



Irresistible Church Training

For Disability Ministry

Presented by



Moving on Up

Navigating transitions between ministries

Creating Smooth Transitions

Children, students, and adults with special needs may have extra challenges transitioning from one ministry to another—preschool to elementary, elementary to middle school, high school to adult ministries, etc. Each ministry within the church will be structured somewhat differently to accommodate the needs of that group. Preparing for and assisting with these transitions can be helpful to the students and the staff and volunteers.

Assisting the Student

Transitions don't have to be all or nothing. Prepare the student for the transition by allowing them to gradually get used to a new ministry program. The more familiarity you can build in, the more successful the transition will be!

- Progressive participation. Allow students to participate in one element of the new program (such as worship) for several weeks before making a complete change. This builds familiarity with the new ministry without requiring a hard break from what's familiar.
- Peer buddies. Invite students from the new program to serve as "tour guides," helping to build new relationships and providing another point of familiarity when the full transition occurs.
- Off-hours exploration. Allow students preparing to transition to explore the new ministry space in a low-sensory environment, perhaps before or after the service.

Assisting Volunteers and Staff

Sharing knowledge and experience from those currently serving a student with new staff and volunteers will ease the transition for everyone. The more information about this student that transfers to the next ministry team the easier the transition will be. How do we ensure that there is continuity between ministries?

- Don't assume communication will happen. Be intentional about having staff from the current ministry communicate with the staff for the new ministry about the needs, accommodations, and procedures implemented to help this student succeed. Transitions without intentional communication can lead to false assumptions, regression, and harm to the student.
- Similarly, make sure communication is established between the parent/caregivers and the new ministry staff. Parents need to understand the new expectations for their child and have a clear path for sharing new information about what is going on in their child's life—issues at school, medical changes, puberty, etc. Communication is essential!