

Start or revitalize a ministry in your church

QUICK START GUIDE



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Quick Start Guide for Vacation Bible School

Available from:

AdventSource

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Introduction

Vacation Bible School (VBS) is a fun and educational summer program for children of all ages. By helping with VBS, you will have the opportunity to show children how to interact with Jesus in a fun way. They will remember these fun times and Christ-centered lessons long after VBS is completed.

The VBS director plays a key role in leading the church's largest annual outreach program for children and their families. The following information is a general guide for the VBS director. As you read, think about how you can adapt these suggestions for your local church. Use this material as a starting point for your own creativity.

Tasks for Vacation Bible School Leaders

1. Get an up-to-date picture of your church's VBS program. Research what has been happening; talk to current and former VBS leaders. Take an inventory of supplies available and assess what new materials may be needed. Find out what has worked well in the past.
2. Select a curriculum for your church's VBS program. Remember to check out **AdventistVBS.org!**
3. Recruit volunteer staff to lead the main areas of VBS, including each of the stations (Bible stories, games, crafts, prayer, snacks, etc.).
4. Create a budget.
5. Conduct regular VBS staff meetings where you can provide training and encouragement.
6. Train your staff in how to invite children to accept Jesus in an age-appropriate way.
7. Mentor a promising leader for future VBS leadership.
8. Share your plans, calendar, budget, and any other pertinent information with the children's ministries committee and local conference.
9. Check with your conference on mandatory volunteer screening requirements.

VBS Leaders Must Be Committed To:

- Jesus Christ and a growing personal relationship with Him
- Christ-centered ministry to children
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church and its beliefs
- A balanced Christian lifestyle
- Teamwork
- An attitude of servant leadership
- Cooperative ministry
- Personal growth and learning



Find Out Who You Are Serving

The ages of children attending VBS vary by the practice of each church. Generally, VBS includes kindergarten through grade 4. Some churches include a program for preschoolers. If your church chooses to go this direction, you will want to find a separate leader for this age group so the activities will be age appropriate. Once children outgrow VBS attendance, start recruiting them as junior helpers.

Sample Planning Schedule

6 Months Before VBS

- Establish a VBS planning committee
- Choose a director
- Establish VBS dates and times
- Outline goals for VBS
- Inventory available supplies
- Begin ordering VBS materials
- Begin selection of staff
- Create a budget

3 Months Before VBS

- Announce the date and time of VBS in your church bulletin and list any remaining staff vacancies
- Contact all volunteers to confirm assignments and announce training opportunities
- Plan a volunteer dedication service and training
- Order any remaining supplies
- Plan publicity
- Share VBS information on social media
- Add a VBS page to your church's website

2 Months Before VBS

- Finalize the VBS schedule
- Make sure any remaining volunteer spots have been filled
- In the church bulletin, list donated-material needs

Incentives That Keep Children Coming Back to VBS

There are lots of reasons children enjoy coming back to VBS: friends, stories, songs, crafts, learning about Jesus, and having fun. Some may only keep coming back because of incentives you offer to motivate attendance. That's okay! Because of those incentives, they will continue to attend and perhaps find what they really need: their Friend, Jesus. Incentives can be anything from gifts to special activities. Some examples include:

- Books from the Adventist Book Center
- Small toys that will remind children of each night's theme
- Coloring books
- T-shirts

Use your imagination!



