



LifeKids Buddies

How They Support Special Kids and their Families

How does LifeKids support kids who have special needs and their families?

- Campus LifeKids Staff and their network of LifeKids leaders check in on our special needs families to see how we can support them because we understand the stress they face is sometimes a 24/7 issue.
- We offer extra support on a case-by-case basis through LifeKids Buddies.

What do LifeKids Buddies do?

- Buddies help every child who attends LifeKids have a safe and meaningful experience, regardless of physical, sensory, cognitive, developmental, or emotional differences.
- Buddies work closely with Coaches. They push in to rooms to support kids the Coach identifies as having an “off” day and who need extra love.
- Buddies keep all kids safe by closely assisting an individual kid who needs more support.
- Buddies can be a regular one-on-one support for a child when assigned by campus LifeKids staff.
- Buddies can use unopened LifeKids rooms to offer a “break” to the child they support when authorized in writing by parents.
- Buddies are on-call to help with any child who needs extra support for any reason at any time.

What do LifeKids Buddies not do?

- Buddies do *not* count toward in-room adult leader-to-child ratios. They need to be available to offer their undivided attention to the child they’re supporting and be able to leave the room to take them for walks if necessary.
- They’re *not* a substitute for the value the relationship with LifeKids staff brings to a child’s family.
- Buddies support a family, but they are *not* the voice of Life.Church or LifeKids to the family.
- Buddies do *not* research local laws or implement policies on restraining a child. That is the job of the campus staff.

How many Buddies does my campus need?

- Have at least **one on-call Buddy at each experience** to assist any child in any room as needed or to help a child with special needs who is visiting for the first time.
- The final count varies from season to season, since **one-on-one Buddies are assigned on a case-by-case basis** after discussing service times and Buddy options with the family. *(Check up regularly on Buddies and families to ensure the Buddy is still a good fit and to see if the child still needs the one-on-one support.)*

How are LifeKids Buddies recruited?

- Connect with local colleges who offer special education, occupational therapy, and speech therapy degree programs.
- Use huddles to educate existing LifeKids leaders about the LifeKids Buddy serving opportunity.
- When onboarding new LifeKids leaders, include a brief overview of the LifeKids Buddy program.
- Put a blurb in the weekly bulletin.
 - *Sample blurb: LifeKids shares the love of Jesus with all kids. If you're patient and can empathize with a child who demonstrates behaviors you might not understand, we can train you to partner with a child who needs extra support in LifeKids on the weekend. Email XYZ@abc.com to find out more.*
- Run the recruitment video, **Athens' Story**.
 - *If you want to continue the story from the video, you can use this script for inspiration: "Wasn't that an amazing story? You didn't even get to hear the rest of the miracle. Through the support of his Buddy, Michael eventually got comfortable enough to attend LifeKids on his own. And now, he even serves in LifeKids as a tech every weekend! When you commit to pour into the life of a child, you really can't imagine all the ways God will use you. The best thing about Michael's story? His LifeKids Buddy had absolutely zero official credentials for working with a boy with autism. Her credentials were love, patience, and commitment. If you feel called to learn more about this or any other role in LifeKids, I'd love to chat with you immediately after the experience!"*

What do LifeKids Buddies need?

- Buddies need ongoing training, community and support.
 - If you've chosen to set up a closed Facebook group for your LifeKids buddies to share success stories and tips, add all new buddies as you onboard them.
 - Periodically have Buddies revisit the **Be the Best Buddy You Can Be: Training for LifeKids Buddies** with you, a Coach, or another high-capacity Buddy.
- Buddies need to be connected with the family they serve so they always know when the child will be there and what tips and tricks work best for the child.
- Buddies need access to the **Fun Facts and Helpful Hints** form, filled out by the parents, if they're working one-on-one with a child. *It is highly recommended to have this form laminated or placed in a protective cover so Buddies can access it and keep it with them as needed until they learn what helps the child.* If a substitute Buddy is working with a child, they will need to access the form and keep it with them, too.