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The Role of Leaders in Service Adventure

Diff between Goal and Objective

Goal might be – be a caring and growth mindset leader

Goals: (objectives)

1. Understand scale of authoritarian – permissive

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- a. Teacher vs parent vs mentor vs friend
2. Articulate your leadership style individually and as a team
3. Adjusting to VSers' needs and situations
 - a. Able to use scale and style to analyze situations
4. Skill-building – interacting with budget, components, and crisis management
 - a. Workshop about gaps and need more support/resources from committee and/or Naomi

What is expected of Leaders?

- provide support for all aspects of program
- frame yourselves as distinct from parents but someone with leadership. Talk through this specifically with RD
- preparation/orientation
- building strong relationships with participants: check-ins
- crisis management (resources) best practices

Unit leaders are expected to guide and offer structure to the group living component of Service Adventure.

What is expected of Participants?

- active service in local community placement
- participation in learning/growth both spiritual and personal
- participation in community and relationship building

Spiritual Leadership

- how to deal with your own questions even as you lead others
- ask AMBS

How to lead reflective conversations – how to deal with the big questions
Tips, tricks, ideas

Service Placements

Goals of participant service placements within Program

1. See God at work in new places and faces
2. Gain independence and empowerment as they discover and grow their skills and gifts
3. Discern the calling God has for them
4. Build intercultural competence
 - a. Grow in ability to see and understand oppression
 - b. Learn ways to faithfully resist discrimination/oppression

Basic Participant Expectations

1. 35-40 hours per week
2. One full-time or up to three part-time placements
3. Communicate clearly with Placement Supervisor about day-to-day work
4. Communicate clearly with Placement Supervisor and Unit Leader about concerns
5. Put forth a reasonable effort in maintaining a good working relationship with placement and staying in their assignments for duration of term

Unit Leader Role & Expectations

1. Unit Leaders are the holders of relationships with placement agencies for the duration of their term. This includes actively evaluating placements of current participants, as well as planning for future placements, possibly at new agencies.
 - a. Sign annual MOU with placement agencies and discuss stipend amounts.
 - b. Community organizations in which Service Adventure participants serve are to be faith-based or ministry-focused, intimately involved in matters of social justice, in service to marginalized populations, or are otherwise in line with the objectives of Service Adventure.
2. Unit Leaders place each volunteer with a specific agency.
 - a. To be a good fit, the participant should be comfortable enough to feel safe, but stretched enough to have a push to grow.
3. Support volunteer and placement if there are disagreements and/or issues that arise. Help volunteer to grow in professionalism and maturity; but also advocate for healthy boundaries for volunteer.
4. Unit leaders are responsible for meeting with service placement supervisors regularly.
 - a. By October 15 each year, in order to become acquainted with participants' supervisors and to assess fit.
 - b. Every three months within term.
 - c. The last check-in of the term discuss participants' overall performance and discuss future relationships between Service Adventure and service assignment organization.
 - d. Additional check-ins are expected when issues arise, with the supervisor and participant separately and together as assessed is necessary.
 - e. Maintain written summaries or record pertaining to the check-ins.

Preparing Well for Participants

Preparing for Start of Term

- Determine final service placement assignments
 - This will typically have been done by the previous leader or the Support Committee
 - If a new leader needs to do this, please refer to the Personnel Process at _ and ask for help!
 - Is there paperwork to begin (child care clearances, physical, etc.)?
- Find host families
- Plan activities or trips for the first few weeks to help build relationships.
- How do you want to set the tone for the year?
 - How will you make sure participants are prepared?
 - Know what to bring
 - Know more about you
 - Know more about each other
 - How will you make sure you have the information you need to prepare well?
 - What would you like to ask participants?
 - What would you like to ask the Support Committee?
- How will you set expectations for parents/families of participants?
 - You will have some relationship with parents/families - what do you want that to look like?
 - Giving parents/families specific things to do (send care packages, visit specific number of times) can help give direction to their role during this year.
 - This is new for them too, and providing a bit of guidance and direction to help them know their role can be a good way to draw boundaries kindly.

