

# YoungLives<sup>®</sup> Handbook

## Building a YoungLives Ministry



You were made for this.<sup>®</sup>

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# Getting Started

This handbook is intended as a supplemental guide for anyone who is interested in starting a *YoungLives* ministry — including area directors, potential coordinators and those who are praying about helping to start a new *YoungLives* ministry in their community. This does not replace the training on *Young Life* philosophies and principles that are contained in *Leadership I and II*, the *Committee Handbook*, the *Relationship Centered Engagement Handbook* and taught through regional and national training events. This book only addresses the unique aspects of starting a ministry for teenage moms within the context of *Young Life*.

Starting a mentoring ministry to teenage mothers may seem daunting — especially if you feel you lack experience, are ill-equipped, are the wrong age, don't know enough about babies or you just don't know where to begin. Thankfully, God does not place any of these same prerequisites on us! What He asks is whether or not we are willing to let go of our

own sense of stability and comfort long enough to walk with Him into the lives of those who are without hope. If we are willing to take that step, we discover two things.

First, our faith takes on a whole new depth and reality. Our faith is acted out in real life — not just in words or statements of belief or church attendance. It takes on feet and walks into lives in the same way Jesus chose to lay aside His own safety and comfort to come be with us.

Secondly, we find that God is already at work in those places of chaos and hopelessness where we have been afraid to go. He is the Father to the fatherless, the God of justice for those who are oppressed and the comforter of those who are afflicted. He has not stopped working on behalf of those whom society has written off or ignored. When we are obedient to His call, we find that He is already opening doors and preparing the path ahead of us.

So as you read this handbook and pray about starting a new

*YoungLives* ministry, take courage. We are not going into uncharted waters, but we are going where God's heart is. This is His work — not ours!

Most importantly, rest assured that you are not alone. You will be connected with people who will provide you with support, training, encouragement and direction. You are joining a community that is committed to carrying the hope of Jesus to all kids. Thank you for sharing in the vision to reach teen moms and see generations forever changed.

## GET IN TOUCH!

Web:

[www.younglives.younglife.org](http://www.younglives.younglife.org)

Email:

[younglives@sc.younglife.org](mailto:younglives@sc.younglife.org)

Instagram: *YoungLives*

Facebook: *YoungLives*

The first four steps in this handbook are directed to both the *Young Life* area director and the *YoungLives* coordinator. Steps five through 10 are written to the new *YoungLives* coordinator. Although some of these steps will overlap with each other or happen simultaneously, they have been placed in this order for a reason. Direct ministry with teenage mothers (including contact work, club, camp and discipleship) should not begin until the foundation of ministry is built. Direct ministry is exciting, and it can be tempting to focus on meeting teen moms before completing the required groundwork. However, building a clear plan and support team first will help to prevent setbacks down the road.



# An Introduction to Young Life and YoungLives

## YOUNG LIFE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

**Young Life's Vision:** Every adolescent will have the opportunity to meet Jesus Christ and follow Him.

**Young Life's Mission:** Introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

**Young Life's Approach:** Young Life meets kids where they are by going to their turf and loving them unconditionally, regardless of their choices about faith. Young Life leaders enter the world of teenagers in order to earn the privilege of sharing God's love with them. They find opportunities to walk alongside kids who need safe, loving adults in their lives; we call this incarnational approach to ministry "contact work." But Young Life does more than "hang out" with kids. We also create opportunities for sharing the gospel: weekly meetings called club, Bible studies called Campaigners and adventure-filled camping programs. The foundation for Young Life's

ministry at the local level is the committee, who desires kids in their community to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Young Life is a community of believers committed to sharing the gospel and building positive relationships with middle school kids (WyldLife), high school kids (Young Life) and college students (Young Life College) in an unstable and confusing world. Young Life offers a variety of programs that reach suburban, rural, urban and multicultural kids. In addition, Young Life reaches out to teen moms (YoungLives) and kids with disabilities (Capernaum).

Young Life began in 1941 when a young pastor, Jim Rayburn, decided it was time for people of faith to step outside the church building and walk across the street to the local high school. Unsure how to begin, Rayburn headed off to the local high school to meet some kids ... and the Young Life seed was planted. Rayburn learned that going where kids are and loving them first is

the way to earn the right to be heard, "opening the door to share the message of Christ." Today we call it "incarnational ministry," but the principle has remained the same: Go to the kids. Love them unconditionally. Inform them about the truth of Christ and let them make their own decisions about following Him.



