



# Special Needs Ministry Resource Book



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## Welcome

We are blessed to have a Special Needs (SN) ministry at tC. Our main campus, equipped with SN Classrooms, is located at BattleCreek. SN is mostly housed within the preschool ministry for children and an additional room has been established near the student area for our adolescents and young adults. We are blessed to provide a place for children and young adults with SN to hear the Gospel in an environment with the resources that help make the message of God's love and Jesus' friendship come alive for them. We have designed our classroom to be sensitive to the sensory needs of children and youth with SN. For example, lighting, quiet space, visually stimulating activities and toys, trampoline, etc. We have a small student to teacher ratio to provide appropriate supervision and support.

At our other campus locations, children with SN are mainstreamed in most classes and given additional help as needed. One-on-one opportunities are provided as possible.

## Spiritual Life

Our primary goal is to foster the continued development of your child's spiritual life and relationship with Jesus. We encourage spirituality by teaching God's word and showing Jesus' love to your child on his/her level of understanding. Each child communicates, interacts, and understands in his/her own unique way, and our aim is to minister to your child in ways that will help him/her see Jesus. For example, we use play, conversation, structured Bible story time, prayer, and other ways to make Jesus real to your child.

## Communication

We want to encourage communication at all times between you and our team. There are three main ways that we foster communication

between our team and families: child profile, ½ sheet update form (available to teachers in classrooms), and emailing the coordinator (tbenditz@thechurch.at).

You can help us stay connected with your child initially by completing the “**Child Profile**,” which asks questions about medical history, current behavior, and preferences. Since we have rotating teachers, it’s important for us to have this information each time you bring your child. Any new information such as allergies, medication changes, or changes in toileting are encouraged to be shared each week when you drop off your child.

## **Environment**

SN is mostly housed within the preschool ministry for children and an additional room has been established near the student area for youth.

In general, we use the curriculum chosen by the preschool and school age ministries, but we make adaptations to fit your child’s developmental and sensory needs. We supplement basic curriculum with more hands-on and tactile learning supports to provide a multi-sensory experience.

We have a small student to teacher ratio in order to provide appropriate supervision and support. Some members of our volunteer team have various backgrounds that provide a great resource to this ministry. For example, volunteers may be in the profession of occupational, speech, or physical therapy; nursing; psychology; or special education.

## **Health**

Because many children with special needs may have health concerns and/or a current medical regimen, it is important for you to keep us updated on your child’s health. When you first join this ministry and then each year, we will ask you for information about your child’s general health and behavior status and needs. This helps our teachers provide the best experience possible for your child.

## **Medicine**

It is our policy that we do not administer medications to your child. However, you are welcome to come to the classroom at the time in which your child needs medicine and administer it.

# **Behavior**

For many children with special needs, verbal communication may be difficult for them; therefore, physical communication is often how children let us know their thoughts and needs. We will do our best to communicate with your child in a way that suits him/her in times of transition, outbursts, or redirection for a negative behavior (this includes, but is not limited to: pinching, hitting, kicking, and biting others, as well as self-injurious behaviors such as hitting or biting self).

It is helpful for our classroom volunteers to be made aware if your child is having a difficult day prior to arriving at church. This would allow our volunteers the ability to be alert to your child's needs and actions before a problem escalates.

If your child has a tantrum or outburst or is aggressive, our main goal is to keep him/her and the other children safe. Our teachers are familiar with tantrums, and if your child's tantrums are mild (e.g., loud but not injurious to self or others; short in duration), we will handle the situation without paging/texting you.

If the behavior is more severe, including injury to self or others, and our attempts at redirecting and correcting do not rectify the situation, you will be paged out of service. You will be asked to take your child home for the day. We love your children, but we cannot allow them to place our other children and adult volunteers in harm's way. Please note that this removal will just be effective for that day. God tells us that every day is filled with new mercies and we will always be ready to welcome your child back at the next opportunity.

# **Toileting**

We recognize that all children have different methods of toileting and are at different levels of independence with toileting. It is important for us to know if your child wears diapers or is toilet trained.

If your child is toilet trained, please let us know how she/he voids in the toilet and who should take the initiative (your child tells us he/she has to go or we need to prompt).

If your child wears diapers, please let us know if you want us to change the diaper or to page you. Children up to 5 years of age are able to be changed by our teachers. Beyond 5 years, a parent will be contacted as needed for toileting purposes. A private bathroom is located in the classroom for convenience.

# **Drop Off & Pick Up**

When you drop off your child, please make sure that his/her ID tag is on the back of the shirt and that you communicate any information the teachers may need to know that day. Please indicate any toileting changes, behavioral and/or medication changes, any new snack exclusions, and any other information you'd like us to know. Allergy information may also be printed on your child's security tag, if you desire. Forms to change the security tag are available at the First Time Visitors desk.

