

Choosing Adult Leaders

There is no perfect adult leader, nor is perfection expected for events. But the time and effort you invest in intentionally choosing and equipping adults will pay off a hundred fold before, during, and after the event! Here are some general tips for choosing leaders for any type of event that will make youth ministry events a positive faith experience for your youth.

Be Intentional

Don't just advertise for interested adults, **choose** adults who can **lead** youth. There are likely a few names that come to mind immediately, but others may not be so obvious. Watch adults interact with youth to see who has the abilities, experience, and/or potential to relate well with youth. Ask youth who they see as caring adults. Pray for God's guidance in identifying the best adults for your event.

If you have adults volunteer without being asked, tell them you appreciate their offer and will add their name to the list of adults you are considering. Some congregations compile a list of those interested and those who are "nominated" by youth and other adults, then form a committee (with both youth who will be attending and other adults) to choose which adults will attend. Some congregations have an application process, and determine adult leaders based on gifts needed to fill a team. However you choose, be intentional in your process.

As a general rule, Adult Leaders should be at least 21 years old at the time of the event. There should also be at least one adult leader for every 7 youth! These are requirements for synod youth events.

Occasionally, congregations find that the number of adults who want to attend an event is higher than the number of youth! If this should happen, discern the impact adults will have on an event. Usually it is a benefit. But sometimes it takes the focus off of the youth and their faith growth through the event. There may also be times in which you want additional adults, if there are known behavior issues or youth with special needs.



Qualities to Look For

Whether you are hosting a bowling party, a Bible study, or a 10-day mission trip, youth ministry events are complex experiences:

- From a risk management point of view, potential hazards are numerous: youth can get hurt, transportation can break down in the middle of nowhere, youth can get lost in the crowd.
- From a program point of view, there are tremendous opportunities and responsibilities to use events to help youth grow in their faith: fundraisers, Bible studies leading up to the event, small group discussions during the event to help youth process their experience.
- From a practical point of view, youth ministry events can be physically exhausting. Late nights, early morning, sleeping on the floor or in cars/busses, working in the heat, walking for miles from sunrise to sunset in the heat, and emotionally and spiritually exhausting conversations with youth are just some of the demands adult leaders might encounter!

Not every adult is capable of the pace and expectations for every event. Some qualities you should look for are:

- A committed faith centered in Christ
- Cares deeply for youth and is able to relate well with youth
- Mature
- Focused on youth and their needs
- Can be firm in setting boundaries and limits
- Flexible and patient
- Possesses good common sense
- Sense of humor – especially in trying times!
- Committed and reliable
- Makes good decisions under pressure

If you will be inviting more than one adult to participate, try to build a team of adults with gifts that complement each other. Some qualities you might want to consider including as you build a team are:

- Male/female ratio
- Early risers and night owls
- Extrovert personalities and introvert personalities (Up front, “let’s do it” types and behind the scenes, “Do you want to talk about it” types)
- “Big Picture” oriented and detail oriented
- Specific skills depending on the event: carpentry/painting, health care, Bible study leader, organizational leader, etc.



How to Ask Adults to be Leaders

How you approach potential adult leaders tells them as much about how you view an event as what you say.

- Well in advance of the registration deadline, make an appointment to sit down with the adult leaders to talk with them about the event.
- Explain the event and why the congregation is hosting or attending this event for youth.
- Explain why you are asking them to be a leader for this event. Be specific:
 - What qualities do you see them bringing to this experience? Did youth nominate them? What special skills do they have that would be an asset?
 - We often assume adults know why we are asking them to participate, when in fact they don't. Describing their specific qualities lets them know they are needed and gifted for this role.
- Explain the expectations for them as an adult leader for this event.
- Ask what questions they have.
- Give them time to prayerfully consider your proposal, and a date to get back to you by.
- Follow up with them by the deadline.

Do Background Checks

The synod highly recommends that you perform a background check on each adult leader before they are officially selected to serve. Check with your church council and church policies to see if procedures for background checks are in place. If no policy is in place, consider forming a task force to determine how you will perform background checks for adult volunteers who work with youth.



Train Your Adults

Once you have selected your adult leaders, spend time equipping them for the event. Teams of adult leaders should meet for group building, planning, and prayer. Develop a timeline for fundraisers and Bible studies. Discuss the serious issues and scenarios that might occur and how you will handle them. Make sure adult leaders know who to contact in case of emergency. Learn any information that is sent regarding an event.

Adult leaders set the tone and example for the entire event – make it a good one!