

What About Children in Our Community Group?

Some Advantages Groups Experience When They Manage Their Own Childcare...

1. Groups can meet any night of the week.
2. Groups have no restraints on meeting time (can extend meeting to 2 hours, or longer, if agreed upon by members).
3. Groups have the ability to meet anywhere in the city (opens the door for meeting geographically, or rotating all over the city).
4. Groups can be more family-focused (families get to know families, not just grown-ups knowing grown-ups).
5. Kids will be in a mixed age group of kids, not lumped with their particular age group as they are at school, church, etc.
6. If groups are rotating out 2 parents to watch kids, those 2 individuals will have an opportunity to have conversations that might not happen in larger group settings.
7. Service projects will be more inclined to include families, not just the adults.
8. Other positive adult influences: Children will more likely come to see their parent's friends as their own friends if adults are rotating through for childcare.

Some helpful tips:

Select a willing childcare coordinator. Usually this is a parent who's really organized! It's not her (or his) job to do all the childcare, just to keep it organized. The goal is always for the entire group to be sharing the load of caring well for the children.

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.

Childcare Ideas / Options



Hire a sitter to oversee the children – Often this can be a teenager. It's important to explain expectations to them and make clear any house rules. *EVERYONE* should help finance this – even those without kids because we are all making this possible through passing a jar each week that is used to pay your sitters a pre-determined amount. If there isn't enough cash coming in then bring it up and challenge the group (not just those with children) to do more. If you have more than enough, just keep the extra in the jar for future weeks.

Ask a responsible older brother or sister from the group—Everything from option #1 usually applies, though you might pay them less. This can lead to tension if there are problems with their performance but deal with it directly.

Take turns caring for the children – It is important that this be the agreed responsibility of *EVERYONE* in the group – not just the women or not just the ones with children. If someone is not especially good with kids be sure to team them up with someone who's experienced, but everyone needs to shoulder the responsibility.

Don't do *any* childcare – Some groups don't do childcare because everyone in the group has children that are older or perhaps the group is made up of single adults without children or young married couples with no children yet. But once children are involved it is important that you make a plan that makes it possible for these people to be involved with your small group.

Have childcare in a different home nearby – This can often be a good option if you can arrange it for children that have trouble leaving their parents alone or if you have a *LOT* of kids. Give the sitters everyone's cell numbers or the number for the host home and if there's a problem Mom or Dad are just a call away! This can really work well with 2 groups that might share a sitting home.

Rotate men & women meeting on alternate weeks – This works for groups consisting of lots of families with lots of kids (especially younger ones). Men meet one week while the wives stay home and watch the children. Women meet the next week while the husbands stay home with the kids. It's important you regularly do whole family times (men, women, children) to maintain connection with everyone.

Take an offering – If just 1 or 2 families in your small group have children you can decide to pass a hat each week to help them care for the expense of hiring a sitter at their home. It's unrealistic for most families to absorb the full expense on their own – but in some cases this is a good option as long as you are dealing with just 1 or maybe 2 families.