You will always pick up your child in his/her classroom.

## **Availability**

Special Needs classrooms are open Sunday mornings starting at 8:45. They remain open through the 9:00 and 11:00 services. A class for Students is available during the 11:00 services only.

Care may also be available during special events.

## **Childcare**

A Special Needs classroom is open Sunday evenings during community group meetings from 5:30-7:45pm.

Please note that all policies for Sunday morning also apply to childcare services. Including but not limited to: each child having a name tag, behavior and contact policy.

\*Please note: Childcare is not equipped to change children who are wearing diapers and have outgrown the changing table. Therefore, they will not be able to provide services if this applies.

## **SN Policies and Procedures**

In our SN classrooms we try to provide the best care possible for your child while he/she is in our room. The following are policies that are implemented by our volunteers and childcare workers to ensure this occurs:

- For security, teachers will check your child's name tag to your tag before your child is able to exit the room.
- There will be at least two teachers in the room at all times while children are present.
- Diapers are only changed by adult females in the room. Children up to 5 years of age are able to be changed by our teachers. Beyond 5 years, a parent will be contacted as needed for toileting purposes.
- Curriculum is provided for your child's classroom each week. Our teachers will share a Bible story, memory verse, craft and activity with your child each week. Age or developmentally appropriate toys will be provided for play during the rest of the session. Your child may also attend theater or play room as is appropriate or tolerated.
- All teachers have gone through background checks and also had training for emergency situations.

### **Special Needs Policies and Procedures for Parents/Care Givers:**

- For security purposes, each child must have a name tag on when entering the classroom.
- When leaving items such as backpacks, cups or jackets, please make sure your child's name is on each item.
- For your child's best care and safety, please communicate with your teachers/coordinator any allergies, toileting, medication or behavior changes each week when you drop off your child.
- Please note that you may be contacted during service or an event in case of a toileting, behavior, or allergy concern. You will be texted or notified via tag number on the screen during services. For the benefit of your child, please keep your phone visible if possible, and/or attend to the tag numbers displayed on the screen during service.

All parents must adhere to the policies listed above in order for their child to be a participant in our Special Needs classrooms during both regular church service times and during childcare hosted times/events. Also, please note: supervision will be provided at all times; however, it is understood that tC staff and volunteers will not be held liable for any accident or injury.

**Please complete and turn in the following profile and signed copy of this form.**





## Getting to Know your Child

**Directions:** Please complete these questions to the best of your ability. This information is very helpful to the Special Needs Volunteers so they can best serve your child.

**Background Information:**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Health and Medical Information:**

Briefly describe your child's disability or disabilities:

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Please list the medications that your child is currently prescribed and taking:

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Does your child experience seizures? \_\_\_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_\_\_No

Does your child have allergies (please include food allergies)? \_\_\_Yes  
\_\_\_No

If yes, please list the allergy and possible reaction to watch for:

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What action(s) should be taken in the event of an allergic reaction?  
(epi pen, parent call, etc.)

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**Communication and Sensory Information:**

What is your child's primary method of communication?

\_\_\_\_\_ Verbal                      \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Device                      \_\_\_\_\_ Pointing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Non-verbal                      \_\_\_\_\_ Picture Exchange System  
\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat Verbal                      \_\_\_\_\_ Sign Language

How does your child best communicate his/her wants and needs?

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Is your child sensitive to sensory information?       \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, please explain. (Examples: does not like loud noises, bright lights, crowds of people, etc.)

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Does your child use any type of sensory device or intervention?  
\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If so, please explain. (Examples: noise cancelling head phones, weighted vest, fidget toys.)

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**Toilet/Hygiene Needs:**

Is your child toilet trained?       \_\_\_\_\_ Yes       \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please specify his/her level of independence in the bathroom and what assistance may be needed:

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Describe any signs or gestures that may indicate his/her need to be changed or taken to the bathroom:

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*(\*\*Please note that once an individual has turned six, a parent will be asked to change diapers as needed. In the younger classes, a parent will be asked to change those children who have outgrown the changing table or mat. A private bathroom is located in the classroom for convenience.)*

**Behavior Profile:**

What is typical behavior/temperament for your child?

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Are there any self-injurious behaviors or behaviors towards others that the volunteers should be aware of (biting, hitting, etc.), and if so, what may trigger those behaviors? (Examples: excessive noise, others in their personal space, toys being taken away)

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How do you handle these behaviors at home, or what can be done to help your child redirect or get through a rough patch?

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Does your child have any self-stimulating behaviors? (loud vocalizations, motor movements) \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No If so, please explain:

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Does your child tend to wander away or try to run if the opportunity presents itself? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No

Does your child put small things in his/her mouth? \_\_\_\_\_Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_No

Is there any additional information you would like for us to know about your child in order to minister to your child?

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_