

# News of the Church

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## Church's Disabilities Website Released in Nine Additional Languages

By **Melissa Merrill**

Church News and Events

**W**hen [lds.org/disability](http://lds.org/disability) first launched in 2007 in English, it brought together information that had previously been scattered across handbooks, manuals, and other websites, making helps and ideas more accessible in a central location.

Now, during 2012, those resources (which include information about 10 different categories of disabilities and a variety of other helps) are being made available in nine additional languages: Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

This most recent launch will help families like the Varins of Paris, France. Raymond and Isabelle Varin had one son, Jérôme, when their second son, Jérémy, was born with Down syndrome. Although Jérémy's diagnosis was a shock to his parents—they knew very little about Down syndrome at the time—most of the Varin family's experiences related to Jérémy's disability have been positive. Brother Varin said that many

people have great affection for Jérémy, noting that members of the Church have been particularly kind in surrounding him and showing him love and appreciation.

He believes the website will help foster those kinds of attitudes. "It can help Church leaders and teachers understand disabilities and how to adapt and manage situations," he said.

But the site is equally important for people with disabilities and their families, he said—not so much as a way to inform but

as a source of encouragement.

"This site is important for families who have a member with a disability because of the support it offers," he said. "It gives you the perspective of the experience and testimony of others, which can allow for a more positive view of the future. For all these reasons it is important that this information be available in different languages."

Elder Keith R. Edwards of the Seventy, who advises Disability Services for the Church, agrees.

"Members with disabilities, their families, and caregivers will recognize that we are all working together for one purpose—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man—and that purpose requires that we

**The Church's Disabilities Site will be available in 2012 in 10 languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean (shown here), Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.**



be of ‘one heart and one mind,’” Elder Edwards said (see Moses 1:39; 7:18). “People will know and understand where they can go for help and will recognize that when the Lord’s Church is working the way it should, no one has to fight his or her battle alone.”

Fatima Alves of Portugal, who has spina bifida, found that the website has helped her realize exactly that: she is not alone.

“It is important to me that the Church has a website to help people with disabilities so that we feel united as Church members. It’s helpful to know that the Church is concerned and has a desire to help and support people in special situations,” she said.

The release of the site is one of several efforts the Church is making to reach all members of the Church, said Elder Edwards.

“Part of our ‘charge’ from the Lord is to provide the gospel to everyone in such a manner that he or she can understand and take full advantage of it,” Elder Edwards said. “We are anxious not to overlook any segment of the Lord’s children in providing meaningful gospel opportunities.

“The website not only will assist the individual but also is designed to help leaders know how to help or where they can go for assistance in helping serve with members who have disabilities,” he continued.

Of course, the website is not intended to replace individual,

personal interaction among Church members.

“Over the years we have had varying degrees of success in dealing with special needs in the Church,” said Elder Edwards. “The success has come in large measure when individuals have determined within themselves to make a difference. The key to helping all—whether they have a disability or not—is to love them and seek direction from the Spirit in reaching out and helping.

“We have all been charged to love our neighbor as ourself (see Matthew 19:19). The Church is simply providing another avenue of assistance in helping us understand and be successful in our desire to assist in the work of the Lord.” ■

In all of the languages in which the site has been published, several features are included:

**Disability List:** This portion of the site offers disability-specific information in 10 categories and offers ideas for how to help someone with each disability.

**Families:** This part of the website, which includes information tailored for family members of children with disabilities, offers suggestions for strengthening families.

**Questions and Answers:** Here, readers can find answers to commonly asked questions in four categories: how-to, doctrines and policies, resources, and statistics.

**General Information:** This section provides an overview of the site and points out that while sometimes people react negatively to disabilities, learning about a person’s situation can increase understanding and acceptance.

**Leaders and Teachers:** This section of the site reminds leaders and teachers of things to keep in mind when working with members with disabilities.

**Scriptures and Quotes:** This collection of scriptures and prophetic statements is meant as a source of encouragement, comfort, and hope for people in difficult situations.