HOW TO PROMOTE VBS

- Set up a VBS page on your church's website
- Post announcements on your church's social media accounts
- Send an announcement to everyone on your church's email list
- Place posters on bulletin board
- Show video announcements
- Print brochures
- Offer preregistration
- Place announcements in your church's bulletin
- Make sure your VBS is listed in the local newspaper
- Display colorful signs outside your church
- Mail postcards to previous attendees
- Make announcements during Sabbath School and church

6 Weeks Before VBS

- Begin publicity campaign
- Plan preregistration
- Make room assignments

4 Weeks Before VBS

- Publicize preregistration and include a photo consent form for parents/caregivers.
- Organize preregistration booth and materials
- Inventory materials
- Update VBS information on church website
- Prepare a flier to hand out at church
- Contact leaders to check on their preparations
- Make announcements in children's Sabbath school classes
- Make announcements during church service
- Post VBS information on social media

3 Weeks Before VBS

- Begin preregistration
- Check registration numbers against materials ordered and order additional materials if necessary



- Encourage children to invite their friends and neighbors to VBS
- Distribute curriculum to program leaders

2 Weeks Before VBS

- Check with custodian regarding his or her function during VBS
- Have all equipment ready to transfer to VBS locations
- Conduct volunteer training
- Make sure volunteers know the songs
- Check with your church's communication director about writing an article for the conference newsletter, union paper, and local newspaper

1 Week Before VBS

- Remind children to invite their friends and neighbors
- Conduct volunteer dedication service

During VBS

- Remind staff of closing program preparation
- Invite parents to closing program
- Post group activity photos on church website and social media
- Make sure photographers and videographers cover all activities

1 Day After VBS

- Conduct a clean-up session
- Registrar collects all registration cards from director and prepares VBS report online at **ChildMin.org**

1 Week After VBS

- Conduct a staff meeting to evaluate and celebrate the VBS program
- Complete all records
- Make written suggestions for next year's VBS
- Complete conference and NAD VBS report
- Give registration cards to the church secretary for filing
- Report on your program to the church – video or slide show
- Collect reusable supplies
- Return borrowed supplies
- Send thank-you notes to volunteers and donors



Sample Volunteer Job Descriptions

Volunteers are the key to running a successful VBS program. When recruiting volunteers, be sure to include parents, teens, and people who enjoy working with children. There is room for people with many talents to join your team.

Depending on the size of your church and the number of children you expect, you may need a large or small team. You may not need a different person for each job. One person can do two jobs, if necessary. The important thing is to be sure that someone is responsible for each task. The following is a list of suggested workers and their job descriptions.

VBS Director

The VBS director plans for the overall needs of the staff and organizes the dates, time, and room arrangements. The director is a behind-the-scenes organizer and may also be the up-front leader. The director contacts the conference children's ministries department to learn about supplementary materials, training, and possible financial support.

Assistant Director

The assistant director is responsible for welcoming the children to VBS each day and planning the opening and closing program. The director could also take on this role.

Crew Leader

Each division needs one leader for every 5-6 children. The crew leader sits with the children during each segment of the VBS program, helps them complete their activities, and leads the group in a discussion or activity as indicated by the closing program leader. This person may also call any parents or caregiver whose children miss a day.

Bible Story Station Leader

Bible story station leaders coordinate the lesson activities, materials, and room decorations for the Bible story station. They also teach songs related to the Bible lesson and tell the Bible stories.

Craft Station Leader

Before VBS begins, the craft station leader looks at the list of supplies needed for their station and works with the business manager to solicit donations from the congregation, local businesses, and community organizations. During VBS the craft leader leads a team responsible for sorting and organizing materials, making at least one of each craft in advance to be sure they work and to show a finished sample to the children, demonstrating the crafts, answering questions, praising the children, guiding them in cleaning up, and organizing a display of crafts for closing night.

Game Station Leader

The game leader is responsible for planning and leading the games each night at VBS. Most VBS games involve minimal setup, though the leader will want to read the instructions ahead of time and gather any necessary supplies.



Snack Station Leader

The snack station leader and helpers plan and prepare healthful snacks, deliver snacks to the designated spot, and consult with the VBS leader and business manager about the cost of snacks and ways to solicit donations from the congregation and local merchants. The snacks correspond with each day's theme and the station manual typically includes a script for the snack station leader.

Prayer Station Leader (Optional)

Some VBS programs include a prayer station where kids learn how to connect with Jesus. This leader is responsible for reading the script in advance, collecting supplies, setting up their station, leading prayer activities, and cleaning up after VBS.

