
VBS for Heroes with Special Needs

Director Tips and Checklist

All Heroes are welcome! Regardless of limitations, all Heroes 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 (and celebrate!) when planning VBS.

Besides more obvious physical and communication challenges, you may have Heroes 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 Heroes with special needs to feel included, experience God's love, and grow in their discipleship.



A Checklist for Directors

- Inform families that you welcome Heroes with special needs and disabilities. Families often feel that churches are not comfortable with or prepared for their child's challenges.
- Meet with each Hero'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 Heroes with special needs 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, available at cokesburyvbs.com!
- Be alert for Heroes 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 for each of your team members to prepare them for inclusion of Heroes with special needs!

VBS for Heroes with Special Needs

Tips and Helps for Volunteers

All Heroes 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 friends who with special needs:

Notes for All Leaders

- Remember that Heroes 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 Heroes.
- Use multiple teaching methods provided in each session to engage all of the Heroes' 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 Heroes with special needs to complete their projects. Have an extra project on hand for Heroes who finish quickly. Easy options are available in our Reproducible Fun Pages!
- Provide additional assistance with cutting, and other tasks as needed for each craft.
- Foster independence by allowing Heroes to complete as many tasks as possible on their own.
- Prepare a volunteer to provide one-on-one guidance when needed.
- For Heroes 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 Heroes understand how to play each game.
- Pair Heroes and encourage them to interact and work together as they play.

Music Leaders

- Provide copies of the Student Take-Home CD to Heroes 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 Heroes to work at their own pace.
- Encourage other Heroes to help 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 Heroes 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.
- Heroes with food allergies often feel left out or treated as an "inconvenience" during snack times. Being attentive to Heroes' dietary needs shows them that they are valued. To Heroes 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!