



Considerations

**FOR REOPENING
YOUR KIDS MINISTRY**

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Introduction

Churches are beginning to discuss their plans to resume corporate worship, small group Bible studies, and children’s ministries. After several weeks of isolation and distance ministry, the question has shifted suddenly from *when* we will get back together, to *how* we will get back together. How and when may look quite different from state to state, city to city, and church to church. Your plan to reconvene needs to take into consideration the official federal, state, and local guidelines for gathering in your area.

The implementation of these guidelines within kids ministry may be more specific and detailed than in other ministry areas. So where and when do you start? Begin by praying and gathering information to form your own action plan for moving forward. We at LifeWay Kids have identified six key areas and 20 questions for kids ministry leaders to consider when making their plans for returning to church.

Many kids, families, and volunteers will be excited to get back together soon. They will all be looking to church leadership for a reentry plan that is safe and sound. Now is the time to prayerfully design your plans around the key areas of strategy, environments, resources, policies, volunteers, and communication. This ebook is intended as a guide and is not a substitute for medical or legal advice. Consult with your church’s leadership and legal advisors before implementing any important actions. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and strength to meet the new and emerging challenges of ministry in this unprecedented time. The team at LifeWay Kids prays this resource will help you begin to navigate this unique time.

Partnering With You,

Jana Magruder



Think through how your approach to kids ministry fits into the overall plan of your church. Your church's plan will influence the reopening of your kids programming. Think through the group sizes and meeting spaces that will be necessary in each of the reopening phases outlined in your local governing guidelines. For example, we may first be able to gather in smaller groups of 10, then 50, before we are able to meet without restriction. This will have a direct impact on how we relaunch our in-person kids programs. Realistically, your children's ministry may lag behind adult gatherings. In the meantime, churches will need to decide how to continue to minister to those who choose to keep worshiping virtually as well as those who return in person. Examining your strategy for ministry will help focus your efforts and resources.



(1) WHAT FACTORS DO WE NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN WE REOPEN OUR KIDS MINISTRY?

The prospect of returning to on-site ministry could be as overwhelming as it was for us to look for new ways to minister during the crisis. There are often more questions than answers. Strive to have open communication with your pastor and other ministry leaders about the variables that apply to kids ministry that may not be as evident in student and adult ministry. In addition, we will be wise to be aware of and follow local government guidelines regarding when to gather, the size of the gatherings, and so on. Doing so can also remind us to be sensitive to our church members, volunteers, and communities. Many in our churches will be ready to return to on-site ministry gatherings, but some will not be as eager. We will be wise to take a shepherding posture as we look toward reopening our kids ministries.

- **Phase in on-site meetings.** Resuming all kids ministry activities at once may not be wise. A phasing in approach, in conjunction with your overall church ministry, will likely be best.
- **Is it possible to offer multiple "services"** or create additional classes within your kids ministry to reduce group size?
- **Continue digital meetings.** Pulling the rug out from under digital ministry could leave some kids disconnected. Kids often won't have a say when it comes to returning to on-site classes and groups. Continue to strive to stay connected to these kids while reestablishing new rhythms of ministry.



(2) WHAT FACTORS DO WE CONSIDER AS WE PLAN FOR KIDS' ATTENDANCE?

The return to Bible study and worship at the church building may present challenges at first. Recommendations from local or state health and government entities can sometimes differ. Based on your area, your church will probably have guidelines in place as services resume in house. In addition, kids ministries will need to think through a few factors.

- **Some families** will probably feel comfortable returning sooner than others. This can impact not only how many kids may show up, but which of your teachers will be comfortable returning.
- **Based on which teachers are available,** number of kids, and any group number limits, how will you group the kids and where will you locate each class?
- **Will you need additional teaching help** if group size limits are mandated?
- **Should you consider asking parents** to pre-register their kids for Bible study in order to adequately prepare to meet any guidelines currently in effect?