Nature Director (Optional)

The nature director is responsible for setting up and changing nature displays, planning and presenting daily nature talks or activities, and organizing a nature display for closing night.

Skit Producer

The skit producer coaches a team that acts out skits for the opening and closing program. The skit producer also obtains and organizes materials as necessary.

Preschool Leader

The preschool leader works with children ages 3 through kindergarten. Preschoolers typically join the older kids for the opening and closing programs, then head to one designated room for the rest of their activities. The preschool leader will recruit activity leaders and work with them to collect supplies, decorate, lead stations, and clean up after VBS.

Music Leader

This person leads the kids in singing the songs that are part of your VBS program. The music leader needs to rehearse the songs and motions in advance so they are prepared to teach them to the kids.

Musicians

You will need to recruit musicians if you are not using prerecorded music. The pianist or guitarist works closely with the music leader. You can also choose to include a variety of instruments.

Publicity Director

The publicity director is responsible for communicating VBS plans and needs to the congregation. They can achieve this by placing announcements in the church bulletin, making announcements at church, submitting bulletin announcements, and posting information on the church's website and social media. They can also look for ways to share VBS announcements with the community.



Business Manager

The business manager creates a budget and presents it to the church board. If sufficient funding is not available from the church, the business manager, publicity director, and VBS director can plan a strategy for involving church members and local businesspeople.

Safety Patrol

A safety patrol is particularly important for larger VBS programs. You can coach teens to serve as safety helpers alongside adults. The safety team should patrol the parking lot and exits.

As an extra security precaution, some churches give each child and their parent or guardian a numbered wristband when they arrive at VBS. Children are not allowed to leave with anyone except an adult with a matching wristband.

Photographer/Videographer

Find a volunteer photographer or videographer to capture highlights from each day's VBS. Show slides or a video as part of your closing program.

First Aid Volunteer

The first aid volunteer keeps the first aid kit supplied (especially with bandages), keeps a record of children with special medical problems, and notifies the snack station leader of children with food allergies.

Custodian

The custodial crew helps set up for the opening night and tidies up in between meetings. (Leaders need to tidy up in the area where they work; the custodial crew watches out for anything that is overlooked.) Their largest job is putting things away after the close of VBS.

Recruiting Volunteers

Vacation Bible School and Junior Volunteers

Kids who are too old to attend VBS can make good helpers. Juniors and earliteens can help with the organization, decorations, traffic flow, skits, singing, snacks, crafts, games, Bible stories, nature centers, and more. Serving as helpers allows them to explore their leadership skills while still having fun experiencing VBS. Also, the younger children love looking up to older role models. Another benefit of involving juniors and earliteens as VBS helpers is that by the time they are teens, they will be ready to step into leadership roles.

The key to using juniors and earliteens at VBS is training. If you show them what to do and why, they can easily take over and do it. It's helpful to bring all the junior and earliteen helpers

SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

It is important that you screen volunteers for two reasons:

1. To be sure all your volunteers are helping in an area that matches their gifts.
2. To be sure all volunteers have completed your conference volunteer screening process.



together for one or two training sessions in the weeks prior to VBS. Throughout the training sessions, help juniors and earliteens see that what they are doing is ministry. There is no limit to their effectiveness if they open themselves to be used by God.

Training and Equipping Volunteers

One important key to a successful VBS is to properly equip your helpers to do the best possible job. In order to accomplish this goal most effectively, your staff should meet for planning and training purposes. Emphasize that the volunteers are the face and hands of Jesus. Other topics you could discuss include:

- Information about this year's program
- Volunteer expectations and job descriptions
- How to interact with children in a way that promotes Jesus
- The ultimate mission of VBS: bringing children to Christ

Focus on prayer, training, and VBS preparation during each training session. Offer affirmation, encouragement, and suggestions for making their ministry effective. The more responsibility you turn over to volunteers, the more time they will be willing to spend on VBS.

