



How to Start a Weekday Early Education Ministry

Weekday Education programs are being established in increasing numbers as the need for child care escalates. Such programs provide an opportunity for the local church to minister to young children and their families and to provide outreach to families whose children are enrolled. Each Weekday Education program should be seen as an integral part of the total church program as the church reaches out into the community to touch lives for Christ. Church Weekday Education provides care, education, and development for each child enrolled, encouraging them to reach their greatest potential--spiritually, socially and emotionally through developmentally appropriate activities.

How to Begin

To begin a Weekday Education ministry, a study committee should be appointed to determine the need and feasibility of such a ministry in the local church. The beginning process can be enhanced by selecting members to this committee who have an understanding of the needs of young children and families in today's world. Leadership in preschool and children's organizations, such as Sunday School, Discipleship, music and mission organizations, can also provide a source of committee members who are in touch with young children. Committee members must be open to possibilities of new and varied ways to reach a community for Christ as they explore the potential for a Weekday Education ministry.

Surveys to Determine Needs

The Study Committee begins by investigating the needs and interests of both the church and community. A survey of the church family is vital to determine the feelings and attitudes toward the ministry. This survey also reveals the willingness of members to be involved in enrolling their children, working in the program and supporting the new challenge.

A second survey involves assessing the community to measure the demand for child care in the area. It seeks to find where the children are, how many preschoolers and elementary children are in the community, the number of children who need child care and the type of care needed. A Weekday Education ministry includes a variety of child-care options including:

- **Day Care**
- **Preschool**
- **Kindergarten**
- **Parent's Day Out**
- **Before and After School Care**

A community survey gives the study committee pertinent information for a proposal to the church. *The Church Weekday Early Education Administrative Guide*, by Bob Couch, provides checklists and forms to assist the study committee in efficiently completing their work.

Licensing/Legal Considerations

The study committee also contacts the state licensing agency to obtain information on beginning a new child-care program. States vary as to the requirements for church weekday programs to be licensed. Some states provide for exemptions to state licensure. A licensing representative provides specifics concerning indoor and outdoor space requirements, zoning regulations, staff/child ratios, building codes, policies, and other information directly related to the steps to beginning a new program. The facilities available for use should be evaluated to determine if there is adequate space to begin.

It is helpful for the study committee to contact and tour other Weekday Education programs in the area. Valuable information can be gained from others who have chosen to minister to children and their families. Details concerning tuition and fees, policies, hours of operation, salaries and benefits, ages of children enrolled and scholarships will help the committee learn, understand and meet the needs of their church and community.

As the study committee continues its work, it must seek a high level of awareness of the willingness of church organizations to share space with a new ministry. Generally, the Weekday Education program should not exceed the number of preschool rooms which are provided for other church organizations. Care for school-age children can be accommodated in rooms designed for elementary-age children. Room arrangement, use of supplies and equipment, and sharing of wall space need to be agreed upon by all leaders using each room. A sharing, caring spirit can be fostered by consistent communication. As each organization seeks to teach and guide children, minister to families and reach out into the community, positive relationships will develop because of shared goals.

Financial Concerns

After determining facilities to be used and the number of ages of children to be enrolled, attention should be given to the basic financial strategy. Will building renovations be necessary to meet licensing requirements? If so, what will they cost and how will they be financed? A tentative budget showing projected income and expenses should be prepared. Income is determined by multiplying the weekly tuition times the number of children enrolled. Include a registration or supply fee(s) that is relevant to your area. Using these two amounts, financial projections can be made for monthly and annual income. Expenses include such items as equipment, supplies, insurance, professional growth, maintenance and utilities. Remember it takes time to acquire a full enrollment. Make realistic projections for these beginning months.

The Proposal

When the study committee has completed its preliminary work and evaluated its findings, a proposal is made to the church. Information included in this report provides insight and awareness to the entire church body about an exciting new ministry--Weekday Education. A comprehensive summary of the committee's findings includes results of the church family and community surveys, availability of space and needed changes, proposed type of program, tentative budget, and recommendation to appoint a permanent Weekday Education Committee. The permanent committee now represents the church in administering the new program. Basic duties of the committee include:

- **Determine policies and procedures for operating and administering the program.**
- **Assist the program director in developing a workable budget.**
- **See that the weekday education program and facilities comply with legal and licensing requirements.**
- **Direct public relations efforts to inform, involve and educate church members and the community about the program.**
- **Coordinate the work of the program with other church activities involving young children.**
- **Review reports and records to ensure proper operation of the program.**
- **Report regularly to the church about the work of the weekday education program.**
- **Organize the involvement of church members and parents as volunteers in the program.**

What Surveys are Available?

As a Weekday Education ministry begins, resources are available through LifeWay Christian Resources to provide guidance in beginning and maintaining a successful program. The hiring and training of staff is at the core of a caring, Christian environment where each child can develop at his own pace to his full potential--mentally, physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally. *Teaching in Christian Weekday Early Education* is a thorough, practical training manual for teachers. The *WEE Learn Curriculum Guides* can help facilitate planning for each age group toward a wholesome, Christian atmosphere where learning takes place in an appropriate way. *Church Weekday Early Education Administration Guide* gives practical help for beginning and administering a Weekday Education program.

As a church continues to seek new and relevant ways to meet the needs of people in today's world, Weekday Education provides opportunities for ministry and outreach through Christian child care. The mission field walks in and out of the church on a regular basis as families bring their children to Weekday Education programs. May we be diligent in ministering and reaching them in the name of Christ.