

# Friendship Companion Training

## Role of a Companion

## Creating Christian Community

Connecting People with Christ and each other

- People with intellectual disabilities want meaningful friendships
- You are a companion with friends with disabilities. Grow in Christ with them through your friendship
- Invite other church members to visit your Friendship group
- Help your friends with disabilities form relationships with members of your church

## Creating Christian Community

Encourage church membership

- Help your friends with disabilities understand the reasons for church membership
- Look for ways to include them in the life of the church beyond the Friendship group (i.e. worship, prayer or service ministries)
- Assist with transportation to church activities

# Becoming Co-laborers

## the 5 stages changing attitudes

### STAGE 1: IGNORANCE

Weaknesses and disabilities are a sign that God either does not care or is not able to fix the situation. In fact, they may be a result of sin or a lack of faith. God is not involved in the life of someone with a disability, because He can't use people who are so broken. I do not know people with disabilities, nor do I know anything about disabilities. I have no interest in getting to know them or to know more about their life.

### STAGE 2: PITY

I feel sorry for people with disabilities. It's too bad, really. I am blessed by God and I can help others. I am grateful that my children are not disabled. People with weaknesses and disabilities obviously need someone like me to help them and give them meaning, due to their troubles. I really don't see any meaning or purpose to their lives.

### STAGE 3: CARE

Like me, people with disabilities were created in God's image. By that virtue alone they have value. I hope that someone will take the time to show them God's love, and I will happily support such an effort. In fact, I think we need to find ways to help those people. Maybe we should start a special church education class, or respite care for the sake of the parents.

### STAGE 4: FRIENDSHIP

I have come to know and spend time with a friend who has a disability. This person has value in God's sight, but also in mine, and I know that my life is better for having known this person, and as much as I have helped her, she has also blessed me. In fact, I now like to initiate relationships with people who have disabilities. God brings many different people into my church and community, including people with disabilities, and we all benefit as we grow in friendship with each other.

### STAGE 5: CO-LABORERS

If God has called each of us to serve and praise Him with every fiber of our beings, then He has done the same for our brothers and sisters in Christ with disabilities. I think ministry should not just be to people with disabilities, but with or alongside people who have disabilities. Together, we will encourage and equip each other, with and without disabilities, into every good work to respond to God's call on our lives. We can all give and we can all receive.

### Creating Christian Community

The only label that defines us as brothers and sisters in Christ is that we are all children of God.

- Labels are needed to identify groups of people
- In our training and conversation with each other and our friends with disabilities you will hear us refer to each other using;
  - A person's name when referring to a specific person

### Creating Christian Community

- “Friends” or friends with disabilities” when referring to a group people with disabilities
- “Companions” will be used to refer to those of us that have been called into relationships with people with intellectual disabilities, their families or caregivers
- As companions, we will also fill other roles, but we are still companions with our friends with disabilities

## The Role of a Companion

- The role of a companion is the most important role
- Spend time with your friends with disabilities beyond the Friendship group (i.e. worship service or their activities)
- Offer to sit with them and their staff during worship
- Become part of their world
- Introducing them to other church members, help them to expand their circle of friends!

## The Role of a Companion

- Invite them to fellowship with you and your friends; you don't need to break out of your routine, simply include them
- Become the catalyst that helps include them in the church
- Look for appropriate activities that fit the person
- Visit their home and attend activities
- Form relationships with their families and caregivers



## The Role of a Companion

- Be familiar with their dietary needs, whether in the Friendship group or another fellowship event
- Be proactive and have alternate food options available. It is awkward to take a cookie off their plate after it was served.