Prayer

Talk about prayer and the power it brings. Read Matthew 7:7; look up pray and prayer in a concordance; search for texts about prayer. Encourage each volunteer to adopt a prayer text and pray it every day. Pray earnestly for God's empowerment of the children. Give them a chance to pray for each other and the children who will attend. Share personal answers to prayer. Continue praying and sharing all the way through VBS.

Guidelines for Volunteers and Caregiving

Because our society is filled with pain caused by improper conduct of adults working with children and youth, it is imperative that those working with children at church have

6 WAYS TO SHOW LOVE AT VBS

It is important for VBS to have a friendly atmosphere. To promote friendliness at your VBS, try some of the following:

1. Be a role model for friendliness, especially to children.
2. Greet the children each day and be sure to learn their names.
3. Take a genuine interest in the children's families.
4. Invite families to other church activities you think they may enjoy.
5. Be friendly with the children. Publicly recognize each one with a tangible reward such as a sticker, small toy, an "I love VBS" button, etc.
6. After VBS, send thank you notes to all your volunteers!



meaningful guidelines for conduct—both for their protection and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, you want parents/guardians and others to feel comfortable and confident with leaving their children in your care. Here are some practical guidelines:

1. Never leave a child, or group of children in your care, unattended. Provide adequate supervision at all times, no matter what.
2. Never be the only adult serving as a caregiver. Always have at least one other person 18 or older with or near you.
3. Always ask a person's permission before touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any area that would normally be covered by a t-shirt and/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you to provide care.
4. Physical and verbal attacks are inappropriate and should never be used as discipline. Putting a child in time out or having them sit in a chair are much more helpful methods in such situations.
5. Kids need to be touched appropriately. Keep hugs brief and shoulder-to-shoulder or side-to-side. Always keep your hands at or above the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you instead.
6. When taking small children to the bathroom, take another adult along.

Be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and the legal requirements in your area for reporting child abuse. In nearly all places, a caregiver can be held legally responsible for failing to report suspected or actual child abuse. Working with children and youth at church is not only a privilege, but also a deep responsibility that we must handle with utmost care. Adventist Risk Management, Inc. and the North American Division Child Protection Policy outline the following rules for leaders. These serve as a protection to you and your ministry against charges of abuse.

- The volunteer screening rule: All volunteers must complete the screening process at NADadventist.org/asv. Please check with your conference if you have any questions regarding this screening process.
- The six-month rule: Do not recruit a volunteer who has been a church member for less than six months.
- The two-person rule: Have at least two adults present at all times, 18 years of age or older, to help with the supervision of children.
- The glass window rule: If the door to a classroom does not have glass in or around it, the door should be left open so the teacher is in full view. Visit ChildMin.org/childrensafety for more information.



Volunteer Ministry Screening

Why the need for volunteer screening?

The screening process is meant to safeguard children and youth from sexual predators and the church from litigation.

Volunteer screening gives the families in your community confidence that their children are safe with us. If a person has had a prior conviction and is still appointed to a position in a church anyway, that church could be liable for negligence. The resulting emotional, social, and financial costs to the church would be substantial.

Who should be screened?

Every person who fills a ministry position in the church should be screened—particularly those who volunteer to work with children or youth. For many young people, any ministry position in the church carries the weight of respect and authority. Pastors and other leaders in the church should go through the screening process first as an example to others. Teens who volunteer to teach younger children may be screened as well. Teens should never be left to work with children alone. Visit NADadventist.org/asv to begin the screening process and ChildMin.org/childrens-safety for more information about child safety.

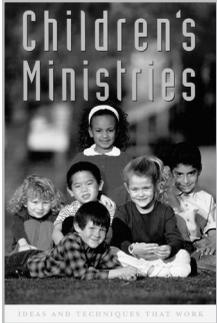
Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and enthusiasm through your church's VBS program. Through your efforts, the children in your church and community will have exciting opportunities to get to know one another and their new Friend, Jesus.



