

Developing a Job Description for a Director of Youth and Family Ministry

By Dr. Dick Hardel

Youth and family ministry is a new paradigm that has a focus on faith formation. Some congregations have begun to use new titles for this position of leadership. Some new titles are: Minister to the Christian Home, Director of Faith Formation, Director of Faith Nurture in the Home, or Director of Discipleship in the Home. These new titles are used to move the members of the congregation away from the old paradigm of youth group or youth ministry separated from the whole ministry of the congregation.

From the study of research on faith formation, The Youth & Family Institute has shared that the home is the primary place to teach and nurture faith. The congregation is in partnership with the home and works to strengthen the adults in the home to pass on the faith. In this new paradigm a Director of Youth and Family Ministry must work with the parents and other primary caregivers as well as the children and youth of the congregation and community. This ministry must be built from a new vision, rather than around a personality of a person.

While I was serving in ministry at our The Youth & Family Institute, when we talked about youth ministry, we meant from pre-birth to about age 35. It is about passing on the faith and nurturing the faith.

When we talked about family, we do not mean one specific type of family. We meant working with every type of family to grow in Christ. This includes single adults. Their family may be made up of two or three very close friends who share faith, values, and friendship. That also is family. Family goes beyond immediate blood relatives and includes mentors, friends, and others outside the household.

Often when a congregation seeks to fill a part-time position in Youth and Family Ministry, it might be that the congregation cannot financially afford a full-time position. However, the expectations of the leadership of the congregation often equal that of a full-time position.

Since the concept of youth and family is a rather new paradigm in faith formation, it may be difficult for a congregation to find a person who is trained in this model. My first suggestion is to search for someone who has the heart and the call for ministry. It may be someone from the congregation. Vibrant Faith Ministries, Augsburg College, Denver Seminary, Luther Seminary, Princeton Seminary, Columbia International University, Crown College, Wartburg Seminary, Fuller Seminary, Mid Atlantic University, Concordia University St Paul, Concordia University Nebraska, and Nazarene Theological Seminary are some of the organizations that provide continuing education and critical skills courses in youth and family ministry. This is an option to consider and may be easier than trying to locate someone outside of your congregation with the passion and skills for this ministry.

Key Attributes of a Director of Youth and Family Ministry

1. Loves the Lord and can express his/her faith well.
2. Loves the Church.

3. Loves to be with children, youth, and their families.
4. Is a director and not just a doer.
5. Understands ministry as team.
6. Is willing to receive coaching, outside training, and on-the-job training.
7. Faith is founded in a theology of the cross (grace-oriented) and lives a faith-filled and faithful life in response to God's grace. In other words, this person models the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

Everything else can be taught. But the attributes listed above are essential.

Other Essential Things to Consider

- A. **Understanding Youth and Family Ministry**
Youth and family ministry is a holistic and intergenerational approach to ministry. It is primarily not about children, youth, or families. It is primarily about Jesus. It is about discipleship and passing on the faith. It is not just children's ministry or youth ministry. It is everything that God is doing in the community through the congregation. Thus a director of youth and family ministry must work with the whole ministry team of the congregation, have a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the congregation, and understand faith formation.
- B. **There are four imperatives in youth and family ministry**
 1. Faith-focused Christian Education
 2. Strengthening Family Relationships
 3. Congregation as Family
 4. Christian Youth Sub-culture
- C. **There are four keys to nurturing faith in the home**
 1. Caring conversation (includes faithtalk)
 2. Devotions in the home
 3. Family Service (in the neighborhood and community)
 4. Rituals and Traditions in the home
- D. **The congregation must offer a salary so that the director could raise a family and also stay for many years.**
- E. **The congregation should financially support the on-going training of the director of youth and family ministry.**
- F. **The director of youth and family ministry (DYFM) must know how the congregation is structured and functions.**
- G. **The job description must clearly state that the DYFM is to equip parents, mentors, and other adults as well as youth with leadership skills to do the ministry. The job is to build on God's vision, equip families for their ministries, direct the ministries, and support the doers of ministry.**
- H. **For the health and well-being of the DYFM and the longevity of the ministry, the DYFM should develop strong, spiritual disciplines. (i.e., personal prayer, devotional life, daily reading of Scripture, faithful and regular attendance at worship, and develop a prayer support team.**

- I. The DYFM, as all other members of the ministry team, is accountable to the vision of what God is doing in and through the congregation. All the ministries in youth and family ministry must connect to the vision of the congregation.
- J. The DYFM should develop a discipling ministry of leadership for both youth and adults in the congregation and community.
- K. The congregation should develop a clear plan for future growth of the person and the position. It is helpful to find a coach for a person in a new position.
- L. The congregation's budget for youth and family ministry must reflect a good salary with benefits, support for the planning and carrying out of ministries, and continued education of staff and other lay volunteers to be trained.