(3) HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO MINISTER TO FAMILIES AND OFFER RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE HESITANT TO INITIALLY RETURN TO CHURCH AND CHOOSE TO CONTINUE TO WORSHIP ONLINE?

As churches begin to roll out plans for returning to on-site ministry, leaders will need to continue to be sensitive to those who choose not to attend in person. During the crisis, many church leaders pivoted quickly to ensure parents were equipped with resources to minister to their families. Church leaders would be wise to continue offering these resources when on-site ministry resumes. Providing digital resources to families will communicate to parents their role in kids' discipleship is still important. If you have been depending on free online content, you may or may not be able to continue to provide that same content. Or, you may be required to start paying for that content.

Content is only part of the answer, though. How will you deliver that content to families? Some content providers may start charging you to use their online delivery platforms. Some churches that previously purchased teaching resources only in print may decide to start purchasing only digital curriculum or take a hybrid approach of ordering both print and digital materials.

As you decide what approach is best for your church's families, consider the following:

- **Utilize the print resources** you do have by mailing preschoolers and kids weekly take-home pages.
- **Send emails and texts to parents**, summarizing the week's Bible content and life application.
- **Place on a secure site**—reserved for your church families—video content you have already purchased.
- **Encourage parents** to use mobile apps with their kids that correspond to the curriculum materials you use.

One last consideration. Providing the same Bible content on the same schedule for families who regather at church as you do for families who stay at home may result in learning continuity and in a smooth transition when everyone returns to the church building.



(4) WHEN LOOKING AT OUR MINISTRY LONG TERM, WHAT DO I EVALUATE? WHEN AND HOW DO I IMPLEMENT CHANGES?

Understanding that, at this moment, the future is more uncertain than ever, it is challenging to think about what your ministry might look like long term. However, this jolt to our way of doing things can serve as a great opportunity to evaluate, reinvent, or recharge elements of your ministry.

● Think through your programs

- **MAKE A LIST** of the programs and activities you offer.
- **THINK ABOUT WHY** you offer each one and determine if it is still meeting a significant need.
- **CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH**, the families you serve, and the communities to whom you minister. Is there a missing piece? Can you swap something you are doing for something better?
- **IS THERE A PRACTICE OR ACTIVITY** you began during quarantine you'd like to continue doing?

● Think through your purpose

- **IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE** your ministry purpose in less than ten words, what would you say? Do your vision for kids ministry and the vision of your church line up?
- **DOES YOUR PURPOSE FOCUS** on activities or relationships?
- **IS YOUR PURPOSE** driven by sharing the gospel and discipling believers?
- **DO YOU OFFER NON-THREATENING**, welcoming on-ramps for families who may be seeking spiritual truths in a post-pandemic world?

Many aspects of your learning environments will be impacted. Finding ways to maintain personal space and elevating cleanliness practices during kids gatherings will be essential. You may need to have different plans for preschoolers and younger kids than you do for older kids. You might initially need to limit the maximum number of children in each room, which could include asking families to pre-register their children each week to reserve their spaces. Reevaluate the size and layout of physical ministry spaces to determine how many children can be accommodated. The teacher/child ratio could potentially be altered as well. Assess the use of classroom tools to help manage kids' behavior due to anxiety and stress, maximize space, and utilize supplies.



(5) HOW WILL THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 IMPACT A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR INSIDE THE CLASSROOM?

Children have most likely been in a flexible environment over the past few weeks, with very little structure. Much of their daily schedule has been dependent on their parents' responsibilities and maybe even more so, on their parents' ever-changing stress level. Many discipline issues that you thought were conquered before may crop up again as kids transition back to the classroom.

Younger children who easily entered your room before may regress to separation anxiety as they leave parents they've spent every waking minute with these past few weeks. Be aware, if the teachers wear masks some children may not recognize the teacher's face. Here are a few ways to help make the transition easier:

- **Greet children** at the door.
- **Kneel or bend down** so that you're at the child's eye level.
- **Sing a song** with the child's name—such as “Lainey came to church today” sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.
- **Bring something to the door** with you that will spark the child's interest.
- **Make sure that your room** looks inviting with activities set up and ready for learning!