*We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us (1 Thessalonians 2:6-8).*



## YOUNGLIVES HISTORY

- In 1991, two Young Life areas (Visalia, California, and Vancouver, Washington) saw a need for a special program to serve teen moms in their areas.
- Mentor Moms was launched in the fall of 1991, with the goal of providing Young Life club specifically for teen moms and matching the young moms with mentors.
- Due to interest generated at the 1996 and 2000 Young Life All Staff Conferences, Mentor Moms chapters sprung up in about 10 areas across the country.
- In 1999, 32 people attended the first Mentor Moms Focus Conference to explore reaching this new population of adolescents through Young Life.
- In December 2001, the ministry was renamed *YoungLives*.
- *YoungLives* camping ministry began in 2002 with an exclusive teen mom camp week at Lost Canyon.

- In 2006, *YoungLives* was present in 55 communities.
- Two more exclusive *YoungLives* camp weeks started in 2007 — one at Washington Family Ranch (formerly Wildhorse Canyon) and one at Lake Champion.
- Four more exclusive *YoungLives* camp weeks were added in 2011-2013 — three at rental properties in Texas and Michigan, and one at Rockbridge.
- By 2013, there were 236 *YoungLives* ministries, seven camp weeks exclusively for teen moms and more than 12,000 teenage moms impacted within one year.

### Need for *YoungLives*

The need for *YoungLives* is great. According to a study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2012, one out of every 10 babies in the United States is born to a teenager. This makes the *YoungLives* mission field one that is ripe for harvest.

Young Life's founder, Jim Rayburn, said, "All kids have the right to know the truth about Jesus Christ." *YoungLives* reaches these vulnerable families with hope that transforms generations.

*YoungLives* is a lifeline for teen moms and their children. We enter their world, model the unconditional love of Christ and encourage them to become the women and mothers God created them to be. We then join this hope with practical life skills to equip them for a brighter future.

Mentoring forms the heart of *YoungLives*. Mentors build relationships with teen moms, offering guidance in matters of faith, parenting and self-worth. This investment of time and heart has empowered positive, sustainable change in the lives of these beautiful families for more than 20 years.



# Step 1: Prayer and Research

## PRAYER

Prayer is the first place to start when building a new *YoungLives* ministry. It is through prayer that hearts are softened toward teenage moms, people from diverse situations are knit together to work in unity and passion and vision for the ministry develop. There are countless stories from *YoungLives* ministries about how prayer started and has sustained the ministry. It is the best way to develop a core team of people who will care about, talk about and serve in *YoungLives*. There is no set timeframe for this first step — some areas start praying and then immediately start working on the next steps. Other ministries have spent years in prayer before any direct ministry started.

## RESEARCH

The second part of this step involves research into the statistics, needs and programs related to teenage mothers in the nation and in your community. Knowing the demographics of teenage mothers nationally and locally, along with how many teen moms are in your community and where to find them, will help direct your focus when you begin direct ministry. While your heart will be to reach every teen mom in your community, having a specific focus creates a stable foundation upon which to build.

## INTRODUCTION TO TEEN MOMS: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Many of the teen mothers we serve in *YoungLives* share a similar set of challenges. However, they often show great resiliency, determination and strength in the face of these challenges. Every teen mom's

experience is unique, but the following topics describe some of the most common obstacles and strengths that we have witnessed among the teen moms who come to *YoungLives*.

### 1. Poverty/Wealth

In a survey of *YoungLives* areas taken in 2010, we found that although *YoungLives* serves a racially diverse audience, almost all of the teen moms involved in *YoungLives* are living in material poverty. Teenage girls from all socioeconomic backgrounds get pregnant, but many more babies are born to girls in poverty — both because they tend to have unintended pregnancies more often, and because they tend to choose abortion less frequently. Where they lack finances, however, many teen moms are rich in other ways — including loyal friendships and strong social bonds.

### 2. Home Life

Most *YoungLives* teen moms come from unstable or transient homes. Some teen moms live in foster care or with a grandparent — or they may not have a consistent place to live and frequently move between different homes. However, because of the dynamics of living in non-intact homes, many teen moms have developed flexibility and adaptability. Others have learned by experience to care for younger children — including siblings or cousins.

