

ONE-2-ONE & ECHO FRIENDS VOLUNTEER TRAINING GUIDE:

1. What are the vision and expectations for our program?

The purpose of Keystone Church's Special Needs ministry is to facilitate inclusion inside the life of the church for the individual with additional needs and for their family. In support of our broader church mission, the goals of the special needs ministry are to love and lead families affected by unique needs into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

a. One -2-One

- 1) Inclusion of children in our environments to help them learn and grow in Christ.
- 2) To help parents become a part of our faith community, having confidence to leave their kids in our care.

b. Echo Friends - Same as above; plus allowing our MS/HS students with special needs to connect with teen peers and experience an atmosphere of friendship and community within the church.

c. Both One-2-One and Echo Friends Programs serve 4 basic groups:

- 1) The children and students with special needs, who have the opportunity to learn and grow in their faith with the assistance of a caring buddy / peer group
- 2) The parents of children/students with special needs, who have the opportunity to relax and refuel in the adult worship experience
- 3) The volunteers (adult and teen) who are working with the children/students with special needs - they often feel they benefit greatly from the time they spend getting to know their child/student.
- 4) The peers of the child/student with special needs, who join them in their ministry environments and learn valuable life lessons such as friendship, compassion, inclusion, support and understanding.

2. Children with special needs are, first of all, children.

They have the same basic needs as other children. They are curious about the world. They love trips to the park, picture books, toys and fun games and activities. They want to learn.

Children with special needs should be given activities they are able to do with boundaries. They need to experience success and learn how to deal with failures. These children may require special care based on their unique needs, but should not be treated as if they are different. In most cases, there will be more things these children can do than things they cannot do.

3. Definition of our programs

- a. **One-2-One** - One-2-One is our program for children and students with special needs, where a Buddy is selected to partner with a child/student as they participate in any of the Keystone Family Ministries.
- b. **Echo Friends** - ECHO Friends connects students with special needs in grades 6 to 12 with ECHO age friends for a fun learning environment. Our goal is to help students grow in wisdom, faith and friendship with God and others. We aim to create an experience that is cognitively and age appropriate, and connects with teen peers, while allowing parents time and peace to refuel in the adult worship experience.

4. Special Needs describes individuals who require assistance for disabilities that may be medical, mental, or psychological.

Disabilities cover a wide range. Some are obvious - such as a child with a physical disability who uses a wheelchair or a child who uses a walker to navigate when walking. Other disabilities may be more "hidden", for example, children who have learning disabilities or Autism. No two people are the same - some differences are just more noticeable. A child with a disability is like all children in that they want friends, respect, and to be included.

5. Show video on what is like to have a disability

Video: Carly's Cafe - Experience Autism Through Carly's Eyes

6. 10 things every child with Autism/disabilities wished you knew.

1. I am a child.

My autism is part of who I am, not all of who I am. Are you just one thing, or are you a person with thoughts, feelings, preferences, ideas, talents, and dreams? Are you overweight, wear glasses or uncoordinated? Those may be things that I see first when I meet you, but you're more than just that, aren't you? As an adult, you have control over how you define yourself. If you want to single out one characteristic, you can make that known. As a child, I am still unfolding. Neither you nor I yet know what I may be capable of. If you think of me as just one thing, you run the danger of setting up an expectation that may be too low. And if I get a sense that you don't think I "can do it," my natural response will be, why try?

2. My senses are out of sync.

This means that ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that you may not even notice can be downright painful for me. My environment often feels hostile. I may appear withdrawn or belligerent or mean to you, but I'm just trying to defend myself. From the example in the video, all of that affects how I feel just standing there, and now I can't even tell where my body is in space.

3. Distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).

It isn't that I don't listen to instructions. It's that I can't understand you. When you call to me from across the room, I hear "Jordan, put your book in your desk. It's time to go to lunch." This tells me what you want me to do and what is going to happen next. Now it's much easier for me to comply.

4. I'm a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally.

You confuse me by saying, "Hold your horses, cowboy!" when what you mean is, "Stop running." Don't tell me something is "a piece of cake" when there's no dessert in sight and what you mean is, "This will be easy for you to do." When you say, "It's pouring cats and dogs," I see pets coming out of a pitcher. Tell me, "It's raining hard." Idioms, puns, nuances, inferences, metaphors, allusions, and sarcasm are lost on me.