Children in general, even kids who were well behaved before, may struggle with self-discipline as they return. Their whole world has been turned upside down these past few weeks with atypical

bedtimes, more screen time, little structure, and minimal interaction with other children. Extra patience and effort on the teacher's part can help kids with this challenge.

- **Send a note**, make a phone call, or send a video message to kids' families the week before letting them know you're excited about being together again.
- **Be ready** to teach when the first child arrives.
- **The first few times** you meet, remind kids of simple classroom rules.
- **Be prepared** with learning activities that will appeal to different types of learners: active, hands-on activities, as well as opportunities for quiet reflection.
- **Ask for additional adult volunteers** to be in your room the first few weeks. Some kids may need one-on-one attention to help with the transition.
- **Enter your classroom** with excited anticipation and make sure that is apparent to your kids.



(6) HOW ARE WE STRATEGIC IN USING CLASSROOM SUPPLIES?

In a normal kids ministry world, we leaders emphasize sharing. But COVID-19 has changed our world. We must take measures to ensure preschoolers and kids are safe. Here are some ideas for key supplies.

- **Consumable Supplies:** Create individual containers of supplies. After a child has used a set of supplies, remove them until they are disinfected.



Learning Environments

- **Toys (Younger Kids):** Examine your toys and remove any that are difficult to clean. Only provide supplies and resources that can be disinfected easily. Once a child has finished playing with a toy, disinfect it and lay it aside to dry before another child touches the toy. Any toy that a child puts in his mouth should be disinfected as soon as possible.
- **Multiple Services:** If you are using a room for more than one hour, place all toys for each hour inside a plastic tote, bin, or laundry basket. At the end of each session, remove all of the toys and provide a new bin of toys for the next session.
- **Furniture and Spacing for Preschoolers:** Evaluate the furniture in your rooms. Remove some chairs from tables to discourage kids from sitting in large groups. Create zones for kids. Consider using painter's tape to designate individual areas of play. For preschoolers, use multiple colors of painter's tape for the different areas. We can't guarantee that kids will social distance, but we can take steps to encourage it. For babies, space baby beds further apart than normal. Move extra beds to temporary storage.
- **Furniture and Spacing for Elementary Kids:** Mark with tape where boys and girls can sit. Give them a square to stay inside. For activities in small groups, make it clear how many people can be in a group or activity at one time. You may wish to create a number sign to post near each group or activity station to remind kids that once that number has been reached, they must select a different activity.
- **Bibles:** Provide each kid with his own Bible to use during Bible study. After Bible study, set aside all Bibles to be disinfected. If a child brings his Bible, disinfect it when he enters the room.



(7) WHAT CAN WE DO NOW TO OUR COMMON AREAS AND CLASSROOM SPACES TO PREPARE FOR THE REOPENING?

- **Deep clean** any areas that need attention before people return to your campus. This is the time to move furniture, wash carpets, and sanitize.
- **Disinfect** all frequently touched surfaces: light switches, doorknobs, counters, sinks, check-in screens, pens, and so on.
- **Evaluate the furniture, toys, and supplies** in each room. Simplify as much as possible. Some items may need to move to storage temporarily.
- **Look for cloth items** (chairs, couches, rockers) to move to storage.
- **Encourage parents** not to bring diaper bags. Provide plastic baskets, plastic baggies, or bins to store each baby's items during the session.



(8) HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE DISINFECT COMMON AREAS, CLASSROOMS, AND SUPPLIES?

Common areas and classrooms should be disinfected as often as the areas are used, usually before and after children and leaders are in these areas. Common supplies should be disinfected after they are used or before another child has contact with the supplies. Consult the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) for recommended disinfectant solutions that are appropriate and safe. As you consider how often to clean and disinfect common areas, be sure to consult with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for updated suggestions on procedures and best practices. Also, consult and update your ministry's policy and procedures as needed.

