

## Youth on the Margins?

**True/False.** With one child in a wheelchair, a family visited a church for worship. Afterward an elder approached the father and said, “Your family is welcome here, but please don’t bring back the one in the wheelchair. She’s too distracting.”



**True/False.** A teacher returned a child with autism to his parents and said, “Please don’t ever bring your child back to Sunday school. We can’t handle him here.” After that, the husband and wife took turns staying home with him.

**True/False.** Many churches want to include individuals with special needs, but they don’t know how.

If you guessed that all three statements are true, you got a perfect score. Children and youth with disabilities comprise 13 percent of all youth, and many of them feel left out and left behind. We want our churches to reflect the body of Christ as pictured in I Corinthians 12, but wonder how to do that.

As members of the covenant through baptism, children and youth with disabilities deserve respect, dignity, and engagement in the life of God’s people. The entire church — not just children and youth ministry — misses out on the bigness of God when some are excluded.

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Parents of children with disabilities weary of advocating on behalf of their children. Churches can be communities of welcome and respite from a society that keeps their children at the margins. Youth ministry, done well, can help these members of God's family transition to adult roles within the congregation and in the community.



In June 2014 both the CRC Synod and RCA General Synod took action encouraging their churches and partner institutions to prioritize the inclusion of children and adolescents with disabilities in church programs and ministries. RCA and CRC Disability Concerns ministries help churches become intentional, empathic, and transformational communities. Please let us assist your church. Find resources at [crcna.org/disability](http://crcna.org/disability) and [rca.org/disability](http://rca.org/disability).

Phone us at 888-463-0272 (CRC) or 616-541-0855 (RCA) for consultation with one of our disability advocates.



Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.

Rev. Mark Stephenson  
Director of CRC Disability Concerns  
[mstephenson@crcna.org](mailto:mstephenson@crcna.org)

Rev. Terry De Young  
Coordinator for RCA Disability Concerns  
[tdeyoung@rca.org](mailto:tdeyoung@rca.org)

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