5. Listen to all the ways I'm trying to communicate.

It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't have a way to describe my feelings. I may be hungry, frustrated, frightened, or confused but right now I can't find those words. Be alert for body language, withdrawal, agitation or other signs that tell you something is wrong. They're there.

Or, you may hear me compensate for not having all the words I need by sounding like a little professor or movie star, rattling off words or whole scripts well beyond my developmental age. I've memorized these messages from the world around me because I know I am expected to speak when spoken to. They may come from books, television or the speech of other people. Grown-ups call it echolalia. I may not understand the context or the terminology I'm using. I just know that it gets me off the hook for coming up with a reply. EX.) Sometimes as a Buddy this is hard to understand or not take personally. If your buddy acts out, does not talk to you, or says something that could be hurtful don't take it personally, just realize what your buddy is going through and continue to show support and compassion.

6. Picture this! I'm visually oriented.

Show me how to do something rather than just telling me. And be prepared to show me many times. Lots of patient practice helps me learn. Visual supports help me move through my day. They relieve me of the stress of having to remember what comes next, make for smooth transition between activities, and help me manage my time and meet your expectations.

I need to see something to learn it, because spoken words are like steam to me; they evaporate in an instant, before I have a chance to make sense of them. I don't have instant-processing skills. Instructions and information presented to me visually can stay in front of me for as long as I need, and will be just the same when I come back to them later. Without this, I live the constant frustration of knowing that I'm missing big blocks of information and expectations, and am helpless to do anything about it.

7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.

Like any person, I can't learn in an environment where I'm constantly made to feel that I'm not good enough and that I need fixing. I avoid trying anything new when I'm sure all I'll get is criticism, no matter how "constructive" you think you're being. Look for my strengths and you will find them. There is more than one right way to do most things.

8. Help me with social interactions.

It may look like I don't want to play with the other kids in my group, but it may be that I simply do not know how to start a conversation or join their play. Teach me how to play with others. Encourage other children to invite me to play along. I might be delighted to be included.

I do best in structured play activities that have a clear beginning and end. I don't know how to read facial expressions, body language, or the emotions of others. Coach me. If I laugh when Emily falls off the slide, it's not that I think it's funny. It's that I don't know what to say. Talk to me about Emily's feelings and teach me to ask, "Are you okay?"

9. Identify what triggers my meltdowns.

Meltdowns and blow-ups are more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload, or because I've been pushed past the limit of my social abilities. If you can figure out why my meltdowns occur, they can be prevented. Keep a log noting times, settings, people, and activities. A pattern may emerge. Remember that everything I do is a form of communication. It tells you, when my words cannot, how I'm reacting to what is happening around me.

My behavior may have a physical cause. Food allergies and sensitivities, sleep problems, and gastro-intestinal problems can all affect my behavior. Look for signs, because I may not be able to tell you about these things.

10. Love me unconditionally.

Throw away thoughts like, "If you would just-" and "Why can't you-?" You didn't fulfill every expectation your parents had for you and you wouldn't like being constantly reminded of it. I didn't choose to have a disability. Remember that it's happening to me, not you. Without your support, my chances of growing up to be successful and independent are slim. With your support and guidance, the possibilities are broader than you might think.

Three words we both need to live by: Patience. PATIENCE. PATIENCE. View my disability as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see my strengths. I may not be good at eye contact or conversation, but have you noticed that I don't lie, cheat at games, or pass judgment on other people?

I rely on you. All that I might become won't happen without you as my foundation. Be my advocate, be my guide, love me for who I am, and we'll see how far I can go.

7. In case of a severe behavior the following procedures are in place:

Echo Friends

1. Evacuate the room of all other students including the High school buddies.
2. Call for Assistance using the walkie talkie. Each student will be assigned a number that will be given to his or her parents. These numbers are located on the clipboard near the door. The parents will be notified by number if necessary.
3. 2 adults must stay in the room with that child. When in a behavior, use VERY LITTLE words to communicate to the child. Visuals, like picture cards, or writing words or directions on a paper are preferred.
4. Keep yourself and the child safe. The best technique when a student has become physical is to block and move. We do not use physical restraints.

