

Member Volunteers Who Serve Within Healthy Limits

Member volunteers support and encourage parents by helping to care, teach and mentor their children through the local church. They provide the children with a testimony of God's grace through their lives. They serve within limits set by elders, to meet the needs of Children's Ministry, but not at the expense of their own spiritual nurturing. They may serve in "over-sized" teams that don't require every teacher to teach every session in order to share the teaching load, avoid burn-out, and provide natural substitute teachers for classes. They are a great way to train less-inexperienced teachers by pairing them with more experienced lead teachers.

Church-shaped Children's Ministry strives to care for the spiritual well-being of all church members, not just the families. What programs you offer should be directly influenced by **who you are** and **what resources you have**. You need to live within this "budget" for the spiritual health of all your members. Building size, number of willing and qualified teachers, age and number of children; available finances; maturity of the Christian parents (ability to teach their children truths, themselves), number of services, and many other factors should be taken into consideration.

Your Ministry IS Children's Ministry

- There are often more teachers, teaching more souls, in Children's Ministry than in any venue in your church, outside of the pulpit.
- Most Sunday School teachers are not trained teachers or preachers. Curriculum doesn't just teach children. It often is teaching your teachers, too.
- Typically, more members miss the worship services and adult classes because of Children's Ministry obligations than any other ministry of the church.
- Over-volunteering and under-training are usually the two, biggest reasons why volunteers do not come back.
- Children's Ministry programs can be vulnerable places for child abuse to occur in the local church.

What Churches Can Do:

- Provide pastor-approved curriculum that is biblically solid, developmentally-appropriate, and teacher-friendly.
- Provide teachers with mentors who can teach them how to manage a classroom, as well as engage children in ways that are understandable, memorable and enjoyable.
- Enlist "over-sized" teaching teams for each program (not everyone teaches every week). This helps avoid teacher burn-out; builds in vacation time and good, substitute teacher choices; and, it allows for teachers to regularly attend adult classes and worship services.
- Enforce a child protection policy to keep volunteers and children safe. Know your teachers before they teach. Pair more-experienced, better-known teachers, with newer, lesser-known teachers. Require a waiting period before brand-new members can work directly with kids.
- Set up healthy volunteering limits to make sure all volunteers are being spiritually well-fed themselves.