

Developing Children's Ministry Programs

Creating environments in which children and families grow in Christ

The power of a children's ministry (CM) program is not in its mere existence. It's in the relationships that are built between the CM team members and the children who attend the program. The CM team members should be trained to use every encounter with the children to draw them closer to Jesus.

Below is a general process for developing CM programs. The process begins with the basics of considering how the program furthers the CM vision and progresses to the use of the program's "fruit" to advertise, and recruit for the next CM program.



Evaluate Current Programs

If you are considering beginning a new CM program, you should first evaluate the current programs. In today's world, having too many programs is not a positive thing. Gone are the days when families wanted to be at the local church as much as possible. For us to create too many programs it might add pressure to the parents to bring their children to the programs more often than their busy schedules can permit. It is better to offer fewer, strategic, well-planned programs than a multitude of disjointed programs. Here is a brief overview of how to evaluate the current programs to determine if there is a "hole" in your program "menu" that should be filled with a new program. Ask yourself:

- Does the program further the ministry vision?
- Does the program satisfy the **FRESH** components?
Family-friendly, Relationship-driven, Experience-rich, Spiritually-based, Help-oriented
(See "A FRESH Approach To Children's Ministry" in the APPENDIX.)
- Is the program "fruitful"? (Do children grow in their personal commitment to Jesus?)
- Has the program "seen its day"? (Is the attendance and "fruit" plateauing?)
- Does the program need to be retired or replaced?
- Does the program need to be improved or re-launched?
- Can the program produce "offshoot" programs? (Other programs related, but different.)

Build New Programs

If you determine that you need to build a new program (to replace a "retired" program, or to fill a "hole" in your current program), here are some basic steps to consider:

1. Establish your ministry vision (if not already done). This is the foundation for all programs.
2. Identify the program need (why does this program need to exist?).
3. Evaluate the program need in light of the vision (does the program further the vision?).
4. Seek counsel about the program's existence (church administration, elders, team members).
5. Set rough plans for the program's operation (how, when, where, to whom?).
6. Answer all questions about the program before they're asked (from parents, CM team, church leaders, board, etc.).
7. Make a proposal to pastor / board (highlight vision connection, potential "fruit," church benefit).
8. If not approved – rework, propose again.



9. When approved, advertise privately to key people (potential team, leaders, etc.).
10. Purchase supplies, curriculum, etc.
11. Recruit / train team members.
12. Advertise publicly to the entire church. Introduce CM team who will run the program. Begin public invitation for new CM team members.
13. Communicate with team members. Share the program vision, train the team to build relationships with the children during the program, and highlight the potential “fruit.”
14. Mentally do a “walk-through” in your head (discover needs and problems before event starts). (See “Program Walk Through” in the APPENDIX).
15. Purchase all supplies, prepare the facility, and prepare the maintenance and security crew.
16. Hold a “dress rehearsal” with your team (run through everything without children).
17. Launch and operate the program.
18. Support your team (compliments, support, encourage, etc.).
19. Evaluate the program (did it accomplish the goals, are there needs for improvement, etc.).
20. Determine if you will repeat the program. Did the “fruit” outweigh the “cost”?
21. Advertise the “fruit” of the program and recruit for the next program. (See the “The Sandwich Principle” in the APPENDIX).