Participant Orientation

Orientation Learning Goals for Participants:

1. What they can expect through the year (basics of the program)
2. What is expected of them throughout the year (Unit Life, Service Placement)
3. Basics of the new city and community
4. Start using intrapersonal and interpersonal reflection to build healthy relationships

Paperwork/Info Checklist for Participants

- Participant Crisis Forms
- Signed copies of Statement of Accountability from each participant (after review policy manual)
- Several group photos and individual photos
- Prayer Card Info: Verse for Unit, Group Photo
- T-shirt sizes
- MOU from each service placement agency

Things to Cover in Orientation Week, or in first few weeks

Home life and Service Adventure policies

- Expectations, van use, one-to-ones schedule set up, chores, rooms/roommates (expectations for each other), common areas, demo cleaning, technology use, calendar, policies, travels, food, learning components, stipends, financial stuff/budget, vehicle upkeep, bathroom schedule, laundry schedule.

Relationship Building Experiences

- Do meaningful group activities regularly through the first few weeks/months that ask intentional questions, provide opportunities to bond as a group.
- Host Family Welcome Event

Spiritual/Personal Growth

- Church Family: Corporate: introductions to church(es), pastor(s), support committee; host families
- How do you take care of yourself so you have energy to grow?
 - Temple care: eating, exercise, sleep
 - Mind/spirit: personal changes during terms, culture shock
- Personal: Worship Nights and Learning Components, ways to do individual growth/reflection

Work

- Visit work placements, meet the boss. If needed learn job description/expectations.
- Transportation planning and practicing

Our new city

- City tour, history (economic, people, shaping events, etc.), needs of people in our town, map (to understand church location, host families homes, etc.).
- Groups use map, walk to local areas, meet neighbors, and explore local parks.
- Grocery store/supplies

All-unit Orientation Zooms with MNN Staff

- Child Safety
- Anti-Racism
- Program Policies/Expectations
- Other?

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Resources to help:

Community Life Values, Principles, and Details

Values & Principles of Community Living (Why We Live as a Unit)

- Value: We want to reflect the early church
 - Common Purse
 - Shared Meals
- To live in community – learning how to think beyond ourselves
- To share life's joys and sorrows together in healthy relationships

Unit life is an integral part of the Service Adventure experience. At its best, a unit is a community of support, celebration, reflection, and discernment as the members of the community offer themselves in Christian service. Living together is where rubber hits the road – how will you make decisions together, how will you balance your own needs with others', how will you keep everything organized and running smoothly.

Unit leaders are expected to guide and offer structure to the group living component of Service Adventure. Following are a list of Community Life Details to think through on your own, and then plan with your unit. Think of all of this as a training – you want the participants to know why they are doing this, so their goals will be shared. They won't be good at first, and maybe can't even take all of this on at first. Find what is necessary to have a successful entry, then after establishing some connections, build together a plan for the coming months. Re-evaluation helps growth.

Meal Planning + Preparing

Why we do this together?

- Communities build relationship over food. Preparing meals with love is a Christ-like way of showing hospitality, even to those closest to you.
- Sharing a Common Purse means you share responsibility for each other. You can't only make choices for yourself, you have to consider how your choices affect others.
- Shared Common Purse can also allow you to do more together than you could alone. If you split your budget between yourselves, you couldn't make the same kind of meals.

How will we do this together?

- Basics
 - Who cooks when and how often? In a team or alone?
 - How does that effect grocery shopping and meal planning?
 - Who will go grocery shopping and when? How will they know what others want to put on the list? How will they make budget decisions?
 - Who will do the dishes and when?
- Taking Care of Each Other
 - What does a meal include? Protein? Vegetables?
 - Special dietary needs?
 - What foods are important to each of us?
- Building Relationship
 - Who prays?
 - What kind of conversation do you want to have at mealtime?
- Common Purse
 - Learn about the weekly and monthly budget. Talk about how to determine needs and wants depending on costs.

