

Partnerships Between Youth Workers and Parents/Caregivers

It is helpful to acknowledge and affirm the larger communities surrounding young people, especially their family members, as a means of best supporting the young people in your youth group. It is also helpful to promote a partnership between yourself and parents/caregivers in order to demonstrate that a diverse group accompanying youth create healthy faith formation of young people. The ideas included below are intended to assist you in facilitating strong relationships and clear communication between yourself as youth leader and the parents/caregivers of young people.

Meet

Meet with the parents and caregivers of each of young person. Invite them to meet for a meal, at a coffee shop near their office, or at a convenient time when they are already at the church. Ask them what they would like you to know about their young person as well as what they are hoping their young person may gain in the youth program.

Share

Share your contact information: phone, email, and social networking media links, and ask if they will share their contact information with you.

Give

Give parents/caregivers the annual calendar prior to the beginning of the school year and advertise events throughout the year via various social media, texts, phone calls, and emails. Utilize social media and create Facebook pages or a blog specifically for parents/caregivers, which includes updates, calendar, upcoming payment deadlines for trips, and the topics for weekly youth group meetings. In addition to sharing programmatic and administrative information, use social media to foster relationships, deep caring, support and prayer.

Honor

Honor the reality of family schedules and the need for time together. Attempt to keep program costs down and be mindful of start and end times, as young people are involved in multiple activities outside of their academic schedules. When possible, check the school break schedules, sporting events, concerts, and other extracurricular events prior to setting your annual youth events schedule.

Teach

Teach a series on honoring parents/caregivers and respecting the family¹. Incorporate the following Scripture texts as a basis for discussing the importance of family relationships: Deuteronomy 5:16, Psalm 133:1, Psalm 144:12, 1 John 4:20-21, Ephesians 6:1. Be mindful to speak positively about parents/caregivers to young people, as you, too, are a role model for respecting elders.

Invite

Invite experts to speak with parents/caregivers about topics of interest. For example, invite a local pediatrician and psychologist to discuss brain development in teens or a Christian Education professor to discuss faith formation in the home.

Host

Host a parents' Bible study that covers the same themes as your youth group lessons.

Recruit

Recruit an Advisory Team to assist you with your program. They will offer valuable insight about what events/dates work from a family's perspective and may provide wisdom and encouragement when needed. Enlisting their help and input will also increase the likelihood that they will assist you when extra volunteers are needed for events or trips.

Assist

Assist young people in planning a "Family Night" where they host and serve a meal to the parents/caregivers and provide the entertainment for the evening as a means of thanking families for their support of the youth program.

Recommended Resources

For Youth Workers:

www.youthspecialties.com
www.whatisorange.org
www.TheSource4YM.com

¹ For example: Powell, Kara, *Parents and Family Junior High Group Study*. Ventura: Gospel Light, 2010

For Parents/Caregivers and Youth workers:

www.cpyu.org
www.homeword.com
www.dougfields.com Special Needs:
www.specialneeds.com
www.drdangottlieb.com
www.sproutflix.org
www.rwjms.edu/boggscenter/projects/Writers_Group.html
www.vibrantfaithathome.org
www.orangeparents.org
www.TheSource4Parents.com

Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families
Robert H. Albers, William H. Meller, and Steven D. Thurber, eds.

Same Lake, Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability
Stephanie O. Hubach

Pocket Guide to Special Needs: Quick Tips to Reach Every Child
Loveland: Group Publishing, 2008

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