



Building Up LifeKids Buddies

Strategies for Recruitment, Onboarding, and Training

How do I recruit Buddies?

- Keep your eyes open for the right people.
 - People who already volunteer in LifeKids
 - They're already on board with our vision and values, they're great with kids, and they love Jesus!
 - Cast vision to an existing volunteer. Tell them the unique qualities you see in them (patience, love, consistency, calm demeanor) that makes you believe they'd be an amazing Buddy.
 - People on staff at great local day care centers
 - Day care workers know kids and have a lot of strategies for dealing with unusual or challenging behaviors. Connect with the head of a daycare for references, or directly ask attenders who work in day cares to sign up as LifeKids Buddies. They may just rise to the challenge!
 - Find out if there are any local special needs day cares. Approach the staff there and invite them to be a part of Life.Church. After attending, the opportunity to use their unique gifting and skills to reach special kids with God's love may be just what they need to get involved in serving!
 - People on staff at or attending local colleges
 - Degree programs in special education, occupational therapy, and speech therapy may require students to fulfill community service hours or hours dedicated solely to working with children who have a clinically diagnosed special need. See if they're attending Life.Church and are ready to serve!
 - People on the Special Education staff at local elementary and middle schools
 - Special Educators and their support staff are already trained to work with kids who have special needs. If they're plugged into Life.Church and want to serve, they're not only great Buddies, but can offer additional strategies and training to keep your other Buddies encouraged and equipped.

What do I need to onboard Buddies?

- Onboard LifeKids Buddies the same way any other LifeKids leader is onboarded, but walk them through the **Buddy Agreement Form** as well to set expectations. Once they complete the **Be the Best Buddy You Can Be Training for LifeKids Buddies**, they can sign the agreement form and begin serving as a Buddy.

How do I train Buddies?

- Hold Buddies accountable to work through the **Be the Best Buddy You Can Be Training for LifeKids Buddies** with you, a Coach, or another experienced Buddy. They can complete it during their assigned serving experience for a week or two before they start working with kids.
- 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.
- Familiarize Buddies with the **Fun Facts and Helpful Hints** form filled out by the parents of a child they'll be working with so they know what communication methods, tips, strategies, routines, and toys may help.
- Share expectations for working one-on-one in an empty room with a child if the **Parent Release Form** has been signed by their parents.
- If a child is trying to escape or hurting themselves or others, your Buddies need to know what to do to keep the child, themselves, and the children around them safe. Laws and regulations surround restraining a child, because it is potentially dangerous and even deadly to restrain a child improperly. **Do your research and reach out to your leadership and the child's parents to make a game plan.** See **Be the Best Buddy You Can Be Training for LifeKids Buddies** for some ideas, and check out this website for more help: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/index.html>

What do I do with all my new Buddies?

- **Assign one on-call Buddy to every experience.**
 - On-call Buddies can work with any new families who attend church with their special LifeKid.
 - On-call Buddies work with the Coach to identify and work with kids who may need extra support.
 - At the discretion of the Coach or LifeKids staff, the on-call Buddy can work in a room to offer support to a child who needs it. They may step in and out of your room to help other kids as needed, as well.
- **Assign at least one Buddy to every child who needs a one-on-one supporter.**
 - When a pair of Buddies supports a child, they can work together for a while, especially with a child who may be more physical or prone to running off. As a child adjusts to LifeKids, the Buddy team can coordinate weekends when they're out, so the child will still have a familiar Buddy.
 - Help the Buddy exchange contact information with the family of the child you've assigned them to. The direct connection gives the family a chance to give the Buddy a heads up if they're not going to make it to their regular service time and to share new tips or strategies that have been helpful for the child. It also offers the Buddy a way to further connect with and encourage the family they're serving.

Any additional tools to recruit Buddies?

- Yes! Use the available recruiting video, "Athens' Story," on the weekend, especially if you can follow it up from stage.
 - After the video, present the opportunity to sign up to serve in LifeKids and as LifeKids Buddies.
 - 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!"

- Add a blurb in the weekly bulletin.
 - *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.*