

Childcare Ideas for Community Groups

Off-Site Childcare Options

Have childcare in a different home nearby – Arrange for the children to be taken to a different home than where the group is meeting. Give the sitter(s) a list of all parent's cell phones and if there is a problem Mom or Dad are just a call away!

Rotate men & women meeting on alternate weeks – When the men are meeting, the women stay home with the kids. And vice versa. Be sure to regularly do whole family gatherings (men, women, children) to maintain a healthy group connection.

On-Site Childcare Options

Take turns caring for the children – Have a rotating schedule with two different adults watching the kids each week. It is important that this be the agreed responsibility of EVERYONE in the group – not just the women or the ones with children. If someone is not especially good with kids, be sure to team them up with someone who is experienced.

Hire a sitter to oversee the children – Often this can be a teenager(s). It's important to explain expectations to the sitters and the children. Being respectful of the host home is key. EVERYONE needs to agree to help finance this – even those without kids. Decide on a set amount and ask people to contribute monthly.

Ask a responsible older brother or sister from the group—Everything from option #1 applies, though you might pay them less.

Advantages To On-Site Childcare

1. Groups have no restraints on meeting time (allowing for flexibility if the discussion is going well)
2. Groups can be more family-focused (families get to know families, not just adults getting to know adults).
3. Kids will develop relationships, learn to care for and handle conflict with a mixed age-group (not lumped with their particular age group as they are at school, church, etc.)

4. If adults are rotating, they will have opportunities for conversations that might not happen in the large group setting.
5. The children will come to see their parent's friends as their own friends. This fosters more Godly adult influence in each child's life.

Other Childcare Considerations

Don't do any childcare – Designate your group to be adults without children. Allow those with children to find their own childcare (for example, grandparents). If free childcare is not an option for them, see the next point.

Take an offering – If just one or two families in your small group have children you can take a monthly or weekly offering to help them care for the expense of hiring their own sitters. This is a great way for the group to meet this need together.

Most Importantly... Make HOUSE RULES wherever you meet - Talk with the host(s) regularly about this. If you rotate homes, then each new home has a new set of house rules. Some people don't want children in the bedrooms, while others don't care. Communicate clearly the expectations to all the children and parents as well as whoever is caring for the kids.

Having children in your small group will bring tension! That's OK! The goal of a group is not to avoid conflict but to work through conflict! This brings about community!!! So, expect problems and expect to work through them. This will bring you closer together as a community group.