- **Practice routine cleaning** of frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, tabletops, toys, light switches, chairs, phones, toilets, faucets, sinks, and so forth.)
- **Use water and soap** to clean hard surfaces before applying disinfectant solutions.



(9) WILL THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND KIDS PER CLASS CHANGE?

Most likely, yes. In order to accommodate the current requirements for maximum group gatherings, you may have to adjust the number of children and teachers allowed in each class. Prior to COVID-19, LifeWay recommended the following for ideal learning environments:

AGE GROUP	MAXIMUM # OF KIDS	# OF TEACHERS REQUIRED	MAX. TOTAL PER CLASS
BABIES	8	4	12
1S & 2S	9	3	12
3S-PRE-K	12	3	15
KINDERGARTEN	16	4	20
GRADES 1-6	21	4	25

These are still excellent teacher/child ratios for effective teaching, and the total attendance should not exceed many state or local government recommendations in the later phases of reopening. However, they may not meet the recommendations during the early phases of reopening.

If you have already been following these recommended ratios AND the square footage of your classrooms are large enough to accommodate a minimum of 6-feet between every occupant in the room, then no changes may be necessary. Although social distancing with preschoolers and children cannot be guaranteed, we should encourage it for safety. However, my guess is many churches may not have the luxury of multiple large classrooms and

an overabundance of teachers for each age group. Kids may be able to temporarily access spaces they do not typically use if adults are not meeting in classes. Also consider the use of fellowship halls and outdoor spaces. It may be necessary to regroup or reshuffle classrooms to take advantage of the largest, safest spaces for children during this time. Remember, these are temporary measures that won't last forever, so it's okay to make some changes you might not ordinarily make under normal circumstances. Keep in mind the safety and security of children when using these new spaces including furniture, emergency exits, limited access, and restroom facilities.

Don't forget to ensure there are at least two adult teachers in the room at all times. Staffing your kids ministry is often a struggle—even under normal circumstances. Expect that pain point to remain (if not increase) during this time of transition. Some faithful volunteers may be unwilling to return right away, especially if they or a family member fall into a high-risk category. Begin talking to your teachers now and determine who is willing and able to return immediately. Their availability may dictate how you proceed with your plans to reintroduce activities for children. Remember, only offer what you can safely and realistically staff.



(10) HOW DO WE EVALUATE OUR CHURCH SPACE?

The details of reopening your children's ministry can get overwhelming. So start with "the why," before you tackle "the how."

Think through your pre-coronavirus programming. What did you offer on Sunday mornings? Small group Bible study? Was it closely-graded or broadly-graded? Children's worship or congregational worship? Now think through which of those elements are **essential**. That's a word we've heard a lot during this pandemic—essential workers,



essential businesses—and it’s a great way to prioritize your first steps of coming back together as a church body. Understand that things won’t return to normal quickly, so it’s okay to prioritize some things over others. Begin asking of each program and activity, “Is this truly essential *right now?*” If so, how can we make it happen safely and creatively? If it’s not, that doesn’t mean it’s not important. It simply means that you can reintroduce it during a later phase of reopening.

Here’s an example to get you started. Is worship essential? Absolutely. Is children’s worship essential? Perhaps not. Maybe during these early days of reentry, families are encouraged to worship together in the same corporate worship service. (It’s probably safer for kids to remain with their nuclear family anyway since those are the only other people’s germs they’ve been exposed to in several weeks.) Work with your pastor and worship leaders to brainstorm elements that could be included in congregational worship (such as a children’s feature, familiar songs, or a listening guide) to help ease the transition for both children and parents. This change may not be forever, but will likely free up a larger room and a handful of volunteers to accommodate something else that ranks higher on your immediate priority list.