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- Explore alternative food sources – thrift stores, food co-ops, etc.

Scheduling

Why we do this together?

- We want to share experiences together as a unit. We want to learn from each other and develop our own skills and gifts.
- We want to find the balance between taking care of ourselves and being part of a group. Different people will want different activities, and working together to find equity in the schedule is a way to build healthy relationships.

How will we do this together?

- Planning in advance gives you time to discuss the balance of activities with service assignments and individual commitments.
 - How far in advance should participants give notice about personal commitments?
 - Who and how will you communicate with service placements?
 - What flexibility will you allow with learning components and worship nights?
 - How will you make sure leadership for each is shared equitably?
 - Best Practice: Schedule 2 months in advance, but remain flexible up to 2 weeks ahead
- How will you communicate about schedule with each other?
 - Best Practice: Group Calendar (if it's not on the calendar, it doesn't exist)
 - Best Practice: Use weekly Unit Meetings to review schedule 2 weeks forward
- What fun things will you do together?
 - What ideas do you have for monthly recreational activities?
 - Who will plan and arrange these activities?
 - Will you invite others to go with you on these activities?

Unit Meetings

Why we do this together?

- Healthy Relationships require communication. This is a way to create opportunities for communication and conflict resolution.
- We want to share responsibilities equitably – taking care of each other.
- Participants should work to grow in their relationship skills – with the guidance of leaders.

How do we do this together?

- When and how often will you meet?
- What kind of topics will you discuss, and how will you decide each agenda?
- How will we set boundaries in healthy ways while responding to others' needs?
- Best Practice: The Leaders gather agenda and moderate - including keeping discussions on track and stimulating equal participation of unit members in discussions
- Best Practice: Leaders will ensure persons are designated to implement decisions made at unit meetings.
- Best Practice: Use this meeting to discuss what expenses you will include in house budget vs they should pay for from their stipend. Talk about why and how those decisions are made. Think carefully about *equity* not *fairness* in making these choices.

Taking Care of the House Together

Why we do this together?

- Common Purse – we all share responsibility for this house. We want to be good stewards of this gift given by the Church and prepare it for the next unit.

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- Caring for Each Other – a clean living space is important for mental health. We want to think about others' needs for cleanliness as well as our own preferences.

How do we do this together?

- What needs to be cleaned daily? Weekly? Monthly?
- How do we decide who will clean what, when? What are our shared expectations?
- How will we bring up concerns about cleanliness? How will that be different between leaders and other participants?
- How will we learn cleaning skills we don't have experience in? How do we ask for help respectfully?
- How will we host guests? What are the extra expectations when someone comes over for dinner or for overnight?
 - Best Practice: Distinguish between unit guests and personal guests. Individual participants are responsible for preparing for and cleaning up after personal guests, i.e. changing and washing linens and towels, etc.
- Best Practice: The Leader leans more authoritarian in this area. Set clear expectations and enforce deadlines. You ensure the house is cared for well.

Sharing Joy Together (Best Practices)

- Joy is close to everyone's heart. Learn what brings joy to everyone.
 - Ask participants about special traditions/rituals from their home or home community. Incorporate some into unit life.
 - Create special unit traditions/rituals.
 - Decide how to celebrate birthdays.
- Encourage celebrations! Take initiative if necessary.
- Sharing care packages & gifts

Components of Program within Community Life

Helpful Resources:

Learning Component

Goals

- To help participants develop a framework and skills for discerning God's purpose in their lives.
- To help participants find a place in the life of the congregation and to evaluate the role of the local, home and broader church in meeting the needs of the world.
- To help participants develop a worldview that enables the individual to identify need and develop a sense of justice that transforms the way of life.
- To help participants to get to know each other as well as getting to know persons from the congregation/community.
- To help participants learn more about the community/area they are living in.

