

Dear Parent,

Welcome to the Image-ine Special Needs Ministry at NorthStar Church. This ministry has been created out of a vision to give children with additional needs and their families a safe, loving and welcoming home within our church community. Our desire is for your child to participate in an environment that provides familiarity and comfort as well as the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ. We believe in God's value for every human life. And we believe that Jesus desires a personal relationship with every person, regardless of his or her abilities or disabilities. Our passion is to see children with special needs, included with their typical peers, in a stress-free environment. We always give any child the opportunity for inclusion experiences through matching with a buddy. This facilitates inclusion and assists children in having successful experiences at NorthStar Church. We also realize that inclusion may not be the safest or best learning environment for your child. We have alternative classrooms for this purpose. Many of the children in this ministry may be included in a class with their typical peers, but join the alternative classroom for story time and craft. Others may remain in the alternative classroom settings for the entire hour based on the parent's desire. We assist by adapting or modifying curriculum on an as needed basis for any child with special needs. We are dedicated to this mission as well as seeing your child succeed and grow within our ministry.

It is our hope that your child is not the only one who benefits from our ministry, but that you, the parent, have the opportunity to learn about God in a deeper way while your child receives safe and loving care. It is also our hope that our church as a community of believers can interact, minister to, and learn from your family. We are excited and privileged to partner with you in this process and build a lasting relationship with you and your family.

In Him,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Courtney Miller". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Courtney Miller

Preschool and Special Needs Ministry Director

What is the Image-ine Special Needs Ministry's approach to accommodation and inclusion through the Buddy System?

- The church provides a personal buddy to accompany and assist the child with special needs. *For the purposes of our ministry, we refer to this as the "buddy system".*
- Each child is included in the typical ministry setting and among typical peers as is appropriate for the child.
- A specialized plan is created to accommodate your child's needs.
- This ministry is offered at 9:00 and 10:20 am.

What is the goal of the Image-ine Special Needs Ministry?

The Image-ine Special Needs Ministry strives to facilitate a specialized plan for the individual with additional needs while working within the policies and resources of the church. The desire of NorthStar's Image-ine Ministry is to partner with parents in developing plans to appropriately accommodate each participant in the church setting. Ensuring the safety of any child (with or without special needs) and of those around them is one of the top priorities of NorthStar Church. For those children who benefit from an alternative classroom setting, we also have two alternative classrooms based on age. These classrooms teach a sensory Bible story as well as engage your child in sensory activities that relate to the Bible lesson for the day.

What is the dream of the Image-ine Special Needs Ministry?

Our ultimate goal is to one-day be a home not only on Sunday mornings, but also through providing Respite Events, support groups, and more.

What safety measures are put in place for your child regarding volunteers?

Screening Requirements for Volunteers

The same policies for our church's preschool, children's, and student ministries are applied inside the special needs ministry. Everyone volunteering with ages birth-17 years old must complete a Background Check Form and agree to comply with the Child Protection Policy Form, ensuring all prospective caregivers have no prior record that would compromise their ability to serve reliably and effectively in the ministry environment.

Two-Person Rule

Coinciding with NorthStar Kidz, this policy requires that two screened, and approved adults always be present during church-provided programming. At no time would any child or any number of children be left alone without any caregiver or with only a single caregiver.

Training Requirements

This ministry requires that no one can serve as a buddy or inside our special needs environment until they have completed the necessary training process we provide.

Policies and Procedures

Check-in Procedure

You will follow the normal Northstar Kidz procedures to check in your child. At this point, it will be important to provide any helpful information specific to the morning that should be communicated to your child's buddy. For example, "Sally did not sleep well last night. She may need more down time than usual."

Parent Presence

Coinciding with the NorthStar Kidz, we require that parents remain on the church campus at all times while the church cares for the child. For events such as respite and Adventure Night, this policy may be altered.

Behavior Management

In the case that every effort has been made to contain a situation in which a child is displaying an inappropriate or dangerous behavior before physical force is required, the parent will be paged for immediate attention and assistance. The rest of the class is removed from the room during this time.

Medical Treatment

Volunteers and ministry leaders are not permitted to dispense or apply medication. If a participant requires ongoing medical assistance, it is necessary to provide his or her own medical aide to accompany them while participating in the church environment and/or events.

Intake Process

We require the completion of an intake interview and form for every child who utilizes the services of the Image-in-e Ministry. We also ask that you join us in updating these documents annually in order to protect your child and everyone involved in the accommodation plan. This helps us to ensure the continued success of your child.

Medical Policies

In emergency medical situations, ministry leaders and caregivers are trained to immediately contact the parent.

All accidents and incidents *must* be recorded and copied. One copy goes home with the child's parent, one stays on file with the coordinator.

If one child injures another, neither child's information will be shared with the other family involved. The report will state only what injury occurred to the child. Staff will speak with the parents of the child who caused the injury, but will never mention the name of the injured child to the family, and vice versa.

Snacks and Allergies

Snacks are only offered in alternative classroom settings. If a child has a restricted diet and/or food sensitivity, we ask that the child bring a carefully labeled snack from home. Also, PLEASE inform us if there is an allergy severe enough to require the use of an Epi Pen as well as where this Epi Pen will be located in the child's belonging so that if the occasion arises the buddy will have quick access to it.

When you will be absent:

You will be given your child's buddy contact information. You need to text, call, or email the buddy when you will not be at church. It is preferred that you would let them know in advance, but if you do not know until Sunday morning please text as soon as you know.

When you will be late:

You are asked to text or call your buddy on Sunday morning when you are running late. After 15 minutes, your child's buddy will be released from the classroom if you have not called or texted.

When your child's buddy is absent:

Your child's buddy will be given your contact information. On times that they will not be present at church, they are asked to secure a substitute at least two Sundays in advance. When they are unable to find a substitute, they let the appropriate member of the Leadership Team know. Every effort will be made to have a substitute buddy present for your child. If a substitute is unable to be secured, we ask that you make an appropriate decision whether your child will be able to participate in the classroom without a buddy for that morning.