### 3. Family

Drug and alcohol abuse, illegal activity and incarceration are common among the fathers of *YoungLives* teen moms. Mothers or other matriarchs

in the family often play a significant role in helping to raise the child, providing financially and materially for the young mother and sometimes providing housing for the young family. Extended family also typically plays a large role in supporting the young mother and her child(ren). It is not uncommon to hear of three or four generations of a family and even non-family members living together.

### 4. Father of the Baby

Poor decision-making, financial irresponsibility and joblessness plague many of the fathers — and wreak havoc on young relationships. Although most teen moms and dads expect to stay together and eventually marry, two-thirds will break up before the child turns three (Edin & Kefalas, 2006, p. 74). Many teen moms learn early on to develop independence and to take on the majority of the parenting responsibilities themselves.

### 5. Pregnancy

Many teen moms in *YoungLives* say they weren't trying to get pregnant — but they also weren't trying to avoid getting pregnant. Because they often believe marriage and a college education are out of reach for them, they place high value on children and sometimes even see them as the best that life has to offer. The positive side of this is that teenage mothers do not often see children as a nuisance that is getting in the way of their goals, and they do not see their lack of material resources or their age as hindrances to being good mothers.

**Note:** All page references are from *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*, by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas (2006). “Characteristics of Teen Moms” has been adapted from a version published by Teen Mother Choices in 2003.

### **Works Cited**

Edin, K., & Kefalas, M. (2006). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*.

To learn more about teenage moms, check out the books, websites and organizations listed in the YoungLives recommended resources list: <https://staff.younglife.org/Leader-Tools/YoungLives/Documents/YoungLivesResourceList.pdf>.

# Step 2: Defining the Structure

The next step is to begin defining the structure of the *YoungLives* ministry within the context of the greater Young Life mission in your area. It takes a team effort by the local Young Life staff, committee, regional director and *YoungLives* regional or divisional coordinator to create the best structure for success and sustainability.

**Two essential questions to consider include:**

- Will *YoungLives* be a stand-alone ministry or integrated into a local Young Life ministry?
- Who will be the direct supervisor for the *YoungLives* coordinator?

## MINISTRY STRUCTURE

There are two main *YoungLives* ministry models: integrated ministries and stand-alone ministries. In either model, having a committee or sub-committee is absolutely vital to the health of the *YoungLives* ministry. A committee provides ministry stability as well as financial, spiritual and emotional support for local leaders. The individuals on committee are the servants who enable *YoungLives* ministry to happen. However, before recruiting committee, it is important to define the structure of the ministry.

### Integrated Ministry

If Young Life is already operating in the community where *YoungLives* is starting, the *YoungLives* ministry should integrate with and come under the leadership of the local area director and existing Young Life committee. Years of experience with *YoungLives* ministries have proven that the supervision and connection a *YoungLives* ministry has with the

local Young Life ministry determines its sustainability.

An integrated ministry has a dedicated *YoungLives* sub-committee that serves as part of the local Young Life committee and also helps with specific *YoungLives* needs. These may include childcare and transportation needs, planning *YoungLives*-specific fundraisers, providing dinners and crafts for club, caring for mentors and supporting the coordinator.

The *YoungLives* coordinator in an integrated ministry follows the *YoungLives* coordinator job description and reports directly to the Young Life area director.

**There are many benefits to working as an integrated ministry:**

- The area director and coordinator can work together to set vision and goals.
- Donors are approached by a unified ministry rather than by separate programs.
- New churches, foundations and individuals will be interested in donating to an area that includes ministry to teen moms.
- Young Life will gain a larger reputation and more advocates in the community because of the increased volunteer base and their added work with teen moms.
- Churches and other community programs will be exposed to several different ways of partnering with Young Life.
- Administrative responsibilities can be shared.
- Young Life leader training can include both Young Life leaders and *YoungLives* mentors.



