

Writing Children's Ministry Job Descriptions

Steve Alley

Whether you are serving in a small church, or in a mega church, you need to create job descriptions for every level of service within the ministry. A well-written job description creates comfortable boundaries within which the team member can securely serve. It is a proven fact of human nature that people flourish within comfortable boundaries, rather than in total freedom. The job descriptions you create will produce a secure team and will greatly reduce potential stress among the team members.

A job description clearly states what is expected of the person in that position, how he/she will be evaluated, who is "under" or "over" that position, and what is to be done in the case of "emergency" or unplanned situations. All of this should be written in a vision-focused, positive, supportive context, rather than in a punitive, threatening manner.

There are five words that guide you as you create a job description. These will be dealt with separately:

1. Vision
2. Structure
3. Responsibilities
4. Communication
5. End

Vision

The vision of the children's ministry (CM) and the overall church vision is a foundation for every job description. Each CM position should advance both the CM vision as well as the overall church vision. You should become familiar with both vision statements. The wording of a vision-focused job description could be something like this:

The Elementary Coordinator position exists to further the children's ministry vision, which is: "____," while also supporting the overall church vision, which is: "____."

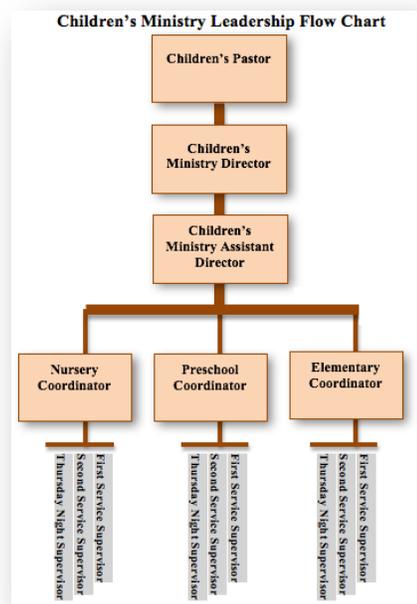
Structure

The job description should reflect where the position sets in the administrative "flow chart." In order to create security, the person serving in this position should be confident in his/her place in the "flow chart." The job description should clearly state who supervises this position, and who is supervised by this position. The wording that clearly defines the structure could be something like this:

The Elementary Coordinator position is supervised by the Children's Pastor, who reports directly to the Lead Pastor. Those who serve in the "elementary" area of the children's ministry report directly to the Elementary Coordinator. The Elementary Coordinator is free to make decisions within the boundaries set by the Children's Pastor. The Children's Pastor should approve decisions that affect changes to the curriculum, safety policies, or procedures beforehand.

Personal Thoughts

When you have to write your own job description, it is both a good thing and a dangerous thing. The "good" part is that you can create your own world, so-to-speak. The "dangerous" thing is that you realize that you are blazing a trail that nobody has walked down before you, and you don't have any "protection," other than your own perspective. So, it is always better to create an initial job description that is conservative, rather than broad.



Responsibilities

Each job description should clearly list, and deal with, specific ministry-related responsibilities. This is perhaps the most critical section of the job description. If this area is too broad, or vague, the person serving in that position will be a "sitting duck" for any new idea, or expectation, that a supervisor comes up with. Those who are applying to serve in this position will see the lack of boundaries and will most likely refuse to accept the position. Is this person over, and responsible for EVERYTHING that concerns, or includes children? If that is true, then this person is responsible for the midweek activities, the preschool, the Christian school, the family programs, Sunday morning programs, Sunday night programs, the care of children during adult Bible studies, etc. This area needs to be clearly defined and agreed-upon! This broad responsibility may be too much for one person.

Personal Thoughts

Your personal job description must reflect the other priorities in your life. Too many people create job descriptions that make them appear to have nothing else happening in their lives. Your current life has other important things in it, make sure that your job description leaves room for those other priorities to exist, and to flourish. You may be wise in making a list of the other priorities of your life and think about those things as you create your job description. Those other priorities won't actually "show up" in the wording of your job description, but your work at the church shouldn't take all your energy and time!

Communication

The final area is "communication." The job description should clearly state who oversees this position, the relationship with that person, or persons, and who this position oversees. It should also clarify the process through which this person expresses concerns or complaints. The wording in this section protects this position, and every position in the CM from unclear communication above, and below them.

End

It is critical to clarify how the position will end or "terminate." Lawsuits happen in this area if it is unclear how the job can end. State, federal, and occupational law dictates specific boundaries on the termination of a position. Whether a position is volunteer, full-time, or part-time doesn't matter when it comes to this area of employee/ employer relations. You should check with your church attorney and insurance agent regarding the actual wording here. Your wording could include providing the employee (or volunteer) with the freedom to end the position at his/her own discretion. Your wording should also include the use of evaluations, and related meetings with supervisors regarding the person's fulfilling of the expectations of the job. The wording should include terms like "due process," "appeal," or "reinstatement." Pray and consult with your legal advisors intensely in this area.



There are other things that a job description can include, such as:

Personnel Notes (dealing with problems, issues, training, supervision, etc.)

Policy / safety Notes (dealing with specific issues, procedures, reporting, documentation, etc.)

Relations With Parents Notes (dealing with communications, meetings, issues, training, etc.)

Office Hours Notes (daily, weekly, evenings, weekends, etc.)

Relations With Church Board Notes (dealing with reporting, attending meetings, conversations with, etc.)

Notes About Evaluation (who evaluates whom, when, how, effects of evaluations, etc.)