

General Overview

Awana's vision and prayer is that all children and youth throughout the world will come to know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. With our commitment to reach ALL children, we equip churches to minister to kids of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities with joy. The information below provides a statistical and theological overview of children affected by special needs. We pray this helps you reach EVERY child in your community for the Gospel and disciple them well.

REALITY & STATISTICS

- **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY** During a study period from 2016-2019, about 1 in 6 kids aged 3-17 years (17%) were reported by parents as being diagnosed with a developmental disability. These included autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, blindness, cerebral palsy, and others (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>).
- **AUTISM** According to estimates from the CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, about 1 in 44 children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>).
- **ADHD** 9.8% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 6 million) have received an ADHD diagnosis (www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html).
- **BEHAVIORAL DIAGNOSIS** 8.9% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 5.5 million) have a diagnosed behavior problem (www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html).
- **LEARNING DISABILITIES** 2.3 million public school students have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for learning disabilities (<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/learning-disabilities-by-the-numbers>).

THE MOST IMPORTANT
DATA POINT IS THAT

100%

OF THESE CHILDREN
NEED JESUS!

This could be the largest unreached people group in America. Unfortunately, families have been asked to leave churches, actively or passively, because of the challenge their loved one with a disability creates for church programming.

THEOLOGY OF

Disability

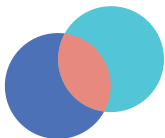


God's Design for the **World**

God created everything and said that it was good (Genesis 1). This was the Normal World. The entrance of sin brought corruption (Genesis 3) that changed the world God originally intended and created, to be abnormal. We expect to see certain things in an Abnormal World. Disability is one of them.

In the Garden, God created humanity to function at 100%. This is no longer possible in a post-Fall world. We ALL function differently than how God intended, with different capacity and capability in areas of physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual ability. However, some disabilities are harder to overcome and more visible or apparent than others. It is only by God's grace that we ALL possess the capacity to improve function in our spiritual lives.

Every single person is made in the image of God. That image may be marred by the consequences of mankind's sin, but it still exists. As such, every person has value, dignity, and is deserving of respect.



God's Design for the **Church**

BELONG

- Since all people are made in God's image, we should seek to love, care, and intentionally reach out to those in our community. This includes those affected by special needs (Genesis 1).
- All believers are called to serve in the body of Christ. No matter a believer's age or ability, they have a crucial role to play in the growth and health of the church (1 Corinthians 12).

BELIEVE

- Every person is fearfully and wonderfully made by God. We need to see and believe this truth about our brothers and sisters affected by special needs and then help them believe this about themselves with confidence (Psalm 139).
- Every follower of Christ, despite age or ability, is invaluable to the growth and health of the church. Leaders and church members need to believe this about those affected with special needs because this is God's design (1 Corinthians 14).

BECOME

- All believers are called to grow in the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Those affected by special needs may not complete handbooks or win awards, but if they have a heart full of Jesus, then we have accomplished our purpose.

For more insight on discipling kids and students with special needs check out [Awana's Special Needs Guide](#).