Space will be at a premium while social distancing remains necessary. Keep in mind that your largest spaces may be the ones dedicated to children’s worship, large group assemblies, or play areas rather than small group classrooms. Consider repurposing these spaces into small group meeting areas during this time to allow kids to spread out and maintain social distancing. Preregistration of children can also be used to help plan and prepare. It will allow you to know how many children to expect, their ages, and any other special information needed. It can also be used to limit the number of children who participate on that day due to space or teacher availability. Other age groups in the church (that do not have the same security concerns as young children) may also have large rooms that could temporarily accommodate preschoolers and

children. For example, the student ministry might be willing to meet outside in the fresh air in order to allow children to use their large gathering area. Prior to quarantine, you may have utilized an indoor play space or outdoor playground. You may consider not using these or similar spaces to reduce the spread of germs. No matter which spaces are used, remember to update and follow your safety and security procedures.

Think through which classes will be open during each hour. You may need to offer more opportunities for worship and Bible study (for example, offer both during both hours rather than one each hour) in order to keep class sizes small. This is especially important if your classrooms are small. Set a maximum occupancy for each class based on how many teachers are available (maintaining good teacher/child ratios), the physical square footage of the classroom (to encourage social distancing), and the age of the children in the room (younger children will need more space so that Bible-learning activities can be spread out). Decide on a plan for expansion as the number of kids attending grows. You may need to be prepared to create an additional “overflow” class at any moment so there is class space for all children who attend.

The scenario of immediately returning to the way we were doing kids ministry prior to quarantines, lockdowns, and stay at home directives is highly unlikely. In fact, preschool and kids ministry may never completely look like what it did before COVID-19 became a household name. Acknowledging this reality is the first step in planning for and providing teaching resources for leaders, families, preschoolers, and kids.



(11) HOW WILL YOU CHOOSE CURRICULUM WHEN YOUR KIDS MINISTRY REGATHERS?

Recognizing the importance of teaching kids the Bible, consider your ministry's curriculum needs. Initially, your curriculum needs may be different than they were prior to COVID-19. Your kids ministry may start off relatively small. But, as your community progresses through the stages of reopening, group sizes probably will continue to grow. Therefore, you may want to consider the following when thinking about teaching resources:

- **Will you provide** small group Bible study only, large group worship only, or both Bible study and kids worship? You'll want curriculum materials that fit the appropriate teaching environment.
- **Will you include** all ages of children, birth through preteens, when your church regathers; or will some children be expected to stay with their parents? Will you reopen the kids ministry with specific age groups and progressively add other ages? This impacts what teaching resources you will need.
- **Will you combine** multiple ages and/or grades in either small groups, large groups, or both? If so, you may want to use broadly-graded curriculum materials, at least for the first two or three months of reopening.
- **Will you have fewer teachers** due to health concerns? This may affect how many leader guides you need; however, you may find that you need to adopt a rotational teaching model. In that case, you might need as many or more leader guides than you once purchased.
- **In order to abide** by your community's or state's reopening policies, will you need to plan for additional groups to meet either at different

times or in additional locations? This approach will intentionally reduce how many preschoolers, children, and teachers are in a room. So, you may decide to purchase additional leader packs, music, and videos in order to accommodate the additional classes.

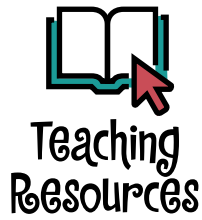
While church finances may be strained as you regather, try to make a resource plan for the largest group you anticipate before the end of the quarterly curriculum cycle. Remember, even though making decisions regarding curriculum resources is now more complicated than before, you will want to provide quality teaching materials in order to disciple kids effectively.



(12) HOW WILL CURRICULUM NEEDS CHANGE DURING DIFFERENT PHASES OF REOPENING?

