

Respite Outreach

Prepared for Inclusion Fusion

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What is Respite Outreach?

- Event based model
 - Large Scale – High Attraction
 - Once a month, every few months, or even once a year
 - May or may not have a ‘Christian’ focus

- In home “Relational Respite”
 - Organic
 - As needed, less formalized

Why Does it Matter?

□ A testimonial...

“I wanted to send a sincere and heartfelt “thank you” for organizing such a wonderful program! One word could sum up our experience last night....amazing! Our children had an exciting time playing, crafting, singing and dancing the night away while my husband and I had a chance to quietly reconnect as a couple and talk over dinner and coffee. Opportunities like this for parents of special needs kiddos are so needed but don't happen nearly enough because of the inability to find appropriate care, the burden of finances or sheer exhaustion from running to and from specialized therapies and schools. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to let our kids have a blast in a safe and nurturing environment and allowing my husband and I to enjoy time together as just husband and wife. We are so grateful and will be back next month (and months to come). We will also be sharing our positive experience with other parents that would also benefit from such a special program. Keep up the GREAT work!”

Who Do We Serve With Respite?

- ▣ Parents
 - Estimated 85% Divorce Rate
- ▣ Child with Special Needs
 - How do they experience the world around them?
- ▣ Siblings
 - A time to get some one on one attention
- ▣ The Community
- ▣ JC!

Now We Know *Why*, But *How*?

Where do we begin?

▣ STEP ONE...A brainstorming session

- Gather your most creative minds and dream big!
- What would show the extravagant love of God to our guests, families, volunteers and community?

▣ STEP TWO....Invite some guests

Serve your own congregation, but it's OUTREACH, after all, so...

- Press releases to local media
- Allied organizations (professional associations for those with ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, County Boards of DD, support groups, MOPS)
- Allied professionals (offices of doctors, counselors, speech therapists, occupational therapists, specialized schools)
- WORD OF MOUTH, aka 'viral marketing.' This is one virus you *want* to spread!
- Outreach cards
- Establish some guidelines for age, but stay flexible!

■ STEP THREE....Recruit LOTS of Volunteers

- Be honest and up-front in volunteer recruitment; what's the 'elephant in the room?'
- Announcements to your congregation (in bulletin, from pulpit)
- Your youth group (service hours!)
- Partner with other churches
- Take no excuses! Hate kids? No problem, be a behind-the-scenes volunteers. Everyone has gifts to share!
- Your website
- Social networking sites
- Recruit to meet your guests' needs
- Videotape/photograph the first event to promote future volunteer involvement

Show Me the Money – What's All This Going to Cost?

Your budget may be like David...

Or like Goliath

- ▣ Sponsorships or donations can reduce costs
- ▣ Events CAN be done with NO financial resources whatsoever

Volunteer Roles

Something for EVERYONE! Set them up for success with lots of information and clearly-defined role descriptions!

- ▣ Welcome/Registration Team
- ▣ Buddies
- ▣ Security Team
- ▣ Medical Team
- ▣ Servers
- ▣ Photographers
- ▣ “Floaters”

Welcome/Registration Team:

- ❑ Clear signage “Register Here”
- ❑ Greet guests in a friendly, calm way
- ❑ Be prepared to welcome guests through a “quiet” entrance
- ❑ Recognize when a child may want to wait in a quieter area while his/her parents register
- ❑ Have parents sign kids in and out
- ❑ Give instructions for where and when to pick up
- ❑ Offer movie or restaurant ideas for parents if needed
- ❑ Remember, not every parent will have a romantic date... “enjoy your evening” works great!
- ❑ Provide registration info to each buddy

Buddies:

- ▣ You are Christ to these families!
- ▣ Review your guest's info and feel free to have an "ice-breaker" ready
- ▣ Welcome your guest at their eye level
- ▣ Roam freely throughout the building – as long or short as your guest wishes!
- ▣ Feel free to exchange contact info with parents at the end of the evening (send an e-mail to parents, postcard to kids, etc.)
- ▣ Never leave your guest – they're a part of your body!
- ▣ Don't put guest's names or pics on FB
- ▣ Remember to leave texts/calls for later – lavish undivided attention on your guest
- ▣ Stay indoors with your guest

Security Team:

- ▣ Your primary job is to make sure kids don't exit the building until they're supposed to!

Medical Team:

- ▣ Be available near a designated First Aid area to answer questions or respond to emergencies.
- ▣ You can request a copy of Registration forms from the Registration Team to be prepared!

Servers:

- Make sure you're aware of any food allergies in guests.

Photography:

- Be aware of guests who choose not to be photographed/videotaped.

“Floaters”

- Be available to escort guests/buddies to bathroom, diapering areas, or any area of the church where there aren't other guests/buddies;
- Please don't feel under-utilized if you're not pressed into service!
- This type of event can only happen if there are extra eyes, ears and hands available at all times!

General Info

- ▣ PRAY for your families, but not OVER or WITH them!
- ▣ Diaper changing location
- ▣ Where to go with medical questions
- ▣ Where to go with behavioral questions

Physical Environment

Make sure your building is set up for success!

- ▣ No loud voices
- ▣ No blaring music
- ▣ All foods allergy-checked
- ▣ No strong smells
- ▣ No over-the-top welcomes
- ▣ No unwelcome touch
- ▣ No bright lights

A Sample Respite Evening....

Friday evening from 6-9 p.m.

Guest/Buddies moves from activity to activity as they wish

- Large motor space – a place to ‘blow off steam’
- Small motor space – Legos, blocks, puzzles
- Craft – sand art, craft foam door hangers, visors
- Movie
- Board games
- Dancing/music/karaoke
- Bounce house
- Quiet room/sensory room

People First Language

Child with Special Needs vs. Special Needs Kid

▣ Words to avoid

- Retarded
- Crippled
- Deformed
- “Suffers From”
- “Victim of”
- Autistic, Epileptic, etc.
- Wheelchair Bound
- Unfortunate

▣ Why does it matter?

- Respects the individual
- Honors the family
- Sends a message to the community

www.freerespite.com

We can increase our influence by sharing resources to form rolling respite networks

- ▣ Cleveland Respite Network - check
- ▣ Cincinnati Respite Network - check
- ▣ Orlando? Houston? Only GOD knows!

Please Stay in Touch!

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Blogs:

Church4EveryChild by Stephen Grcevich, MD:

<http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com/>

Diving for Pearls by Katie Wetherbee:

<http://katiwetherbee.wordpress.com/>

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