Structure

- One evening (day) per week to be spent together as a whole unit.
- During the first month, participants and leaders would share their life stories in detail. The leaders would begin and act as models for the sharing. Allow each person up to one hour with maximum of two persons per night. Persons can use photos, their collage and spiritual journey exercises developed during orientation week, etc.
- As you plan throughout the year, make sure you balance having participants teach with having participants learn. Having the chance to teach a skill or even activity they enjoy is important for their growth experience.
- Make use of your local community and your congregation! Go to local events, invite congregation members to teach about their experiences or skills.

Use of learning component money

Learning component money is for activities, done as a whole group that will offer environments and opportunities for participants to learn. These dollars are budgeted in each Service Adventure unit to cover the cost of activities that might otherwise be limited due to tight budgets.

However, these dollars are not meant to create frustration in determining how to spend the total budgeted amount each month. Rather, as a group ask the question, "What experiences or new opportunities do we want to be involved in this year?" Keep in mind that most Service Adventure budgets are fairly tight and that education and recreational benefits can be gained from many free or inexpensive activities as well.

There is sometimes a fine line between the recreational and educational benefit of an activity. If an activity needs discussion to justify its educational benefit, then maybe it's best covered by recreational allowance.

Learning component planning sheet

Questions to answer before the LC

1. What is the topic?
2. What are we learning/doing?
3. Who do I want to lead this?
4. Who else needs to be involved?
5. How much time will this take?
6. What expenses are involved?
7. What plans do I need to finalize?

Questions to answer after the LC

1. How prepared was I?
2. What went well?
3. What didn't go well?
4. What could I do differently?
5. Other learning component ideas:
6. Remember for next time?

Worship Nights

Informal worship leading/planning

In this context, informal worship simply implies a gathering for worship that does not necessarily involve a pastor; is usually held in a setting other than a sanctuary; and involves a portion of a larger body of believers. It does not refer to the specific elements incorporated into the gathered worship experience.

Who should do the planning of worship and who should lead the service?

Some people treat these components as the same thing but they don't need to be. **Each member of the unit should have the opportunity to plan worship nights regularly.** Use local church members as a resource to lead a worship time.

Planning worship is about including those pieces that will be meaningful to participants, while also stretching and expanding their context for what worship is. Leading worship is about guiding the variety of pieces and having them flow together. People who are leading worship should **always** be a part of planning the worship, but those planning may not always have a part of leading worship.

Unit leaders and participants should participate in both the planning and leading of worship. Unit leaders should also be willing to do most of the primary planning/leading of worship for the first few weeks.

Plan to check in with participants who lead worship, to see how they felt about the experience, particularly if planning and leading worship is a new thing to them.

Should we have a worship theme, and how do we decide what it will be?

Theme's help to give overall direction and some continuity to a worship service, but not every experience of worship *needs* to have a theme. There may be occasion when the worship planner decides to focus on one aspect or item of worship. That one item then becomes the theme.

Early in the year, and periodically thereafter, survey the unit about what kind of topics they would like to cover during worship. No idea is bad one! Some may just be more difficult or unfeasible! You could have a brainstorming session to come up with different ideas.

Work towards making your worship themes connect with the participants and what they are experiencing. Make sure you balance teaching with empowerment.

Closing thoughts on informal worship leading & planning

Worship can and will take on a form which will work best for each unit. Above all else, keep the focus on God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. In order to be the most creative with what you are doing, it will take planning, planning, planning.... Just plan on it! Your experiences together are worth effort.

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Building Strong Relationships between participants and with participants
--Understanding Participants and Parents: Resources
Case Studies

Check-ins – Some of the most important work that you do!