Children's One-2-One Ministry

1. Remove the student from the area of the class.
2. Ask another adult for assistance and to be with you during this time of distress.
3. Go to another area that is available, depending on the location. When in a behavior , use VERY LITTLE words to communicate to the child. Visuals, like picture cards, or writing words or directions on a paper are preferred.
4. Have a staff member go to the host station to page the parents.

Echo High School and Middle school

1. Evacuate the room of all other students including the High School buddies.
2. Call parents. Phone numbers are posted on tech desk.
2. 2 adults must stay in the room with that student. When in a behavior, use VERY LITTLE words to communicate to the student. Visuals, like picture cards, or writing words or directions on a paper are preferred.
3. Keep yourself and the student safe. The best technique when a student has become physical is to block and move. We do not use physical restraints.

8. Important tips when working with your buddy.

- a. **Interact-** Biggest mistake that adults make when they meet someone with a disability is failing to interact with them. Usually they try asking a question and will not get a response back. The same rules of polite conversation apply to adults and children. First introduce yourself and explain how you are connected to the child. Depending on the child, it may be necessary to take the child's hand, or place your hand on the child's shoulder to make a proper introduction.

- b. Observe-** Some children with special needs perceive sensory input in different ways and may be unable to verbalize discomfort. Remember that behavior is communication. Always keep a lookout for these differences and think about what the child's behavior is communication to you. If you're not sure what you're seeing, ask the child's parents or other adults for advice.
- c. Be flexible-** Some adults say that they will not change the way they do things to accommodate one person in a group. But the whole point of teaching is to use a variety of methods to help another person understand and master new skills. For example, if a child does not have the appropriate motor skills for an activity, help the child go through the motions and assign a buddy to help the child practice on the sidelines for a few minutes. A child may have difficulty understanding some concepts; but when those same concepts are presented in a game or hands-on art project, they make more sense.
- d. Be Consistent-** If a set of rules is presented to the group, apply those rules consistently to everyone. Share your expectations with the student and assist the student to be successful following the rules and expectations. Be consistent with this every week.
- e. Use visual, auditory, or tactile cues-** Having the right cues in an environment can mean the difference between participation and nonparticipation for many children with special needs. Always bring along the student's binder for the picture and schedule supports. We also can use index cards or paper with simple written instructions to help communicate the rules for appropriate behavior. If the student is unable to read use picture cues to help communicate your wants or needs. When transitioning to a new place or activity use tactile cues such as gently touching a person's shoulder or offering a desired object to get their attention.
- f. Be Positive-**A positive attitude is the single most important quality for anyone who works with children with special needs. Being positive to the parents and sharing about how the child is doing is essential. Some people with no experience or knowledge of their disability have jumped right in and changed the student and the parent's life for the better.

9. Questions and Answers:

BREAKOUTS

10. Introduce the tools we have

a. Boundaries- Help students to understand where to be and how to behave in their space. Giving a student boundaries also allows them to stay in their designated personal space.

b. Choices- Give students a choice of 2 items or activities to allow them to feel in control. When students refuse and chose to do an activity that is not appropriate at the time tell them it is not a choice.

Define space; Engage a child through visual and tactile aides.

c. Chair Cushion- Provides tactile and sensory input and allows the right amount of movement to maximize their focus without needing to get up from their seat.

d. Squish Balls- Good sensory intervention for a coping mechanism, to remain focused, or to keep their hands busy.

e. Hand Hugs- Will help self-stimming behaviors and help a child get extra sensory input when they need it.

f. Ear phones- Help block our irritating and painful sounds. It can also be calming from sensory overload.

g. Schedule/Picture Schedule- A visual tool to help communicate to your buddy or to allow your buddy to communicate to you.

h. Visual timer- Help children who have difficulty moving from one activity to another to anticipate and be ready for the change.

i. Buddy Binders- In these binders you will find picture cards to help communicate with the student, a schedule of activities, sensory objects, communication for the parents and other volunteers.

j. Exit notes- A communication piece to give the parents; insight on the activities the child did in class and how they did.

k. Asking for Help