As your church prepares to regather once local, state, and national governments lift certain restrictions, develop a teaching resources plan that takes into account not only the present reality, but also how many families may regather at church over the next few months. Some suggestions are:

- **Provide digital content** for families indefinitely. Even when gathering restrictions are lifted, some families may continue to refrain from gathering in groups.
- **When some families start returning** to your church facilities, provide digital resources for stay-at-home families that use the same content and on the same schedule as the curriculum used at church.
- **Some families may choose** to regather at church, but keep some or all of their children with them in worship. Consider providing age-specific take-



home pages for those families. The take-home pages may follow your current curriculum content and schedule.

- **When your church first re-opens**, you will likely have a season during which kids sit in church with their families. Consider sending families digital age-appropriate resources such as a take-home page for them to print and bring with them to worship. Suggest families pack a “worship bag” that could contain the printed take-home page, a worship service listening guide, a blank pad of paper, new markers or crayons, new chenille stems, stickers, etc. Additionally, parents can download the LifeWay Kids App on a mobile device for Bible-related activities.
- **Once families leave their children** in their small groups and/or large groups, make sure you have enough curriculum resources on hand, including leader guides and other teaching resources for teachers, activity pages for kids, videos and music. Also, consider mailing take-home pages to children not in attendance.

Since families will most likely regather at church in various stages, using the same curriculum materials on the same schedule for both digital and in-person experiences provides continuity and better equips parents to continue Bible teaching at home.



Policies & Procedures

Now is the time to review and update your policies and procedures. Some of your current policies and procedures will need to be elevated, others may need to be added, updated, or eliminated. Be sure to evaluate and address best practices around hygiene, wellness, and cleanliness. Also consider the number of classrooms that you might open at specific times and the arrangement of classroom spaces. It is wise not to do this in isolation. Consult with your church's legal advisors and insurance providers so they can review your current and updated policies in light of new operational considerations.



(13) WHERE CAN WE FIND RELIABLE INFORMATION TO WRITE AND UPDATE POLICIES?

Updating policies and procedures for the return to kids ministry is necessary. Begin now identifying the policies to be created and updated. Then, consult the following sources for information:

- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
- *Environmental Protection Agency*
- Your local health department
- Your church's medical team or other area health care professionals
- Your church's insurance provider
- Your church's legal advisors

Periodically, review the policies and procedures. Ensure information is up-to-date and add any additional information if needed. While our attention is focused on policies related to COVID-19, it's also a good idea to review and update all your policies.



(14) WHAT HEALTH AND CLEANLINESS POLICIES NEED TO BE ELEVATED OR ALTERED?

As kids and ministry leaders gather in classrooms again, it is important to recognize and implement a new normal to best protect the health and safety of those in your care. As you steward the new rhythms of your ministry well, consider altering or elevating certain health and cleanliness policies to best protect the families you serve.

- **Consider updating and training leaders** on the ministry's wellness policy. As a church, decide if leaders will ask wellness questions as a family enters the building or when a child is being checked into the ministry. Include procedures of what to do if a child's temperature needs to be taken. Remember to consult health care professionals when updating the wellness policy.
- **Include or increase regular handwashing** for kids and leaders. Post handwashing signs in prominent areas. Elevate the frequency for children and leaders to wash their hands (before snack, when entering the classroom, and so forth.)
- **Include appropriate disinfecting solutions** for leaders to disinfect common areas and supplies as needed. See "How often should we disinfect common areas, and classrooms, supplies?" for more information.
- **Update policies and procedures** to consider limiting items parents bring for their child.



(15) HOW MIGHT OUR CHURCH'S ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL POLICIES CHANGE INITIALLY?

Maintain your church's security system for drop off and pick up of preschoolers and children. Think about eliminating hugs, high-fives, fist bumps, etc. Transition to air high fives or invite kids to create a special greeting for everyone in your ministry. Here are some more ideas for adjusting arrival and dismissal.

- **If kids are pre-registered**, you may print check-in labels ahead of time. Or, consider asking specific volunteers to operate each check-in station to limit the number of people touching the screens and printer.