Relationships

This is the basis for the rest of the goals. Find out about their family...where do they fit in.... what do they want out of the year...find out about their friends (who are they, what role do friends play in participant's life). Leaders need to help establish this relationship as a "safe place" for the participant...Non-judgmental, not critical, honest, unconditional positive regard. There needs to be a safe place to be able to discuss issues.

Strengthening bonds

Find something that you have in common...sometimes it can be hard to find commonalities, but it is very important.

Breaking down barriers

Finding the balance between being a leader and a friend...finding the fine line between not being paternal and yet being parental....in a positive way.... or possibly stripping down negative ideas about what leaders do....

Share in struggles

It is very important not to be judgmental...this will facilitate a more open relationship...perhaps it is just about simple struggles in the house i.e. learning to cook...your job is not necessarily to solve problems, but to empower them to figure out what to do.

Accountability

Once the relationship has been built, then the pushing towards growth can occur. Or if there has been an issue in the house that they need to be held accountable for.... anything from getting to work on time to performing unit responsibilities

Encouragement

A chance to give positive feedback about each one as a person...now that you know the person and what issues they have been working on, you can give specific descriptions regarding their growth and choices

Motivation

This step cannot happen right away. There needs to be a level of comfort in the household environment first. Using relationship to get the person where they want to go.

For example: Participant having anxiety about cooking meals.... They will not have any motivation to work on this. Leader could give "homework" related to the specific problem i.e. find three recipes and learn them; use only those recipes when cooking until you become proficient at those.

For example: Participant struggling with attitude or personality issue. Assign "homework" related to the specific problem i.e. who are you? How would you describe yourself? What change(s) would you like to see in yourself? What are specific, measurable, things that you can do toward this goal?

Check-in formats:

Formal (scheduled): Coffee shop, breakfast, lunch

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Informal (unscheduled): Dishes, preparing dinner, driving in car, late night talks
Suggestion: Scheduled vs. unscheduled toward the end of the year

Suggestions from a former leader

I asked each participant in the beginning of the year to set goals. I kept a formal record (template in my computer) that I would print out each time. I kept track if we spent money for the one-on-one. This forced me to be prepared and pray for the one-on-one, rather than just shooting from the hip. It showed participants that I placed a priority on these times. I had both talkers and non-talkers, though I adjusted approach, never gave up on doing these.

Typical format

- Icebreaker question
- Questions related to placement and relationships, etc.
- Periodically refer back to goals set at beginning of year
- Follow-up questions from last one-on-one
- Scripture/prayer together

Wellness scale

The wellness scale is a simple tool used to help leaders acquire a baseline for each participant, get an idea of what they're dealing with, and see what direction things are going. Leaders will then have a simple but tangible assessment that gauges how the participant is moving on their own pre-defined scale. For instance, if someone is complaining of "hating it here" or "being depressed", the leader would need to know if this is simply normal behavior for this individual, or if this is something that they should be really concerned about.

Acquiring a baseline

This would be good to go through individually with each participant within the first few weeks in the unit (as soon as a good solid rapport is built between the leader and the participant).

Step one – On a scale of 1-10 (1 = "felt suicidal", 10 = "felt fantastic"), thinking back to one year ago, how would you rate your feelings on average? What is the highest number that you have ever reached? The lowest?

Ask what each of those levels (average, highest, lowest) looks like for them. For example, if their answer is "average of 6", then have them describe what a "6" feels like for them. If their lowest was a "2", then have them describe that as well (i.e., "At a "2" I start to feel like nothing matters, I withdraw socially, have thoughts about "not being here"). Then have them describe their highest number in the same way. (It might be good to make a note of these descriptions for each participant because they will be different for each person.)

Step two - Using the same scale, ask the participant to give the same average rating describing how they feel now (within the last two weeks), and again ask them to describe how that number feels like for them.

