

Child Care Ideas For Off-Campus Life Groups

Tips on Providing Care & Discipleship

Kids are great. They are a blessing of the Lord in the lives of families. But sometimes managing the needs of kids and Off-Campus Adult LIFE Group collide.

Our favorite idea is to include kids in part of your meeting yet allowing sufficient adult group time for your group study, discussion, and prayer requests that may not always be kid friendly. (#1 Below)

Although there are times that group meetings or activities involve the children the entire meeting, we do not advocate that on an on-going basis. To neglect adult time is to prioritize the spiritual development of children above that of the adults, yet both are critical. We believe the greatest gift that the church can give children is to lead parents to love and serve God wholeheartedly. When that happens, parents will, in turn, pass it on to their children both by example and by training. The role of the church is to come alongside parents to assist in their role of spiritually training their children.

Here are some ideas for childcare during Off-Campus Adult Small Life Group meetings.

1. Include the kids in the first part of the group.

Plan to involve kids during the first part of the group meeting. Some things to accomplish could be to have a monthly memory verse for the kids (sneak it in for the adults in this way), have a brief prayer time, and give the kids a child level overview of what the adults will be talking about. Then send the kids to their childcare location. This is healthy because it lets the kids see what mom and dad are doing, and models spiritual life of adults. At the same time, there is a need for having adult time with adult prayer requests and adult-level discipleship and accountability. The kids will benefit by having spiritually mature parents!

Pros: Kids see parents' spiritual side.

A hired babysitter could arrive later and cost less.

Cons: Doesn't solve the issue.

Some kids may destroy any adult fellowship during this time.

2. Find someone outside the group to provide care.

Some of your group members may have teens who would be happy to help with childcare. Sending a little money their way would be a great incentive for next week or when the going gets rough. Another option is to hire a babysitter. The next section of content has ten ideas on where to look for childcare providers.

Pros: Everyone gets to attend group.

Cons: Possible cost.

3. Child Care Reimbursement from your church.

Pros: It helps with the cost.

Cons: If lots of groups use it, the church may run out of money in that budget line item before the end of the year.

Kids in Group

4. The group rotates who provides care--two husbands one week, two wives the next.

By rotating sets of men and women, those doing childcare are still getting to fellowship with someone they don't normally hang with, thus making the point of the small group--spiritual encouragement--still possible (if the kids aren't totally wild).

Pros: People still get to spend time with someone other than their spouse.

Cons: These two people don't get to attend group.

5. Parents attend separate groups (men's and women's groups).

Pros: It totally solves the childcare need.

Cons: It's good for husband and wife to attend small group together.

6. Host the kids in a separate nearby home.

Some churches do not allow kids in the same home as the group meeting—insisting that groups must arrange childcare at another house. That tells you how strongly some people feel that the children are a serious detriment to the work of the small group.

Of course, with very young kids, the moms are uncomfortable with that. Also, you'd need at least two sitters or volunteers in that scenario.

Pros: No disruptions to group.

Cons: Finding a house close enough. Providing multiple childcare providers.

Finding Child Care Workers

1. Look within. Use some rotation system as outlined above.
2. Ask group members to share names of their sitters. Share names of trusted teens.
3. Look around at church and see whom might be good.
4. Ask your student or college minister for recommendations.
5. Ask your preschool minister or church childcare coordinator for names.
6. See if some members of another LIFE Group would be willing to serve.

Best Practices for Security and Safety

1. Have at least two people with the kids, preferably not a married couple.
2. Make sure the area is safe.
3. Have someone from the group randomly check on the kids every 15-30 minutes.
4. Provide training for people who will do childcare.
5. If possible, do background checks on workers.
6. Make sure none of the kids have allergies to look out for (milk, peanuts, etc.)
7. Be clear in communication & expectations (time involved, safety, spiritual content, etc.)
8. Provide some structure. Have the worker lead a lesson or Bible study with the kids.
9. Have a list of cell numbers so that the worker can text a parent if needed.
10. If the group of kids is larger, it may be best to separate the children into older and younger groups.