Policies & Procedures

- **Your church may establish a one-adult rule.**

Only one adult can drop off and the same adult must pick up the same child. This will reduce the number of different people in your kids ministry space. All other family members need to wait outside the kids' area. Guide people to move outside the building to have conversations with others. This will keep the hallways clear and allow people to speak to each other while standing farther apart.

- **Instruct everyone to wash hands** or use hand sanitizer upon entering the ministry area.

- **Another idea is to start a system** where one adult drops off kids with volunteers at the welcome desk or at a specific set of doors instead of parents going to and entering the classrooms. The volunteers will take the kid(s) to their room(s).

- **Create a traffic flow pattern** that directs people to enter through one door and exit through another. Use painter's tape and signs to direct people in the new traffic flow and to help them maintain a safe distance from each other.

- **Consider staggering drop-off and pickup** times to prevent a rush of people. This can be arranged by age (all twos at 8:15, threes at 8:25) or by time (5 families at a time every 10 minutes).



Volunteers & Leaders

Volunteers are essential to kids ministry. Start thinking now about how your team may look different when you return. Don't assume that all of your volunteers will be able to continue to serve. Some leaders may be hesitant to serve due to health concerns. You will likely need to recruit and onboard additional volunteers. Now is a good time to start having conversations with your current team to ascertain who may or may not be back. Use this time of preparation to communicate and minister to teachers. Begin casting new vision now so you can formulate an action plan before you meet again.



(16) HOW DO WE ASSESS OUR VOLUNTEER NEEDS?

For many kids ministry leaders, ministry focus abruptly shifted exclusively, or nearly exclusively, to the parents of the kids they serve. Most kids ministry volunteers shifted with their leaders as they too focused on their own health and families. As churches evaluate the best strategy for resuming on-site ministry, it is wise to intentionally consider the volunteers who help us lead the various aspects of our ministries. We can't assume that all volunteers will be ready to step into old roles. We will be wise to open the "door" and let our volunteers know we are excited to resume on-site ministry, while being sensitive to those who are not ready to return. Use the following suggestions:

- **Keep communication lines open** and pray for and with volunteers through phone calls, text messages, and email.
- **Communicate any new expectations** your church has for volunteers such as updated policies and procedures.
- **Survey teachers** about when they plan to return to teaching.
- **Relieve any pressure** for volunteers to return before they are ready.
- **Strive for balanced evaluation** of on-site ministry needs with sensitivity for volunteers' specific life circumstances (health, family, etc.)
- **Identify how many additional volunteers** will be needed in classes and for other responsibilities.



(17) HOW DO WE ENLIST NEW VOLUNTEERS AND WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES WILL THEY HAVE?

You may find it necessary to engage more volunteers in your ministry once you return to on-site teaching. These new volunteers will be valuable and could become full-time leaders down the road. In the world of social distancing, many new volunteers who have been out of the mainstream for quite a significant amount of time will very likely step up to the plate and look for ways to serve. Tried and true methods of finding volunteers will always work.

Build relationships with people and personally ask them to serve. You can find these volunteers anywhere in your church. A great way to start would be to talk to those you already know who are involved and serving. Sometimes they will be a great resource to guide you to others whom you might not know are interested in serving with preschoolers and kids.

Remember, just because your church is coming out of a season of social distancing does not stop the need for careful background checks, volunteer training, and a process for mentoring new leaders. Again, since each church is unique, be sure to abide by your church's stated policies as they pertain to volunteers and rules that govern them.

As you enlist volunteers, keep in mind the various roles that may be needed for this transition time:

- **With churches adding services**, new volunteers may be needed as greeters responsible for a good morning wave in the children's area to make everyone feel welcome when they arrive.



Volunteers & Leaders

- **The need for additional cleaning** of surfaces and toys may require an additional volunteer or volunteers to take on that specific role.
- **Additional classroom leaders** will be needed to substitute for those who choose not to return to teaching right away.