Leaders can determine how much the participant is really struggling in comparison to themselves from the past, rather than trying to figure out whether they are "just complaining" as compared to other participants. If the participant states the average for the last two weeks was a "3", we can clearly see that they indeed are struggling based on their description of an average "6" from the past, and we

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should be taking this seriously since any significant drop may be the start of suicidal ideations they described in level "2". Once you've assessed where this person is, then a plan can be developed for how to address it.

Note: If a participant identifies at any point during the year that they are thinking about hurting themselves or another person, these should be taken seriously and responded to immediately by connecting them with a professional therapist.

If a participant currently describes a number lower than their average, it may be good to help them think about what would help them move forward, at least back to average. For example, if they say they are at a 4 and their average is a 6, then ask "what would it look like for you to move to a 5?" or "what would you need to move up to a 5?" This can give the leaders an idea of what area in their life they would like to change or find improvement in. For example, if the participant says, "I feel like I'm at a 4, but if I didn't have to cook this month, I'd definitely be at a 5". Now they know that cooking is causing the extra stress, so they know what to address. Rather than letting the participant out of cooking, perhaps the leaders can identify the source of the stress and can help them move past that.

Check-up

During the first few weeks, everyone is making adjustments as they transition to their new situation. For some this is exciting, and they'll indicate higher numbers to reflect that. For others, this will be a stressful time and their numbers will likely reflect that as well. Since their numbers will likely reflect the normal stress of transition, it would be good to go over step two again after another few weeks or month has passed, just to see if they are adjusting well.

Throughout the year, leaders can inconspicuously "check-up" on the participant by simply asking "what number are you at right now?" If the participant says "5", then it is evident that he/she is moving in the right direction and not likely in danger of harm, and the current plan can be continued. If the participant says "2", it can quickly be determined that the plan is not working fast enough, and that he/she is reaching danger levels that warrant something more urgent. It also allows the participant to be more aware of how they are actually feeling, and the fact that it varies at different times.

The whole process helps to get an accurate picture of how they are doing, and we can quickly assess which direction they are moving (better or worse) without having to wait for an official discussion with them. Most participants will not voluntarily keep leaders up-to-date on how they are doing (especially if they are not doing well), since it is perhaps somewhat embarrassing, and they feel bad that they can't just do this on their own. And most leaders can't regularly have in-depth discussions with each participant, so a check-up system where one clearly knows how a participant is doing by simply hearing a number can be very efficient.

Note: Leaders don't need to be afraid to use the word "suicidal" in the assessment, because that can help determine how accurate the term is for the person. If someone responds vehemently with the phrase "No, I would never hurt myself" and appears to mean it, then it's probably a good sign. But, if they rather matter-of-factly accept the use of the term, it likely means that it's not out of the realm of possibility. The entire scale can also be used for anxiety/stress or any similar emotional state.

Wellness scale (short version)

Step 1: Baseline (within first month of term)

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On a scale of 1-10 (1 = “felt suicidal”, 10 = “felt absolutely fantastic”)

1. What would your average number be over the past year?
2. What is the highest number you’ve ever been at?
3. What is the lowest number you’ve ever been at?

Ask for a description of those numbers.

“What does a _ (average number) feel like?”

“What was it like to be at a _ (highest number)?”

“What did a _ (lowest number) look like for you?”

Step 2: Current reality

Using their scale, ask what number they’ve been at over the past two weeks and ask them to describe it.

If they are lower than their average, help them think about how they might be able to move forward or back to average. “If you’re at a 5 now, what do you think it might take for you to get to a 6? Or even a 5.5?”

If they can identify an area of stress, are there ways you can help them remove or deal with that stress in a more helpful way?

Step 3: Check in

Check in on their numbers again a few weeks later and then throughout the year – both in perceived great times and when you think they might be struggling.

If they’ve been able to move forward or up:

“Wow, that’s great. How were you able to do that?”

If they’ve moved down:

“What do you think is going on that brought you to that number?”

“What would help you move back up to a _?”

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-Mental Health issues (resources) Best Practices

Closure/Debriefing

Resources: