

From the Parking Lot to the Classrooms

When a family enters your church for the first time there may be many thoughts going through each person's mind. For the parents it can be an anxious time because they are considering leaving their children in the care of strangers. The children may be thinking, "Will I know anyone? Will anyone speak to me? Is this going to be fun?"

According to Tom Clegg of Church Growth Institute, ***"When visitors walk through the door, they will decide in 3 to 8 minutes whether they will return."*** What do people experience when they walk into your church for the first time? Do you pass the 8-minute test with flying colors?

Where do I park?

Help new families identify which entry doors are closest to the youth ministry areas. This can be done through various types of signs. Also, reserve some parking space near the doors for new families visiting for the first time.

Where Do I Go?

Once the families have entered the building do they know how to find your classrooms? Establishing a greeting team is helpful in guiding families to the proper classrooms. Make sure the greeters are warm and friendly and are able to share information about the youth ministry program.

Additional Support

- Paint a ribbon or design on the floor or wall that leads families from the front door to the classrooms.
- Hang signs that clearly identify the areas and various classrooms.



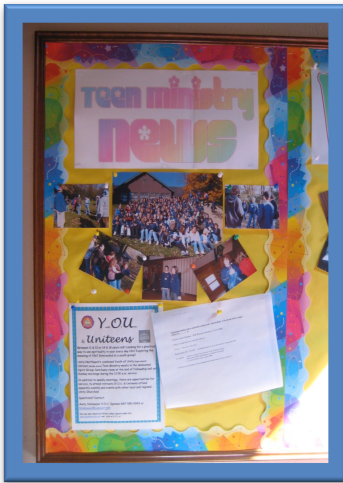
Youth Ministry Greeters

- Create a team of people who connect with each family as they arrive, answer questions and provide additional information.
- The team also assists new families by explaining the sign-in/sign-out procedure and making sure all registration forms are filled out.
- Serve coffee or doughnuts, and offer parents tours of the classrooms and facilities.



What Do the Children Experience?

- Create displays and bulletin boards that show the children and teens enjoying your programs.
- Post information about class schedules and topics of study.



Additional Support

- Hand each new family a Youth Ministry brochure
- Post Youth Ministry news on a bulletin board
- Have handouts of lessons and parent information readily available.

Will Anyone Assist My Child?

- Assure parents that their children will be well cared for by assigning an adult “connector” to their children. The connector introduces visiting children to other kids and to the classroom activities and routines. Connectors help kids and their parents feel safe, secure, and valued. They also help kids overcome the anxiety they feel when they enter a room full of children and adults they don’t know. For infants and toddlers, the connectors serve as personal contacts for parents so they can find out how their child adjusted to the new surroundings.

Additional Support

- Provide first-time visitors with a special ribbon or sticker. This signals your group that they have a visitor and encourages the children to greet them with a friendly welcome.
- Have kids in each classroom serve as first-time visitor ambassadors to show new students around.

Will Anyone Even Know We Were Here?

Follow-up is important.

- It shows visitors that you are grateful for their presence and you hope they will come back. It also gives you an incredible opportunity to get feedback and invite them to return the following week. Consider providing feedback survey with a self-addressed stamped envelope for visitors to respond with comments about their visit.

Additional Support

- Send a personal note to the visitors, or create a welcome card from the kids in the classroom.
- Send off visitors with the same friendliness you offered when they arrived. Most churches do a good job of welcoming guests, but they don't give the same personal contact as guests depart.