

The Children’s Ministry Leadership “Dance”

Communicating, and respecting among each level of CM leadership
Steve Alley

General Guidelines

The various “levels” of leadership within the children’s ministry (CM) are each equally essential for the effective spreading of the Gospel message to children! Each level is different, yet critically important! The communications between the various levels of CM leadership is like a “dance.” Each dance partner must understand the dance and move in harmony with the other partners. If one dance partner moves in a self-centered way, he/she could “step on the toes” of the other partner and ruin the experience! Ministry cooperation and teamwork is a carefully-protected “dance.”



The CM “Levels”

The “levels” of CM leadership are:

- The CM volunteer
- The Area Coordinator
- The CM Assistant Director
- The CM Director
- The supervising Associate Pastor or Senior Pastor

It is important to create a “dance” between the various levels of CM leadership that ensures that no one is “left out in the dark,” or that no one feels “stepped on.” Each level of the ministry carries certain responsibilities and associated authority. The purpose of the decisions made at every level is not to “smother” or “micro-manage” the creativity of any other level; but each level needs to be responsible for the functions assigned to that level. Communication is the critical “key” to success in this “dance”!

The general rule regarding when to contact or inform a level “above,” or “below” you is, “When in doubt, check it out.” It is always better to err on too much communication than too little. It is vitally important to assure that communication goes through the correct channels as much as possible. Each member of the leadership team should communicate “to and through” the person under and over him/her directly. To “level jump” in communication can lead to a confusion or “corrosion” of trust. The three options for communication are:

- **“Inform”** – You are able, and “cleared” under your job description, to make the decision yourself; but it is a matter of courtesy, and open communication, to inform those under you or over you regarding your decision.
- **“Consult”** – Because of the significance of the issue, it is required that you consult with those over you before making a decision.
- **“Bump Up”** – When faced with an issue that is beyond your “level,” and that can affect the overall ministry, this issue must be presented to the level above for a decision.

Most of the day-to-day activities that happen in the CM only require that a supervising level be informed. Some more significant actions or decisions will demand that the supervising level be consulted regarding the decision or direction. There are some issues or decisions that need to be “bumped up” to person who occupies the next “higher” level. This “dance” is a two-way process. Ideally, every member of the CM team communicate with each other, regardless of level, using these three options.

The definition of “significant actions” or “significant decisions” will be something that will develop over time. Generally, an action or decision is considered “significant” when it involves a major change in operation or personnel.

For the sake of clarity, the following is a list of “typical” ministry actions or decisions. Based on the specific level, the responses will change. It would be good for you to discuss each of these actions with your CM team to agree on the appropriate responses. Remember, it is **ALWAYS** better to over-communicate!

Actions / Decisions With Possible Responses

Action / Decision	Inform	Consult	Bump Up
TEAM DEVELOPMENT			
1. Recruiting			
2. Clearing new volunteers (Ministry Questionnaires, fingerprinting)			
3. Placing new team members within team			
4. Training new team members to serve on the “RTW” or other productions teams			
5. Apprenticing new team members			
6. Rotation			
7. Movement of team members between or within productions teams			
8. Team member issues / challenges			
9. Removal of team member			
LEADERSHIP TEAM ISSUES			
1. Establishing new coordinator, or area leader			
2. Coordinator complaints or ideas			
3. Coordinator removal or leaving			
4. Sub leadership within productions teams (supervisors, etc.)			
POLICIES / PROCEDURES			
1. Regular communication regarding existing policies/procedures (training and refreshers)			
2. Establishing of new policies/procedures			
3. Changes to existing policies/procedures			
CURRICULUM / SCRIPTS			
1. Re-ordering curriculum or scripts			
2. Shifting curriculum or scripts (existing curriculum or scripts)			
3. Changing curriculum or scripts (department, program, or whole ministry)			
4. Issues / problems with the curriculum/scripts (complaints, ineffective, etc.)			
PROGRAMMING			
1. Maintenance/supervision of the existing programs or productions			
2. Evaluation of the existing programs or productions			

3. Creation of new programs or productions			
4. Ending of existing programs or productions			
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES			
1. Purchase of regular supplies (within budgeted boundaries)			
2. Purchase of new supplies (small, classroom or program needs) (within budgeted boundaries)			
3. Purchase of new furniture, sets, costumes, staging, or equipment			
4. Program-related expenditures (food, equipment, entrance fees, etc.)			
5. Printing / copies (all through Design)			
6. Reimbursement of team member expenditures (within budgeted boundaries)			
7. Purchasing of new scripts or curriculum for productions			
8. Proposing new budget			
9. Maintaining and tracking current budget			
FACILITY USES			
1. Regular service-based room use			
2. Changes to regular service-based room use			
3. Facility or stage repair			
4. Additions to facility or stage			
5. Changes to signage			
PARENT-CHILD ISSUES			
1. Upset parents (deal with it right away on site)			
2. Child discipline issue (deal with it right away on site)			
3. Parent comments or suggestions			
4. Injuries (complete "Accident / Injury" form and submit for signature)			
5. Special needs child issues			
6. Parent support or training			
ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES			
1. Leadership at the church			
2. Conversations with the senior pastor, elder, associate pastor, etc. regarding CM programming, issues, etc.			

CM Leadership “Zones”

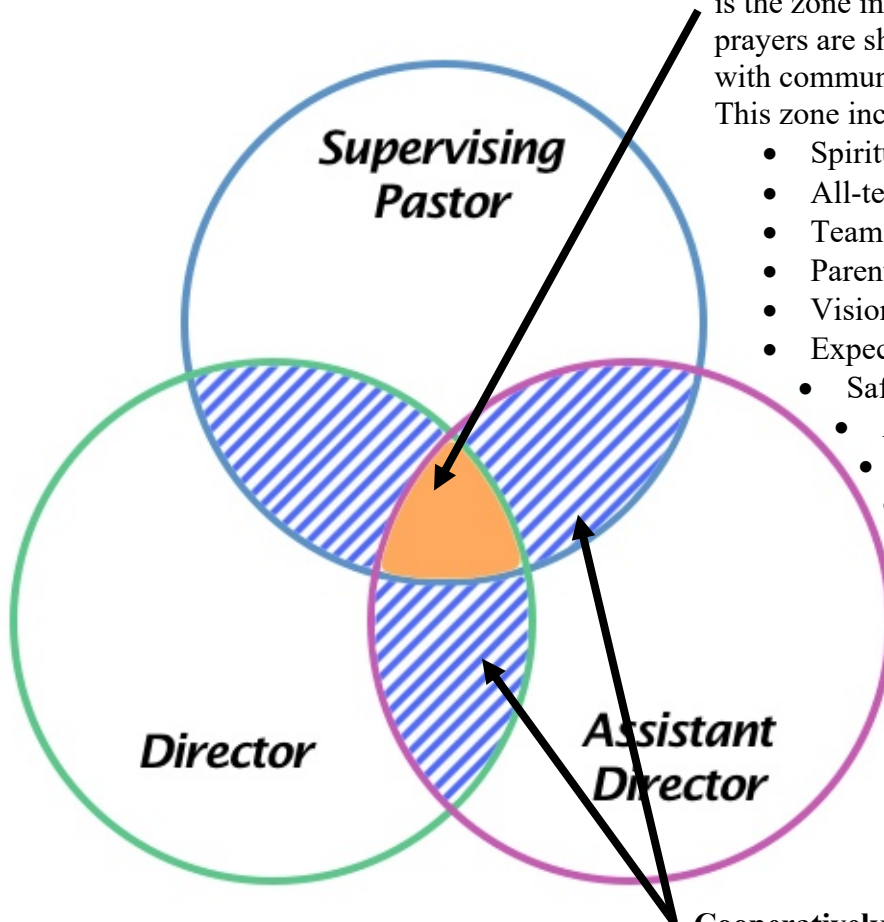
The chart below reflects a 3-person structure. You could easily remove one of these circles if you wish. The important thing is that the “overlap” areas are respected, and the central “core” area is understood and protected.

Mutually Shared Zone

This “central core” zone builds the leadership team. It is the zone in which plans are made, issues are solved, prayers are shared, and dreams are formed. It is rich with communication, support, and encouragement.

This zone includes:

- Spiritual needs/development of team
- All-team training
- Team development ideas/challenges/plans
- Parent issues (complaints, needs, etc.)
- Vision-related plans or adjustments
- Expectations from Pastor John or Pastor Mike
- Safety or security issues
- All-team programming needs or plans
- Children issues
- Personal needs of leadership team
- Mutual respect, sacrifice
- Over-communication



Cooperatively Shared Zones

These zones are areas rich in professional respect, courteous communication, and shared energy. These zones might include:

- Shared programming needs/issues
- “Just so you know” communication
- “What do you think?” questions
- Personal encouragement
- Advice on team issues (when asked)
- Shared energy/support (How can I help?)