Preschool ministries may also consider adding more volunteers simply for helping children who will experience separation anxiety or other challenges.

In general, look at your church's specific needs based on the strategy you are using to get back to campus and find roles that will be most advantageous to you, your volunteers, and the kids to whom you will be ministering.



Effective Communication

Communication is always a challenge, but in this past season you likely have already devised a quick and easy way to communicate with your parents what is going on with the church. Parents and teachers will want to know what to expect before they return. Share with them the steps the church has and will continue to take for the safety of everyone. Clear and consistent communication will be an important part of the process of coming back together again. You will need to communicate with families and volunteers to let them know what to expect the first time they return to the church facilities. Share the comprehensive plan and updated guidelines. Include key church leaders to ensure they are informed. Determine methods of communication so that everyone knows where and when to look for official updates and information. Effective communication will make the transition as smooth as possible.



(18) HOW CAN WE EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH CHURCH STAFF AND CHURCH LEADERS DURING THIS PROCESS?

The task of developing and communicating a transition plan back to campus is too large for one person. Kids ministers don't need to, and in fact should not, shoulder this responsibility alone. When communicating with church leaders, be gracious and encourage them to consider different facets of reopening the kids ministry. To help those not normally involved in kids ministry to understand the specifics of what needs to happen, consider enlisting a task force of church leaders, parents, and volunteers to give valued feedback on concerns that need to be addressed. Also, determine how you will communicate your reopening plans with parents, teachers, and church members.



(19) WHAT DO WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO VOLUNTEERS?

As you prepare to implement new rhythms of life into your kids ministry, continue to be open and transparent with your leaders. Assure them of the church's plan to gather people together again in confidence and safety while protecting the most vulnerable. Consider implementing the following processes as you communicate:

- Gather leaders virtually for training and community.

- Develop a list of standard procedures for volunteers to implement and explain how and why these new procedures are in place.
- Set realistic expectations for volunteers. Be sure to share expectations with honesty, authenticity, and with the full support of your church staff.
- Describe unexpected scenarios that volunteers may face in the upcoming transition.
- Utilize helpful online training tools such as *Ministry Grid*. Resource your volunteers and leaders as you equip them to serve kids and preschoolers with the safest practices for the future.



(20) HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE UPDATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS?

Make sure to concisely include the reasons for the policies and procedures to help parents and teachers better understand. The more information you can communicate, the easier the transition will be for everyone. You'll want to include information about safe drop-off, pickup, hygiene practices, as well as other concerns brought up by your task force. A note from you in addition to your Business Administrator or Senior Pastor will help to further emphasize that the church cares for families and takes seriously their safety and protection. As you communicate, keep in mind the following suggestions:



Effective Communication

- **Be proactive in communication**, not just reactive.
- **Establish channels** for news and information, and tell people where to find or how to get announcements and information.
- **Create messaging lists** that people can opt into (email, text, etc)—allow people to opt out.
- **Update contact lists** (active vs inactive families).
- **Send invitations** to inactive families to reengage.
- **Establish a regular cadence** for communication (weekly? monthly? daily?).
- **Build closed and public online communities** where people can ask and answer questions.

Listed below are various methods to use as you communicate with parents and teachers:

- Video conferencing platforms
- Weekly Emails
- Website
- Social Media
- Text Messages
- Phone Calls
- Postal Mail

Whatever your method of communication, make sure to communicate clearly and effectively how church will look a bit different for your families when you start to host on campus sessions again.



As you progress through the stages of reopening your kids ministry, may this tool provide practical answers to your questions. Build on the information included to meet the specific needs of your church. We must acknowledge that the situation is changing quickly. We must plan the best we can for the current situation and be prepared to revise our strategy as conditions and guidelines change from week to week. As the LifeWay Kids team returns to our individual church buildings, teaching preschoolers and children, know we are praying for you during these challenging days. Together we're facing the same challenges as we strive to minister and disciple children and their families.

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