. If so, consider whether you need these leaders to recruit their own volunteers.

2 Consider the skills that your team needs and recruit people with those skills.

- Do you need organizational skills, recruiting skills, gifting in hospitality or caring?
- Make a list of all the ideal skills your team would possess.

3 Consider the demographic make-up of the team. Strive for a balance of people with professional skills, family experience, and heart for disability ministry. A variety of perspectives will result in better discussions and more realistic plans.

Our suggestions for the make-up of your team:

- One-third: people with specific disability-related skills or training, such as a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, special educator, or others
- One-third: people with disabilities and/or their family members
- One-third: members of the congregation who have a heart for people living with disability

Each of these groups will bring skills, excitement and energy to the team, enabling your ministry to stay balanced, focused, and realistic.

4 Consider how the team will relate to the congregation and the session. Raising awareness and educating the congregation are vital functions of every disability ministry. However, congregational education also lays a foundation for drawing in new volunteers. Some considerations:

- Would it be good to have a spot for a ruling elder, a deacon, and a pastor? It may not be realistic to have all three, but try to include at least one officer so that the ministry is always connected to church leadership.
- Find creative ways to regularly keep disability

ministry before the congregation. Use church bulletins, emails, social media, and in-person ministry updates as much as possible.

5 Set the agenda for your first meeting. Use the points in the preceding sections to create an outline for your first meeting agenda. You will also want to be sure to:

- Define the team's purpose.
- Discuss how to serve and function as a group.
- Discuss how to relate to the congregation.
- Explain how to keep the session informed.
- Decide the team's next steps. Start with a meeting to listen to your families with disabilities about what is working, what is not, and what they would like to see in the future.

Would you like help developing a disability ministry team at your church?

Contact us at engagingdisability@pcanet.org.