## Stand-Alone Ministry

Sometimes YoungLives ministries start up in areas where there is no existing Young Life. In that case, it is necessary to start YoungLives as a stand-alone ministry. The YoungLives coordinator in a stand-alone ministry follows the YoungLives area director job description, completes additional training recommended for YoungLives area directors and reports directly to the Young Life regional director. In this case, there are several additional responsibilities that fall solely on the YoungLives coordinator and committee. A few of these responsibilities include:

### Committee

- Recruit and retain an active YoungLives committee.
- Regularly communicate and partner with the committee to carry out the work of the area.

### Financial Management and Donor Development

- Complete and manage the annual budget.

- Partner with the committee to secure and raise the area budget and oversee the finances.

### Administration

- Update ministry information in Core Ministry Counts.
- Meet all area requirements as determined by the regional director.

This model is much more time-intensive for the coordinator and requires more training and guidance before starting.

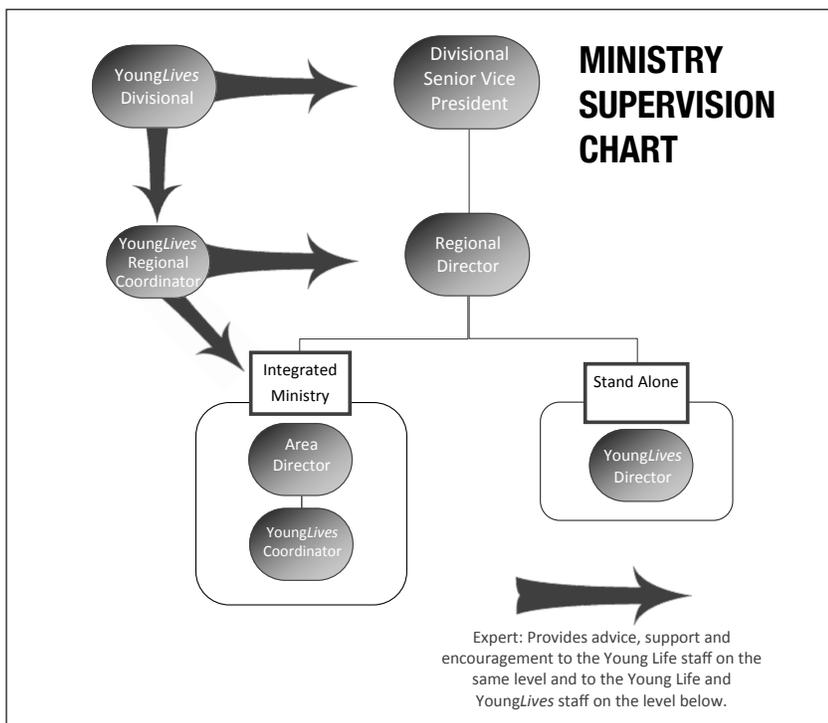
## MINISTRY SUPERVISION

The local area director provides direct supervision for a YoungLives ministry. In the case that there is no local area director, the regional director will serve as the direct supervisor. The YoungLives regional coordinator (if there is one in your region) and divisional coordinator act as advisors and support for YoungLives ministries, but do not offer direct supervision, as the chart on this page indicates.

Although the supervisor of a YoungLives ministry may not have direct YoungLives experience, he or she is still the Young Life specialist in the area and has extensive training and expertise to offer to a new coordinator. We recommend that the supervisor visit the YoungLives club regularly and also set up a regular time to meet with the coordinator for training, questions, accountability and establishing vision. **The supervisor plays a vital role in coaching the coordinator in areas including:**

- Service Center resources.
- Young Life philosophies.
- Recruiting and training volunteers.
- Building a committee.
- Making church and community connections.
- Establishing a budget.
- Fundraising techniques.
- Administrative responsibilities.
- Doing contact work.
- Running a healthy club.
- Planning a camp trip.
- Setting up Campaigners.
- Making a plan for ongoing training.
- Reporting on Core Ministry Counts.

In addition, it is helpful for a new coordinator to go with the supervisor to visit local clubs, meet school administration, network in the community and speak to churches. Not only does this provide a model for the coordinator of how to network in the community, it also provides a united ministry front to the community. We can impact more kids with the gospel if we work as a team chasing after all lost kids together.



