3 STEPS TO TAKE WITH EVERY NEW VOLUNTEER

We recently asked thousands of church leaders about their biggest struggles in ministry. Their answer? **Volunteers.** And not like, "We wish we had more!" (They do.) But more like... "We wish we knew what to do with them."

Finding great volunteers is its own challenge, and we have a few ideas on training and retaining volunteers for your ministry. But once you find great people, how do you get them connected to your ministry? What steps should you take when you find a volunteer so you know they're a good fit for your ministry and fully aware of the chaos incredible opportunity they're signing up for?

Well, we've put together a list of some of the most important steps for onboarding your volunteers. We'll walk you through each step and offer helpful resources so you're not starting from scratch.

Ready to see how you can onboard your volunteers? Let's go!

INTERVIEW THEM

As ministry leaders, one of the traps we can fall into is thinking, **"Well, I've known them for eight years. I'm sure they'd make a great volunteer!"** And, yes, most of the time, our intuition is right. You know your ministry, your team, and your group, so of course, you know what it takes to be a good volunteer.

But no matter how long you know someone, you should always set aside time to interview them after they apply. So much can happen in an interview setting that can signal whether a person is a good fit for your ministry. They might share a story that reveals they'd be great at leading things up-front. You might discover a hidden talent you can use in your weekly environment. Or, they might express growth points you'd like to address before they enter your ministry.

The interview is truly one of the most important factors in your onboarding process. It's your chance to ask them questions like...

- What are you looking forward to most as a volunteer?
- What's a show, game, or musical artist you're into right now?
- Why do you want to serve with us?
- Can you tell me more of your faith story?
- How can you apply your strengths when you serve with us?

Oh, this is also a great chance to give them space to ask their questions. **You're not just interviewing them—they're also interviewing *you.*** Make sure to set aside time in your interview to ask questions. Even better, tell them ahead of time that you'll give them space to ask about your ministry, vision, and values. That way, they can come prepared with specific questions!

So, even if you've known them longer than you can remember, make sure they go through your interview process. You'll get to hear from them, they'll get to ask you questions, and you'll both learn about each other by the end.

Remember, an interview signals that you take the volunteer process seriously. You're not about to let just anybody work with the kids and teenagers in your ministry. You have an idea of what a trusted volunteer looks like, so after the interview, you should...

SCREEN THEM

Keeping your group safe is your top priority. Screening each and every volunteer regularly is one of the ways you can keep your ministry safe. With safety measures like background checks, you can screen your volunteers to see if there are any red flags. From there, you can make the appropriate decisions with your leadership team.

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Depending on your situation, screening your volunteers is *required by law.* You might be required to run background checks and other security screenings on any adult working with kids and teenagers in your ministry, whether they are paid staff or volunteers.

To best serve your families (and volunteers), we recommend partnering with an organization dedicated to screening volunteers and keeping ministries safe.

Protect My Ministry is an organization we love partnering with. They're the nation's leading provider of background checks for churches. Serving over 35,000 ministries, they know what's needed to keep your ministry safe with their thorough screening process. With our partnership, **you can get up to 15% off a security package for your church or ministry.**

Screening your volunteers is an essential part of your ministry volunteer onboarding. Background checks can alert you to safety concerns for your ministry, giving you more tools to keep your group safe.

But your onboarding strategy doesn't stop there. Once you've interviewed and screened your volunteers, it's time to...

TRAIN THEM

For some of us, our first volunteer experience was showing up to a weekly service or gathering without any idea of what to do. It was sort of a learn-as-you-go situation, and when it comes to ministry, that isn't the preferred way to find out if one of your volunteers is a natural public speaker or is terrified of crowds.

Instead of throwing your new volunteers to the wolves (or the Cheeto-stained hands of a pre-teen small group), ministry training should be part of your onboarding strategy.

There are a few different parts to training volunteers.

- **GENERAL MINISTRY TRAINING.** This is where you tell your volunteers about your ministry, vision, and values. It should also be the first training session a volunteer experiences. You might explain your different environments, why you approach ministry the way you do, and what it looks like to be a successful volunteer. This volunteer training is a great time to hand out ministry tools like your volunteer handbook, business cards, and links to your communication platforms like Hubs.
- **PRACTICAL MINISTRY TRAINING.** This as-needed training can happen with all your volunteers or smaller groups. In these practical ministry trainings, you can give them specific tools, ideas, and information to help them better serve others. Some examples of this might be small group training, hosting an event, or connecting with parents.
- **SAFETY TRAINING.** We recommend hosting this ongoing training at least every year. You'll want each of your volunteers to be updated on the latest laws, policies, and procedures to keep your group safe. While you can create these trainings yourself, we recommend working with an organization like **Protect My Ministry** to discover the most relevant information for your church.

Training is one way we can extend clear expectations for our volunteers. A single day of training is easy to forget, so we recommend sprinkling some training throughout the year in your emails, social media posts, and communication strategy to establish consistency. Ongoing training is genuinely helpful when you clarify expectations for your volunteers and keep your ministry safe.

And just like that, you've got an onboarding strategy for your volunteers! Or, at the very least, you've got some assurance that you're already on the right track. So what's next?

First, don't forget to check out **Protect My Ministry** to see how they can help you keep your ministry safe. Their background checks, training, instructional videos, and resources can help you do even more to keep your group safe.

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But if you're looking for more ways to care for your volunteers, that's one of the reasons why we make Grow Curriculum! We make a ton of resources from teaching curriculum to fully planned events and discipleship activities. Plus, we've got a whole strategy for working with youth and kids ministry volunteers. You can steal it if you want!

Whether you're training new volunteers, updating your strategy, or looking for new ways to keep your ministry safe, we hope you've found something to help! Keep being awesome!



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