Recommended Resources

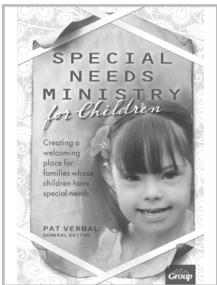
AdventSource offers VBS programs, children's ministries resources, and incentive items you can give to children for attendance and rewards. Visit AdventSource.org or call 402.486.8800 for a complete list.



Children's Ministries Manual

By Anne Calkins

Learn how to reach this new generation and ignite their passion for Jesus. Containing practical answers to your questions, it teaches tried and true techniques that fit all kinds of learning situations from involving kids in role play to leading them into a committed relationship with Jesus.
Product #021992



Special Needs Ministry for Children

By Pat Verbal

Do you know what it takes to make these kids—and their parents—feel welcome in your church? This practical, insightful book is your guide to answering all those questions and more. Packed with case studies and personal stories from recognized experts in this ministry field, you'll learn the truth about promoting your ministry and recruiting the right volunteers, the best ways to reach the most overlooked group in your community, and more.
Product #043340



Pocket Guide to Discipline

By Group Publishing

The pocket guide is packed with practical ways to avoid most discipline issues—plus tips for tackling any problems that do arise. These are the best-ever solutions from the front-line teachers who have mastered the art of keeping their classrooms stress-free and fun—for both kids and leaders! Includes 10 booklets— one for every volunteer!
Product #012007



Seventh-day Adventist VBS Kits

Each year the North American Division's Children's Ministries Department creates a VBS kit specifically for Seventh-day Adventist churches. This kit is available online at AdventistVBS.org, at AdventSource.org and 402.486.8800, and from your local Adventist Book Center.



NAD Youth/Children's Ministry Volunteer Code of Conduct

Acknowledgment Because I want the best possible environment for our children and youth to grow up in, it is important that those working with children have guidelines for conduct in order to protect both themselves and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, I want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with me.

My Commitment to Volunteer Ministry

As a Youth/Children's Ministry Volunteer, I will:

1. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times for the children for whom I am responsible.
2. Have at least one other adult, eighteen (18) years of age or older, to help with the supervision of children. If I find myself in a situation where I am the only adult present, under no circumstances will I allow myself to be alone with one child (the "two-person rule"). This protects the child as well as protecting the adult from possible allegations.
3. Ask a child's permission before physically touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as care is provided.
4. Refrain from physical and verbal attacks and corporal punishment which are inappropriate behaviors and should never be used as discipline. "Time outs" or "sit-in-that-chair" may be helpful discipline methods to use with children.
5. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and "shoulder-to-shoulder" or "side-to-side." I will keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, I will encourage them to sit next to me.
6. Provide extra care when taking small children to the restroom. I will take another adult along, or leave the door open.
7. Be aware of conducting activities in rooms that do not have an interior viewing area, or I will leave the door open during the activity to allow easy observation by others.
8. Cooperate with the volunteer screening process and complete the Volunteer Ministry Information form, as required by the church.
9. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and aware of the legal requirements for reporting suspected cases of abuse. In addition to any legally required reporting, I agree that if I become aware of any behavior by another individual which seems abusive or inappropriate towards children I am supervising, I will report that behavior to the church pastor, elder, or directly to the Conference Treasurer's or Risk Management Director.



10. Cooperate with church leadership in conducting children and youth ministries by being a volunteer who is loving, kind, firm, and always a thoroughly professional person. Working with children and youth is not only a privilege; it is also a serious responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.
11. Participate in orientation and training programs conducted by the church.
12. Uphold the standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

* In the event I find it impossible to comply with the above, I will comply as closely as possible with the Code of Conduct and act in good faith for the welfare of the people involved.

Thank You for your service as a Youth/Children's Ministry Volunteer Please retain a copy of this document and keep it for reference.



