

Children's Ministry Facilities Ideas

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The children's ministry (CM) facilities are a critical part of the ministry. In the "big picture" of your CM, where you minister to the children isn't really that important. A child's life can be impacted in either a sparse environment or a fancy one. The effectiveness of a CM is not based on the buildings! It is based on the people on your CM team, their devotion to Jesus and their love of the children. The critical value of your CM facility is directly connected to the parents' perception of the CM and the CM team's comfort and support.

No matter what facility the CM uses, it needs to be clean, safe, and visually stimulating. Even the best facility can be unattractive due to weeds, flaking paint, or dirty floors. The challenge is to be a good steward of what facility you have.

This is a list of ideas to include in your CM facilities. Obviously, there is no "perfect" facility, and in reality, you must work with what you have, but if you are in the process of rebuilding or designing a facility, you may consider these additions.

General Exterior Ideas

1. **Playground** – A nicely equipped, safe, enclosed children's playground. If you can provide professionally created and purchased play equipment that is an extra bonus!



2. **Signs** – Easy to read direction signs which show where the CM is located on the church campus.



3. **Drinking Fountains** – Nice, efficient drinking fountains set at adult and child levels. A weak drinking fountain, or one set too high, can give the wrong message to thirsty visitors.



4. **Speakers** – Music played through speakers can be valuable in "setting the mood" for the CM area. They can play worship music or children's songs during the service. Some churches play the worship service and sermon through the speakers after the service begins.



General Interior Ideas

1. **Information Center** – An information center needs to be right on the traffic path for parents as they come into your CM area. It should be marked by clear, large, friendly signs.



2. **Room Numbers** – Clearly marked room numbers and age assignments outside classrooms. These should correspond with some "Parent Directory" or other way for the parents to find the rooms.



- Large Classrooms** – If you use age-based classrooms, they need to be large. Small classrooms may seem to “save money” by getting more rooms into the overall facility, but almost without exception, churches end up tearing out walls or adding to the room size later. Rooms should be no smaller than 25 x 25 feet, they should be at least 25 x 30. If your ministry vision is based on large-group areas, design large group rooms bigger than what is needed now.



- Intercom** – Pre-wire for or install an intercom or phone system into every room. This adds a tremendous level of communication support for the teachers. The same conduits can carry wires for #3 below. (In today’s world, this may be done wirelessly.)
- Room Speakers** – These are both for ambiance (worship or children’s music) and for announcements from the CM office. (May use the phone system speakers.)



- Extra Wide Hallways** – In your planning, when you think your hallways are wide enough, widen them by an additional 2 feet. As you grow, the comfortable flow of parents and children at drop-off and pick-up periods is vital to safety and public relations. Interior halls are affected by classroom doorways opening into the hallways and drinking fountains on the walls. Check-in lines will always flow into the hallways! Interior hallways of 12 -15 feet are great!



- Child-sized Restrooms** – This design feature says, “We care about children!” Small, low toilets and sinks are better than steps up to adult-sized ones. A mixture of adult-sized and child-sized toilets is ok. Mirrors and towel dispensers should also be within reach for the little ones. Stall doors without locks is also a good idea. Make sure there are plenty of restrooms or stalls. Children having to walk long distances is not good.



- Pod Classrooms** – Preschool restrooms in “pod” classrooms. A “dream” facility has preschool restrooms directly connected to classrooms. The classrooms are arranged in “pod” configurations around child-sized restrooms.



- Supply Room** – This is a great support to your loyal, CM team! The room should be located in the CM area. The door may be a “Dutch door” that can be used as a check-in and out counter. The room should be as large as possible, don’t go any smaller than 15 x 20 feet. You’ll always use every inch! If possible, this room should have a sink and counter in it for cleaning the supplies if necessary.



- Storage** – A mistake we tend to make in facility design is the lack of storage. Consider who needs to store stuff, and plan for it! You cannot keep “stuff” away by not building storage...it will find places to live!

- A CM Office** – A centralized location with a reception area. This is a welcoming area that says, “We care, and we’re professional about it.”



12. **Plenty of Restrooms** – Having one set of restrooms for an entire hallway or CM complex is not as good as having two sets. Having more restrooms reduces the time that children are out of the classroom for restroom breaks. Make sure your restrooms are well ventilated! There is nothing worse than stale restroom air! When planning on ventilation, always double the capacity of the fan!



13. **Sinks** – Having a sink in every classroom is a luxury, except for the Nursery. A sink in the nursery is vital! If you can afford it, it's a nice addition to a good facility. Sinks in the middle and upper grade classrooms aren't as necessary. If you are adding sinks, remember to include drinking fountains in the sinks. This prevents 60% of the need for children to leave the classroom!



14. **Centralized Check-in Area** – Efficient check-in and check-out process. There should be a centralized check-in area with kiosks at which the parents register their child as being present and then print labels for their child and check-out tags to keep. Children should be checked-in and out by parents or guardians. In multiple worship service situations, ministry rooms with two doors increases the efficiency of the parent flow. Children can be checked in at one door and checked out at the other. Systems that permit parents to use their smartphones to check in their children are very helpful!



15. Elevated classroom windows. Distractions can be reduced by placing the classroom windows above the “view line” of the children. As parents or others pass by, the children will not be able to see them. The classroom doors should still have lower windows for viewing into the classroom. Make sure to install “one-way” glass so children can't see out, but parents can see in.



16. Large, assembly room. Your facility should have a large room where most of your children can assemble at one time. This room should have a stage and sound system. There could be a kitchen adjoining this room for potlucks, etc. If you develop your CM around the “large group/small group” format, you may need several of these large assembly rooms to cater to the various age group divisions.



17. Medium, large room. You might want to build “double wide” classrooms with sliding partitions in a couple of areas in your facilities. These are valuable for versatility!

The “trend” in today's CM is away from age-specific classrooms. Churches are building facilities to handle a mixture of “large group / small group” ministry settings. Instead of building classrooms, they are building medium sized rooms for a “block” of children (by age or grade). The medium sized group of children experience a large-group presentation and worship, then they break up into small groups around tables within that same room. There are “pros” and “cons” to this approach, but it does have significant impact on the facilities. You need to discuss this in light of the overall ministry vision before the facilities are built or refurbished.

18. A good temperature is vital for a good learning environment. If you can't afford thermostats in every room, one thermostat for two rooms is ok. Make sure these two



rooms have a door linking them so the teacher can stick his or her head in and make suggestions for temperature adjustments without leaving the room.

19. A communication link to the sanctuary area. If you aren't sure if you need this, lay a large conduit (5 - 6 inches) with a pull cord for later. This may be used for transmitting the service or sermon into the children's area or for other communications. With today's wireless technology, this may not be necessary. It is one of those "plan for the future" things.

20. Video monitors in the hallways that can be used to pass on announcements or to show an inspirational, vision-focused videos or recruiting videos. The monitors would be controlled by a central control area.



21. Strong WIFI throughout the CM facilities. In today's connected society, parents will appreciate this. This will also be useful for CM training or display of videos.



22. A CM leadership team meeting room. This is a comfortable room with a large meeting table. The room should be large enough to hold a large CM leadership team (10-20 people) and enough room to enjoy meals together. There should be a video projection system in the room with a screen and a white board for presentations. A phone with a speaker system should also be present so that you could speak to people and have the whole group share in the conversation.



Nursery /Toddler Facilities

1. Excellent air circulation. If the air is slow-moving, the smells will build. Build larger vents and capacity than is really needed in these rooms.
2. Washer / dryer. This is a great support to the wonderful servant who will volunteer to do the laundry for this ministry.
3. One-way windows. Parents like to see in, and your volunteers benefit from knowing they're looking. You can post a sign "Watch us love your children!" over the window on the outside. The inside is covered with a mirror film so the children cannot see their parents and begin to cry.
4. Noise and smell barriers. The nursery / toddler area may be the most critical area for attracting new church attendees. If this area is smelly or filled with the sounds of crying children, first time visitors may get the wrong impression of your care for the children. Build a second door and buffer area for both sound and smell. This would mean that you would have a door into the check-in/out area, and then a second door that separates this area from the area where the children are. In the check-in area, place sweet-smelling deodorizers, and nice music.
5. Cubbies in the Nursery check-in area NOT where the children can reach them.
6. Industrial carpet in the Nursery and Toddlers rooms to withstand regular cleaning.

