

# VBS FOR VOYAGERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## Director Tips and Checklist

All Voyagers are welcome! Regardless of limitations, Voyagers need to experience the love of Jesus through caring adults. God created each of us with a variety of abilities that leaders need to take into consideration when planning VBS.

Besides more obvious physical and communication challenges, you may have Voyagers who need extra structure, require adaptations in their physical environment, or just have a difficult time relating to others. A few simple steps and modifications can make all the difference in helping Voyagers with disabilities to feel included, experience God's love, and grow in their discipleship.



### A Checklist for Directors

- ⊕ **Inform families that you welcome Voyagers with special needs and disabilities.** Families often feel that churches are not comfortable with or prepared for their child's challenges.
- ⊕ **Meet with each special needs Voyager's parents or caregivers.** They can provide valuable insights and suggestions concerning the specific needs for their child. Ask about:
  - the family's experiences in church
  - the child's interests and favorite activities
  - the child's daily routine, allergies, medications, and any physical accommodations or special equipment requirements
  - how the child best relates to others
  - preferred coping/discipline strategies
- ⊕ **Contact a special education teacher to help you understand** a particular disability and for additional suggestions.
- ⊕ **Communicate expectations on supporting special needs Voyagers to Station Leaders.**
- ⊕ **Arrange for a Safe Sanctuaries-appropriate "buddy" to help** with the activities or to provide gentle reminders on behavior. Be sure to equip him/her with a copy of the Buddy Guide in advance (found in the To Mars and Beyond VBS Special Needs Classroom Leader guide, available at [cokeburyvbs.com](http://cokeburyvbs.com))!
- ⊕ **Be alert for Voyagers whose parents have not informed you about their child's disability.** Have a volunteer ready to step in and help the child or teacher as needed.
- ⊕ **Provide a copy of the handout on page 71 for each of your team members** to prepare them for inclusion of special needs Voyagers!

# VBS For Voyagers with Special Needs

## Tips and Helps for Volunteers

All Voyagers are welcome at our VBS and need to experience the love of Jesus through caring leaders and adults. Help us provide that by following these pro tips with our Special Needs friends:

### Notes for All Leaders

- ⊕ Remember that Voyagers with disabilities have God-given gifts to share with us all!
- ⊕ Generate an atmosphere of love and respect, and present a positive attitude toward all Voyagers.
- ⊕ Use multiple teaching methods provided in each session to engage all of the Voyagers' senses.
- ⊕ Overlook harmless behaviors. Stay calm when you face a behavior you don't understand, and consult your Director if you need help.
- ⊕ Keep directions simple by giving one at a time.
- ⊕ Announce a five-minute warning before the end of all activities to facilitate smooth transitions.

### Craft Leaders

- ⊕ Allow extra time for special needs Voyagers to complete their projects. Have an extra project on hand for Voyagers who finish quickly (easy options available in our Reproducible Fun Pages!).
- ⊕ Provide additional assistance with cutting, and other tasks as needed for each craft.
- ⊕ Foster independence by allowing Voyagers to complete as many tasks as possible on their own.
- ⊕ Prepare a volunteer to provide one-on-one guidance when needed.
- ⊕ For Voyagers with visual impairments, have craft materials with a variety of textures available.

### Recreation Leaders

- ⊕ Review your games to determine if adaptations need to be made.
- ⊕ Ask questions to make sure your Voyagers understand how to play each game.
- ⊕ Pair Voyagers up, and encourage them to interact and work together as they play.

### Music Leaders

- ⊕ Provide copies of the *Take-Home CD* to Voyagers to help them learn the songs at home.
- ⊕ Teach each song's sign language and motions as you go to keep everyone engaged.
- ⊕ Use PowerPoint® slides from the Complete Music CD during all music times. When needed, provide words of the song in large print or braille.

### Science Leaders

- ⊕ Display a visual, step-by-step guide illustrating the procedure for each experiment.
- ⊕ Allow Voyagers to work at their own pace.
- ⊕ Encourage other Voyagers to help them as needed.
- ⊕ Announce a five-minute warning before the end of an activity to facilitate smooth transitions.

### Snack Leaders

- ⊕ Keep extra snack supplies on hand in case of spills or other accidents.
- ⊕ Ask your Director if any Voyagers have food allergies, sensitivities, or other dietary restrictions.
- ⊕ Have snack alternatives on hand.
- ⊕ Be sure to read lists of ingredients carefully; food substances that cause reactions can be present in common foods.
- ⊕ Voyagers with food allergies often feel left out or treated as an "inconvenience" during snack times. Being attentive to Voyagers' dietary needs shows them that they are valued. To Voyagers with a gluten intolerance, a cookie they can eat is not just a fun snack, but tangible evidence that they are known, loved, and welcomed!