Vacation Bible School Director Ministry Description

Introduction

- Responsible to the children's ministries committee.
- Relates closely with the children's coordinator, the VBS staff.
- Ministry mission: To help children develop a friendship with Jesus, with the Bible, with the church, and with each other.

Responsibilities

The Vacation Bible School leader plays a key role in directing the church's largest outreach program for children and their families and has the following responsibilities:

1. Organization and administration.
2. In consultation with the children's coordinator, recruits volunteers.
3. Represents VBS on the children's ministries committee.
4. Develops a VBS budget with the help of the children's coordinator.
5. Plans the VBS space—which rooms of the church will be used and for what.
6. Plans the VBS time—the date, time of day, and program schedule.
7. Takes responsibility for reporting the VBS event to the local conference.
8. Leads the team in follow-up events.
9. Demonstrates a concern for child safety by completing the volunteer ministry information form and returning it when asked, and by observing the guidelines for volunteers and caregivers.

Coordination of the Vacation Bible School

Delegates leadership of the learning stations to able and responsible leaders; holds them accountable (stations include Bible learning, craft, games, etc). Makes routine staff assignments, as follows:

- Drama ministry—training a small team to do skits for the general session.
- Family visitation ministry—organizing VBS staff to visit students at home
- Follow-up ministry—sending birthday cards and invitations to follow-up events.
- Hospitality ministry—providing daily snacks, organizing food for parent night and follow-up.



- Guiding ministry—training and mentoring teen and adult guides who are each assigned a group of five students to accompany throughout VBS (guides and assists station leaders when asked, but does not teach).
- Music ministry—learning VBS songs, leading the singing at VBS and follow-up events.
- Publicity ministry—communicating and publicizing VBS at church and in the media.
- Registration and record keeping—maintaining and updating student files, name tags.
- Welcoming ministry—greeting, finding name tags, showing where to go.
- Optional—safety patrol, videographer, medical, custodial, parenting seminar.

Screening Volunteers

Helps volunteers match their spiritual gifts with a ministry task as a leader, guide, or aid. Accept only volunteers whose volunteer ministry information forms are up-to-date and who have been approved by the screening committee.

Training and Equipping

- Attends a conference VBS workshop where VBS programs are demonstrated or checks on-line for church-recommended programs.
- In consultation with the children's coordinator, selects a VBS program and orders the materials.
- Holds VBS staff meetings to communicate the mission and goals of VBS, distribute curriculum materials to station directors and job descriptions to the staff, explain logistics, the schedule, procedures, and traffic flow.
- Conducts regular VBS staff meetings; encourages volunteers in their personal prayer life.
- Trains the staff in how to invite children to accept Jesus in an age-appropriate way.
- Mentors a promising leader for future VBS leadership.

Time Commitment

Approximately 10-15 hrs. per week; 3-6 hrs. per day during VBS.

Length of Commitment

One or two years, depending on the practice of the local church.

Training

Basic children's ministries certification (on-going).



Qualifications

1. Volunteer Ministry Qualifications

A commitment to:

- Jesus Christ and to a growing personal relationship with Him.
- Christ-centered ministry to children.
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church and to its beliefs.
- A balanced Christian lifestyle.
- Teamwork
- Cooperative ministry under the leadership of the pastor and church board.
- Personal growth and learning, continually upgrading methods and skills.

2. Special Qualifications

- An attitude of servant leadership.
- A passion for children and children's ministries.
- Leadership experience in a ministry to children.
- A current recommendation from the volunteer screening committee.

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Vacation Bible School

This Quick Start Guide for Vacation Bible School is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry at your local church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or an experienced volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

Other titles in the Quick Start Guide series:

- Children's Ministries Coordinator
- Beginner Sabbath School
- Kindergarten Sabbath School
- Primary Sabbath School
- Junior Sabbath School

For a complete list of Quick Start Guide titles visit AdventSource.org



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