### Additional Resources

To find contact information for your nearest Young Life and YoungLives connections, visit:

Young Life website: [younglife.org/](http://younglife.org/)  
ContactYoungLife/  
Young Life Service Center:  
877-438-9572



# Step 3: Finding the Right Leader



Finding the right person to lead the *YoungLives* ministry in your area is vital to building a healthy ministry. Someone may be passionate about *YoungLives*, but not have the gifts or available time commitment to be the coordinator. On the other hand, just because someone looks good on paper may not mean she has the heart for *YoungLives* and the way we do ministry. Drop any stereotypes about what a *YoungLives* coordinator should look like. Age, marital status, race, church denomination, number of kids, and work status do not determine how successful a coordinator will be. Instead, consider her leadership qualities and her ability to develop a team.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A YOUNGLIVES COORDINATOR

### A *YoungLives* Coordinator ...

- 1. Is passionate about Christ and about sharing Christ with teenagers.**  
Her love for Christ should be the primary motivation for service. Her love for the teen moms and children comes out of love for the Lord, but is not the driving factor. A “bleeding heart” for the cause of teen moms is not the best candidate.
- 2. Believes in Young Life’s ministry methods.**  
She is not just passionate about reaching teen moms, but about doing it through the ministry of Young Life. She either has experience with Young Life or is very teachable and open to learning about how Young Life reaches teenagers. She is also willing to partner with the local Young Life area director and to be mentored and trained by a Young Life staff person.

- 3. Can recruit, develop, and mobilize adult volunteers.**  
The coordinator needs to be someone who can mentor women and develop volunteers into strong leaders — not just someone who loves teenagers and wants to do direct ministry.
- 4. Can run club and do direct ministry.**  
Look for someone you would hire to start any club in your area. *YoungLives* is a ministry of Young Life. We use the same tools to reach teen moms. You need a person you can see running a great club and connecting with teenagers relationally.
- 5. Is entrepreneurial and a self-starter.**  
This is most likely a new ministry in your area. The coordinator should be a person who is self-motivated, who can find creative solutions for roadblocks and who perseveres through disappointments.
- 6. Is a good representative.**  
Healthy *YoungLives* ministries collaborate with community organizations and churches. A strong coordinator will be able to present the ministry of Young Life and *YoungLives* accurately and with vision and passion.
- 7. Is a strong leader.**  
The *YoungLives* coordinator needs to be someone who has a vision and can put a plan in place to reach that vision. This will include developing adult support, raising funds, developing relationships in the community and church, recruiting and training mentors and reaching out to teen moms.



## HIRING PROCESS

It is important to clarify from the beginning whether the *YoungLives* coordinator intends to be volunteer, part time or full time, since this will determine the direction of fundraising, committee-building and training. However, the interview process for a new *YoungLives* coordinator should follow the same procedures as any other hire within a region — regardless of whether she is volunteer, part time or full time. Allowing someone to lead *YoungLives* without following proper hiring or training guidelines compromises the integrity of our mission.

**We want to make sure that every *YoungLives* coordinator is equipped with:**

- The “heart and soul” of Young Life — the passion and ethos that has marked the best of our mission since 1941.
- A clear biblical and theological foundation.
- Spiritual and emotional health that provides a solid foundation for the incredible challenges of ministry in the coming decades.
- Practical skill training, including the unique aspects of ministering to teen moms.

These priorities have defined the following training plan for those leading *YoungLives*. Providing full support to those who carry out this mission will help ensure excellent and sustainable ministry.

### Job Titles

The official job titles, along with their corresponding job descriptions and pay scales, are used when hiring *YoungLives* staff. We follow the same guidelines as set forth by Young Life. The original hire is staff associate I, II, or III with a *YoungLives* ministry focus (includes part-time or full-time staff).

