

## Children's Ministry Director Position Recommendation

Faith formation is a lifelong process in which people claim their identity as beloved children of God and their call to participate in God's purposes for the world. This process begins at birth, and involves **information** (what we know), **formation** (who we are and who we are becoming), and **transformation** (how the world is changed because of who we are and how we live). A life of faith, then, includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The effectiveness of this process has an impact on how well a local church fulfills its mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (§ 120, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*).

A director of children's ministry needs knowledge and skills in several areas in order to be effective:

- Biblical and theological literacy
- Spiritual disciplines
- Resource development
- Child development
- Relationship building
- Setting and meeting goals
- Communication
- Evaluation
- Safe Sanctuaries®

Some potential staff will already possess many of these skills. Other skills will be developed as a person works in a particular position.

The children's ministry director benefits from one or more of these spiritual gifts: servanthood, teaching, exhortation (encouragement), leadership, administration, helping, and shepherding. This leader should show evidence of passion for children's ministry, prior effective ministry leadership, and evidence of active and growing discipleship. This person demonstrates a basic knowledge of child development with appropriate attention to challenges and safety.

Useful skills for this position are the ability to listen to and communicate with people of all ages, ability to work with other adults, children's ministry leaders, and children. This person needs to be able to delegate responsibility and follow up on getting the job done.

This leader should show genuine interest in responding to the needs and concerns of children in the congregation and the community.

Since each congregation is different, the staffing needs related to children's ministry will also vary. However, there are a number of factors that will affect the successful employment of a staff person. Factors to be considered include realistic job expectations, adequate salary and benefits, continuing education and development, healthy staff relationships, and regular feedback.

The staff-parish relations committee will find a description of its responsibilities related to staff in ¶ 258.2g of *The Book of Discipline*. These responsibilities apply to both ordained and lay employees. This document provides additional help for congregations in the process of hiring a director in children's ministry and in evaluating their current staff configuration.

## **Recommendations for Hiring Staff In Children's Ministry**

### **Screening Process**

Each church needs a screening process for potential staff persons. This process should include a reference check, a criminal background check, a psychological assessment, and a review of the candidate's social media.

### **Job Description**

The staff-parish relations committee should provide a written job description. The job description should be used in annual performance reviews. It should also be updated whenever a person's responsibilities are altered.

The director of children's ministry will be attentive to the hopes, concerns, and needs of children in the congregation and in the community to determine how your congregation might serve children and their families and how the children might serve one another as Christian disciples and good neighbors. For additional information on responsibilities of the children's ministry director, refer to [\*Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2013-2016: Children's Ministries\*](#).

### **Compensation**

Churches should pay equitably, demonstrating the importance of children's ministry and considering the local economy and the resources of the congregation.

Additional factors to consider include:

- Educational background
- Previous experience
- Full-time versus part-time
- Scope of responsibility
- Local cost of living

Increases in salary should be based on merit and on increases in the cost of living.

Churches can consult with annual conference boards of ordained ministry and/or with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to determine current compensation ranges for children's ministry staff.

### **Benefits**

Benefits should include health insurance, continuing education, retirement benefits, and reimbursement of work-related expenses, such as mileage and supplies.

### **Clergy**

When an ordained clergy person is chosen as a children's director, the congregation needs to follow the appointment process as described in the appropriate sections of *The Book of Discipline*.

## **Supervision and Retention**

### **Supervision**

The director of children's ministry serves as a member of a team. The person's supervisor should be clearly identified, and the two should meet on a regular basis for prayer, planning, and conversation about the children's ministry. Supervisors should be trustworthy, respectful, and collegial.

At a minimum, the staff-parish relations committee should conduct an annual evaluation of the children's ministry director. The evaluation should be based on the director's written job description and include documentation of effectiveness and any need for improvement. It can be helpful to schedule quarterly or midyear evaluations for new staff persons.

### **Communication**

Consistent communication between the children's ministry director and supervisor should be the norm. In addition, the director will need to communicate regularly with members of the children's ministry team, other staff, parents and guardians, and members of the congregation.

Additionally, children's ministry staff should be added to contact lists for district and conference news (print and electronic). They should be encouraged to join appropriate United Methodist and social media groups.

### **Spiritual, Physical, and Emotional Health**

Part of supervision is working to ensure the director takes care of his or her spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. Effective leaders nurture their relationship with God. They schedule days off, vacation, and time with friends and family. When special events (e.g., retreats, professional development opportunities, or Holy Week services) require additional work time significantly beyond the director's prescribed hours of work per week, the director should take additional time off.

If the need arises, the children's ministry director should have access to counseling services and/or professional coaching.

### **Professional Development**

The children's ministry director should continue to build knowledge and skills for ministry. Participation in workshops, conferences, online courses, and professional networks are a part of staff work. Congregations should provide time and financial assistance for the director's participation in ongoing development.

Churches can contact their district or annual conference offices to receive information about district-, conference-, and general church-sponsored learning opportunities. Other professional development organizations that relate to staff in children's ministry include Christians Engaged in Faith Formation (<http://www.cefumc.org>) and Discipleship Ministries Children's Ministry (<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/children>).

### **Termination of Professional Relationship**

Termination of employment should occur only after adequate measures have been taken to improve performance, resolve conflict, or address other issues. When termination becomes necessary, all persons involved should demonstrate grace in the process.