

Creating Smooth Transitions

Children, students, and adults with disabilities may have extra challenges when transitioning from one ministry to another—preschool to elementary, elementary to middle school, high school to adult ministries, etc. Each ministry within the church will be structured somewhat differently to accommodate the needs of that group. Preparing for and assisting with these transitions can be helpful to the students, staff, and volunteers.

Transitions don't have to be all or nothing. Preparing for the transition may involve allowing them to gradually get used to a new ministry program. The more familiarity you can build in, the more successful the transition will be! A few methods you may consider...

Progressive Participation

Allow students to participate in one element of the new program (such as worship) for several weeks before making a complete change. This builds familiarity with the new ministry without requiring a hard break from what's familiar.

Peer Buddies

Invite someone from the new ministry to serve as a tour guide. This person can serve as a relational bridge and provide a point of contact and stability in a new environment. Discernment and wisdom should of course be used when assigning young children as a peer buddy.

Off-Hours Exploration

Allow transitioning individuals the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the new space without the hustle and bustle of a full room. Getting familiar with the room itself prevents the physical environment from being just one more unfamiliar element to the transition.

Assisting Volunteers and Staff

Transitions don't just happen with people. For those with additional needs, a transfer of knowledge between staff and volunteers is crucial to a smooth transition. But how do we ensure continuity between ministries?

Don't Assume Communication Will Happen

Be intentional about setting up time for staff to hear about needs, accommodations, and procedures they've learned or implemented.

Make Sure Parents/Caregivers Are Involved

Just as we can't assume communication will happen between volunteers, we can't assume that communication will happen with parents. Transitioning ministries may also mean transitions in other areas of life. Making sure there is an open line of communication between the family and the new ministry leader is vitally important.