## TRAINING GUIDELINES

**Full-Time Staff: Staff Associate I, II, III, Ministry Focus: *YoungLives***

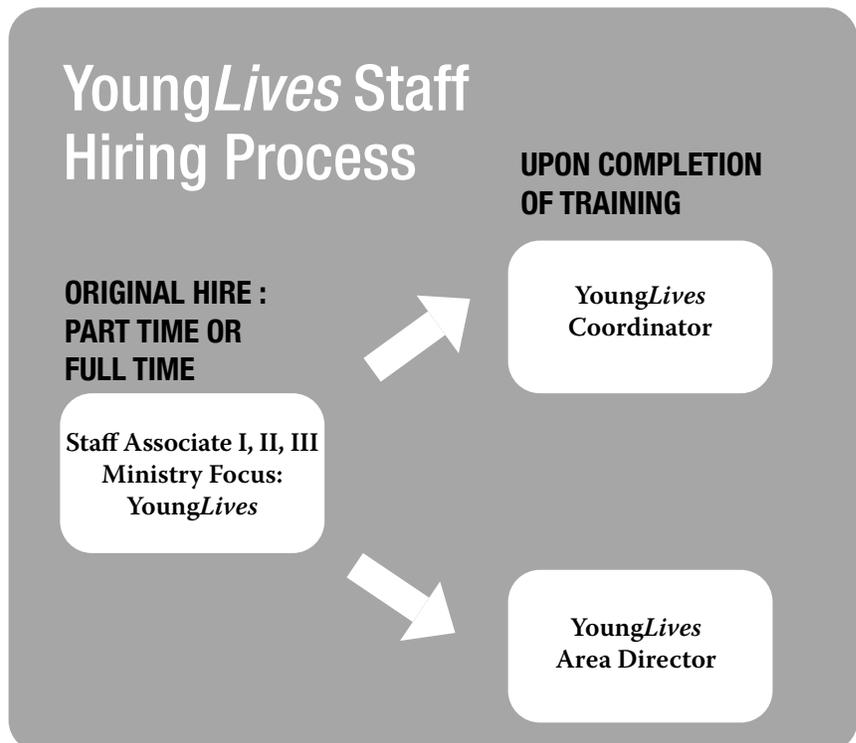
- Meet all training requirements set by the Young Life Training department for full-time staff.
- Attend annual *YoungLives* Divisional Summit.
- Follow all regional training and meeting requirements for full-time staff.
- Follow all area training and meeting requirements (if a part of local Young Life area).
- If the trainer for Leadership I and II is not the Young Life area director, meet at least monthly with area director (if part of local Young Life area).
- Upon successful completion of training, *YoungLives* full-time staff may move into two positions: *YoungLives* area director (if in a stand-alone area) or *YoungLives* coordinator (equivalent to direct ministry position, if under supervision of local area director).

**Part-Time Staff: Staff Associate I, II, III, Ministry Focus: *YoungLives***

- Attend annual *YoungLives* Divisional Summit.
- Complete Leadership I and II.
- Follow all regional training requirements for part-time staff.
- Follow all local area leader training requirements (if part of local area).
- If the trainer for Leadership I and II is not the Young Life area director, meet at least monthly with area director (if part of local Young Life area).
- If functioning as a stand-alone area, attending Area Director School is highly recommended.

**Volunteer: *YoungLives* Coordinator**

- Attend annual *YoungLives* Divisional Summit.
- Follow all regional training requirements for volunteer team leaders.
- Follow all area/local leader training requirements for volunteer team leaders.



- Meet at least monthly with area director.
- Note: It is best to view YoungLives team leaders as volunteer staff members due to the responsibilities and unique needs of teen-mom ministry.

### Important to Know

- Part-time staff and volunteers are welcome, but not required, to attend any missionwide trainings.
- Additional YoungLives training and resources are available online and through YoungLives divisional coordinators.

- There is specific YoungLives material in Leadership I and II, as well as training in spiritual formation, leadership development, funding and other fundamentals that serve any ministry leader.
- It is essential that YoungLives staff/volunteers personally know their supervisor(s) and understand how the structure of supervision within Young Life works.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Human Resources — YoungLives coordinator and YoungLives area director job descriptions
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Leadership I and II
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): YoungLives — Training and Events



# Step 4: Funding

It is essential for the area director and *YoungLives* coordinator to create a potential *YoungLives* budget and a strategic plan for raising the budget before moving forward.

Budgets can vary tremendously based on salary and whether or not the staff person needs health benefits, how much food, craft items and baby supplies they get as donations, whether the *YoungLives* and Young Life area share office space and supplies and multiple other factors. The best way to get an estimate for a new budget is to download the template/sample budget from the Staff Resources website and to plug in some estimated numbers. Think through what will be needed for salary, mileage reimbursements, training events, camp (girls often cannot afford to pay for camp themselves), program expenses (many areas get donations for club and contact work to help keep costs down), office supplies, fundraising expenses and donor care.

