

HOW TO BEGIN A TUTORING MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

I. DETERMINE THE NEED FOR A TUTORING MINISTRY

Talk with parents, schoolteachers, Guidance Counselors, and the school officials to see if they feel a tutoring ministry is needed. Secure statistics on school dropout rates from your state or district education office. Share your concerns with fellow church members to see if they recognize the need for tutoring for their children. Your associational or state Church and Community Ministries Director can help you conduct a formal needs assessment.

II. PRAY ABOUT THE NEED FOR A TUTORING MINISTRY

- A. Pray about your involvement and be sure God's leadership and direction are evident.
- B. Solicit the prayer support and involvement of your Pastor, Minister of Education, WMU/Brotherhood leaders, and your fellow church members. Involve the Youth Minister from the very beginning.

III. PLAN AN AWARENESS MEETING

Contact the missions division of your State Baptist Convention or the Home Mission Board to arrange an awareness program for your church or missions group on Tutoring Ministries. Invite everyone interested in tutoring to attend.

IV. SECURE CHURCH APPROVAL

Present the need for a tutoring ministry to the church. Request your church to officially authorize the use of church facilities for the ministry. Decide on funding for the ministry.

V. SELECT A TUTORING COMMITTEE

The next step in organizing a tutoring program is to form a committee to work out the details of organization and to discover how the church can best serve. The committee may already be a functioning committee such as a Church Missions Committee or a Ministry Group.

VI. VISIT THE SCHOOL

The entire tutoring program is based on a good working relationship between the church and public school officials. Without this basic foundation the tutoring program cannot function. Make an appointment with the principal or superintendent of schools to talk with him/her about the interest your church has in helping children who are having problems and need individual help. When making this contact be mindful of the following suggestions:

1. Within a given school always work through the principal or his/her designated representative. This means asking his/her help and keeping him/her informed.
2. On your initial contact:
 - a. Let him/her know that the church has an interest in beginning a tutoring program.
 - b. Inform him/her of the resources within the church which could be of help.
 - c. Find out what he/she feels needs to be done.
 - d. Secure his/her cooperation in setting up a working relationship.
 - e. Ask for help from the Special Education teacher, if the school has one.
3. Make it clear that your tutoring program does not imply criticism of the school program.
4. Make appointments ahead of time; and if it sometimes seems hard to see school personnel, remember that they have an overwhelming number of responsibilities, and that from their point of view tutoring is a peripheral program. Interested as they may be, it does not have and cannot have first priority.
5. Avoid the first week or two of school, unless you and the principal have agreed on the details of a program far in advance, as the first weeks in any school are more demanding than usual.

VII. SELECT A DIRECTOR

The director of the tutoring program can be either someone on the church staff or a volunteer. This person should be one who has a deep concern for and interest in school children with problems. He should have some insight into the dropout problem and be able to establish good rapport with the school officials. It would be helpful to select a director who has had some experience in teaching in the public school or has had some training in the field of education.

VIII. ENLIST TEACHERS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS

The church has many resource persons within its congregation who could be utilized in helping these school children who are having difficulties with their subjects. These tutors might be retired schoolteachers or certified teachers who are rearing a family and are unable to teach full time in public schools. They might be housewives who have a desire to help. Many Baptist men and women have engineering degrees and could help with mathematics. Some churches use youth who are proficient in their studies. Others may want to help with transportation, refreshments, etc.

First develop a combined information sheet and application blank suited to your method of recruiting. Direct personal contact with the prospective tutor is probably the best way to recruit, especially when the project is new.

A sign set up on a table near a well-traveled area can get a large number of people interested in the project in a short time. Announcements at Sunday School, Discipleship Training and at organizational meetings are also effective. Make use of posters with applications attached and write articles in the church paper or Sunday bulletin.

IX. PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

There are basically two ways of getting the pupil acquainted with the church's tutoring program.

- A. The best way to recruit the pupil is on a selective basis with the principal. In most cases the principal will confer with the teachers of the grade level the church is interested in working with to determine which children need this help and could best profit by it. The principal and the Tutoring Program Director could then send a letter, signed jointly, to the parents, informing them of the service available and encouraging them to let their child participate. A sample letter is included in the Tutoring Children and Youth Manual.
- B. A second way of recruiting pupil is by open communication such as neighborhood mail outs, handbills, posters, signs, door-to-door invitations, associational papers, local daily papers, and church bulletins. In some cases, the principal will make the announcement at school.

X. SECURE WRITTEN PERMISSION

It is important for the director of the tutoring program to get acquainted with the parents prior to beginning the program and to secure their written permission for the child to participate. During this visit the following things need to be discussed and clearly understood by the parents:

- A. That participation by the child is not being required by the public school, but that the church is making this service available to the children.
- B. The importance of regular attendance by the child.
- C. Arrangement of any transportation, if needed.
- D. Although tutoring programs are usually offered at no cost to the child, any fees set by the church need to be understood.
- E. The Bible will be used as a resource and spiritual needs will be addressed.

XI. TRAIN AND ORIENT TEACHERS

Contact the North American Mission Board or the Kentucky Baptist Convention to schedule a 14-hour basic training workshop. In order to get a good start and establish a smooth running program, all teachers should be trained and should meet together with the director for an orientation. During the meeting the teachers should learn who they are going to help, what room they will meet in, the process of administering the program, i.e., policies and records, and some basic ideas on their roles as teachers. One area in which the teachers will most likely want help is in establishing rapport with their pupils. Suggestions for gaining rapport with pupils are provided in the Tutoring Children and Youth Manual. Most of these items are covered in the 14-hour basic Tutoring Children and Youth Workshop.

XII. BEGIN THE PROGRAM

After the beginning date has been set all pupils should be notified. Most of the first meeting will consist of enrolling and getting acquainted. During this time the pupils need an orientation to the program to become familiar with the procedures. Refreshments could be served at a get acquainted reception, and the parents could be invited if the director and teachers so desire.

XIII. EVALUATE THE MINISTRY REGULARLY

For best results, the director should maintain a constant contact with the school principal and others who can help equip the teachers to improve their teaching skills. The director and teachers should always be alert to other ways the church might be able to be of service to the families. Use an evaluation form to get feedback from volunteers.

XIV. REPORT TO THE CHURCH

Report to the church in regular business meeting on the tutoring ministry. Share successes and prayer requests, but respect the students right to privacy.

(Adapted from "How to Begin a Church Community Tutoring Program" by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and "Getting Started Check-List" by Richard Robinson). For more information, or to schedule a TCY workshop, contact Missions Mobilization Team of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, 502-489-3530 or ministries@kybaptist.org.