



## HOLDING AN INTEREST GROUP MEETING FOR FAMILIES LIVING WITH DISABILITY

Interest group meetings at your church can be especially helpful when you want to learn who are the families living with disability in your church and how to best serve them. Here are a few ideas for hosting an interest group meeting that works in your church context:

**Make the meeting announcement warm and inviting.** When appropriate, invite families personally. Make it clear that you are not asking for any commitment. You simply want to hear from them about their lives so that you can glean ideas.

**Consider how wide to open the circle.** Some families will be comfortable identifying with disability while others will not. If you want to include families who may not typically be associated with a disability ministry, specifically address them in the invitation. See the example below.

**Provide childcare and activities for older kids and teens.** When possible, offer activities for kids with disabilities and their siblings at the church (or wherever the meeting is held). You want to make it as easy as possible for parents and caregivers to attend the meeting. Activities can be as simple as playground time, games, crafts, or a movie with popcorn.

**Carefully plan the meeting agenda.** Include a big-picture vision for ministry and where you ultimately want to be as a church. Be honest about the realities of where the church is currently. The more honest you are, the more open your families are likely to be.

**Encourage families to share both verbally and in writing.** Some families won't feel comfortable sharing out loud, so have a brief questionnaire that they can fill out if they want. Encourage them to give additional information or thoughts that they have later.

Here is a sample announcement that you might adapt for your ministry:

*If you or someone in your family has a disability, our church would love to get to know you more! We are hosting an interest meeting so we may learn more about your family and ways our church can come alongside you for care, encouragement, and discipleship. This meeting is for people of all ages and with any disabling condition, including learning disabilities, families with mental health diagnoses, and the elderly. Our only objective is to get to know you better so that we can more effectively plan our upcoming year of disability ministry at Covenant Church. To register or reserve childcare (birth to age 15), email us at [info@covenantchurch.org](mailto:info@covenantchurch.org).*

Would you like to hear how other churches have conducted interest meetings? Contact us at [engagingdisability@pcanet.org](mailto:engagingdisability@pcanet.org).

