



"Youth Ministry for Life" *Help Sheet*
(for youth and family ministry leaders)

Position descriptions for youth and family ministry staff

Highlights

- [Where to start?](#)
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An important tool in calling and supporting youth and family ministry staff is the job or position description. A position description is a written and reviewed document that outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and accountabilities of the individual. Having a clear sense of what the position and ministry involves helps in recruiting, interviewing, and calling staff as well as offering a foundation for the day-to-day planning he or she will put their energy into. The lack of a detailed position description often leads to frustration, misunderstandings, conflict, misuse of time and resources, confusion, and a high turnover of staff members.

A position description draft is best developed in partnership with a small group having representation of youth, parents, youth committee representatives, call committee members, or staff members related to the youth and family ministry in your congregation. Then circulate the draft among staff, congregation members (youth and adult), and committees for review and comments before finalizing it.

Where do we start?

It's not really that difficult to develop a position description as long as you work from an understanding of your congregation's mission, goals, community context, organizational structure, and vision for youth and family ministry. This may present an opportunity to

pray about, discuss, and write down these components if some of them don't already exist in your congregation. Think, pray, and talk through responses to the following questions with reference to your congregation's ministry:

- What do you envision your ministry to be with youth and families?
- What gifts, skills, and assets do you currently have for this ministry? (Even without a staff person.)
- What are the essential aspects of the ministry and its related programs?
- What are important partnerships to maintain with other churches, schools, organizations, and ministries?
- What tasks, responsibilities, and functions are needed to accomplish this vision?
- Who is responsible for planning, implementing, coordinating, staffing, resourcing, and evaluating this particular ministry?

Focus the position description and its purpose into one document. Take time to sort out what information is best provided through other supporting documents in a staff packet (description of congregation and surrounding community, mission statement, ministry plans, annual report, compensation and benefits information, map of community, resources and funding provided for youth and family ministry, etc.).

Contact your [synod or regional offices](#) and the [ELCA Youth Ministry Network](#) (1-866-352-2638) to find samples or guidelines for youth and family ministry position descriptions.

What generally goes into a position description?

There is a wealth of information to consider in writing a position description, but it is important to be concise so that it provides an easy-to-read and understand document. The following are areas of content that are often addressed in a position description:

Ministry description

- Begin with a general purpose statement for the position, such as: "The Director of Youth and Family Ministries works to encourage, inspire, and nurture young people and their families in the Christian faith."
- List some of the assets and gifts your congregation already has for doing this ministry.
- Identify which staff member supervises and supports the individual.
- Identify any committees or task groups that are an integral part of the position and ministry (youth committee, Christian education task group, congregational life committee, ministry support committee, etc.)

Specific responsibilities

- List specific responsibilities for the position. These flow from your ministry planning processes. For instance, if you choose to focus on outreach, what kind of contacts or visits would you expect the person to

make? How will he or she relate to other programs such as Sunday school, confirmation, or worship planning)?

- Identify expectations or responsibilities for relating to other congregations, community organizations, school programs, or ecumenical groups.
- Make sure the responsibilities are realistic and achievable in relationship to the staffing and volunteers you provide.

Applicant background requirements

- List education and theological training requirements. Include nonacademic ministry or work experiences that would satisfy the education requirements.
- Describe expectations for church membership or affiliation.
- Describe expectations for past leadership experiences in youth and family ministry, outdoor ministry, or Christian education.
- Describe any background checks required as a condition of employment or call.

Time

- Describe the time requirements for the position. Is it full- or part-time? Define the hours and days of work expected and any work pattern expectations (office hours, required work days, weekend expectations, overnight events, multiple-day events, or long-term summer trips, etc.)
- If the position is shared with another congregation or organization, describe how the work hours, days, and work locations are divided or managed.
- Estimate the amount of travel and out-of-office time the position may require.

Staff team responsibilities

- List anything that staff are expected to do as a team member. (i.e., attend staff meetings and retreats, cooperative program planning, submit budgets, annual reports, assist with administrative tasks, lock and unlock buildings, etc.)

Evaluation

- Describe any work plans, appraisals, evaluations, strategic planning, or documentation that staff is expected to complete or participate in on a routine basis.

Let it grow and evolve

Just because a position is neatly described and reflects a lot of committee work behind the scene, don't set it in stone forever. As your youth and family ministry changes, grows,

evolves, or shifts directions, so should the position description. Change may also come about as the staff member's gifts, skills, and interests develop over time. It's affirming and energizing for a person to be invited to give routine input and advice on how their position description compares to reality, and how it might be adjusted or morphed in the interest of effective ministry and their own professional growth.

On the other hand, a position description set in jelly can be a problem. A "We don't need to write it down—let's play it by ear" approach lends itself to manipulation, passive-aggressive behaviors, misunderstandings, misdirected energy and resources, conflicting expectations, or surprise conflicts. (None of those sound too pleasant, do they?)

No matter what you do, strive for clarity, thoroughness, and openness to growth and change in developing a position description for your youth and family ministry staff. Stay focused on the health and support of the staff person, your ministries, and congregation. You won't regret the effort. Neither will your staff, youth, or congregation.

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