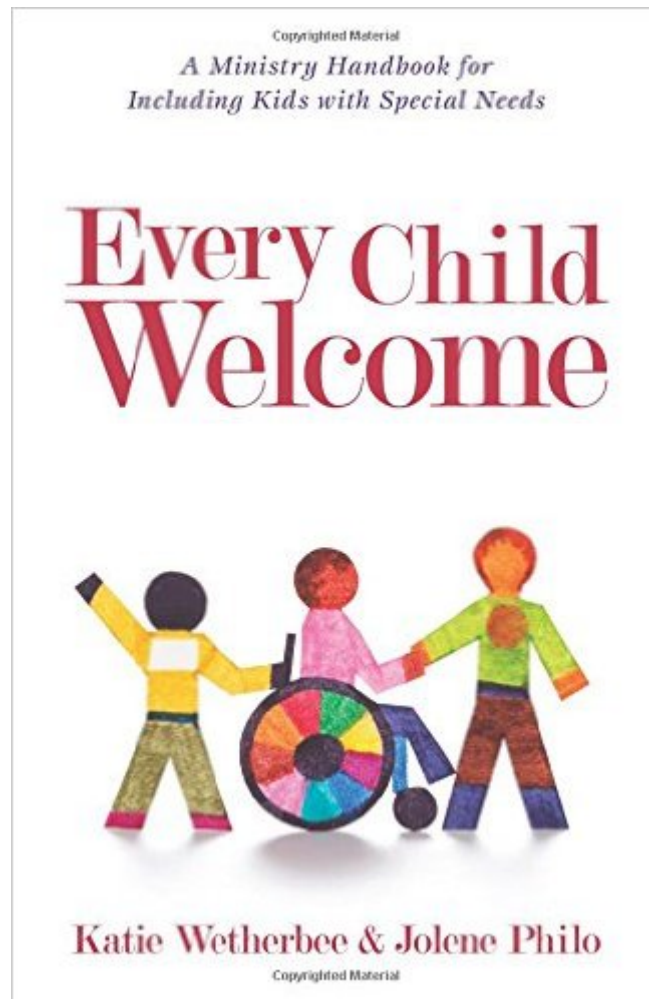


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# Every Child Welcome: A Ministry Handbook For Including Kids With Special Needs



## Synopsis

A guide to children's ministry that serves families with special needs Jesus set a high standard when He said "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." The call is not limited to children who will sit quietly at His feet and listen, who color between the lines, who raise their hands and wait to be called upon, and who work at grade level. Children's ministries are responsible to be ready to bring children with disabilities to Jesus' feet too. Every Child Welcome is the guide for leaders and volunteers to assist in purposeful planning and skill development for a ministry inclusive of children with unique needs. Experienced children's ministry leaders, and parents of special-needs children themselves, the authors are superbly equipped to offer a thoughtful, thorough approach to creating a positive environment for children—one where all children will be able to digest the important concepts being taught. For leaders and volunteers, Every Child Welcome will provide the knowledge and tools to create a welcoming environment before kids arrive

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When we talk about ministering to and helping children, whether in the church or in the culture, we often use the phrase "the least among us", in part, to emphasize the responsibility we have to them. They often do not know or cannot be a voice for their own needs so adults are given the responsibility to do so for them. While ministering to them can be a challenge at times, it can also be one of the greatest sources of joy and blessing. There is nothing quite like explaining the gospel of Jesus to a child and seeing the lights turn on in their eyes as you teach them the Bible. Added to the

natural challenges of teaching children are the challenges brought on by children who have special needs. Whether it is autism, learning disorders, physical handicaps, or children who suffer from one form of abuse or another, ministering to children with special needs is a challenge that very few are equipped to handle in a church setting once or twice a week, let alone feel comfortable handling. As a father of two special needs children (two girls who were born without eyes) and as a children's teacher in my local church, I am daily living with the challenges of working with children with special needs. While there are a lot of resources out there to help parents with special needs children, there are not many resources to equip children's workers in the local church to more effectively and confidently minister to special needs children for the few hours a week they might have with them. Since resources are sparse I welcome new works aimed at equipping children's ministry workers to work with special needs children. One such new resource is *Every Child Welcome: A Ministry Handbook for Including Kids with Special Needs* (Kregel, 2015).

The first time I heard someone mention special needs children in church, it was accompanied by a long list of "Don't ever do XXXX again!" • The commandments to the church were accompanied by a list of things to instruct parents of other kids to never do at church and to make sure their children never did. In short, it made ministry with special needs children sound like a lugging a burden through a minefield, where "survival" • was the only hope. As a pastor, that's not the approach that seemed best to me at the time. It still seems like a terrible approach. After all, God's people are not all of one shape, size, and ability group. If we cannot flourish as the church by welcoming all people, then we have something wrong. Then I was offered *Every Child Welcome* through Kregel Academic and Ministry for review. Given how hard it was to pick one book to start with, I viewed this as a godsend for learning better first steps. I was right. Katie Wetherbee and Jolene Philo, both long-term educators, present a concise look at how all children can be welcomed and celebrated in church. Rather than presenting a burdensome batch of "do/don'ts," • they give strategies to try out. Some of these strategies are generic "after all, Wetherbee and Philo don't know who you're ministering to" which is fine. Given that many readers of *Every Child Welcome* are, like me, not qualified to make highly specific diagnoses, we should be looking at broadly usable ideas. From there, the more specific strategies recommended come into play. The most valuable information here is what should be the most obvious. The authors give some clear guidelines about how to communicate about children's behavior which helps keep it edifying and private as appropriate.

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