Being fully aware of how to utilize Young Life's tools for fundraising will be extremely helpful. "Relationship Centered Engagement™" is a biblical based approach that Young Life uses to raise funds at all levels in Young Life ministry. Relationship Centered Engagement principles can be used not only to raise your budget, but also to start a club, area or anything that involves mobilizing people. The Engagement Levels and Cycle are used for both for the community based fundraising facilitated by the committee along with our staff's Personal Donor Development experience. Relationship Centered Engagement and the Personal Donor Development are critical as you begin to build the financial base of the *YoungLives* budget. You can also get an introduction to the concepts of Relationship Centered Engagement along with the Field

Guide on the Staff and Volunteer Resources site.

In addition, keep in mind that *YoungLives* is often able to tap into resources that Young Life cannot access as easily. There are many churches, foundations, agencies and even individuals who are especially interested in funding work with teenage mothers and their children. Even secular foundations and agencies can see the benefits that mentoring has in the lives of teenagers and will be willing to invest in the ministry for the sake of the young mothers and their children. *YoungLives* also touches the hearts of existing Young Life donors in a new way, and many existing donors may decide to give above their regular donation amount to help start up the new *YoungLives* work.

## AVENUES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### Personal Support

Personal fundraising is a responsibility of every Young Life staff person. Having people who will personally invest in the *YoungLives* coordinator and her leadership is essential to building a healthy financial foundation. Remember: People love giving to vision, especially when they have a relationship with the person or cause they are supporting. Don't disqualify potential donors before asking; give all of your contacts the opportunity to invest in *YoungLives*.

### Church Relationships

Churches are often significant supporters of *YoungLives* — through volunteers, financial support, donations of space and supplies and prayer support. There are mission-minded and compassion-oriented churches in every community that will partner with *YoungLives*. Compile a list of the churches and pastors in the community where you

will be serving teen moms and take time to learn about each church.

### Fundraising Events

The *YoungLives* committee can plan and host fundraising events to raise the portion of the budget not secured through donor support. These events will be specific to your community and will include collaborating with the Young Life annual fundraising events. *YoungLives*-specific fundraising events are also common. These can include drives collecting change in baby bottles, fashion shows, luncheons, walk-a-thons, bunco or other events.

### Foundations and Grants

Raising funds from foundations and grants is another way to raise additional funds for *YoungLives*. There is funding through grants and foundations that may be available specifically for *YoungLives*, while Young Life may not meet their qualifications. As this money is unpredictable, it should be seen as a supplement to your Relationship Centered Engagement budget plan. Grant writing is a time-consuming task and is best done by a qualified committee member or friend of Young Life who is trained in it. The Young Life Service Center also has a Grants and Foundation department that can assist your area.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Relationship Centered Engagement — Relationship Centered Engagement, Case Statement and Donor Engagement tool Examples, Relationship Centered Engagement Handbook
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Budget
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Fundraising
- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Donor, Donor Appreciation, Grants, Fundraising

# Step 5: Church and Community Collaboration

Church and community collaboration is critical to gathering volunteers and potential financial support for the ministry. It also plays a crucial role in identifying potential resources and community advocates for teenage moms. *YoungLives* serves a demographic that is often low-income and high-need. The more we collaborate with community organizations, the less we will have to duplicate their efforts. As you begin to build a committee, they will help you to make even more connections with churches and community agencies.

## BUILDING CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS

It is often easiest to begin making contacts with churches where you or someone you know has an existing relationship with church leadership. It is equally important to direct your efforts to establishing relationships with churches in the community where you want to begin ministry (if your ministry is starting in a different community than the one you live in). These churches will often have a vested interest in making a difference in their own community. Be sure to include in your strategy those churches whose ethnicity and socioeconomic background reflect the girls you want to reach.

Your initial contact with churches can be a letter, but it is essential to follow up with phone calls. Keep a record of your communication and find one contact person at each church (such as an administrative assistant, missions pastor, or women's ministry leader) whom you develop a rapport with. Clearly communicate the *YoungLives* mission, the need for mentors and other volunteers and your desire

for a personal meeting. Keep an impartial attitude about these contacts, as not all churches will choose to be involved.

Many churches will readily enter into partnership with *YoungLives* because they clearly see teen moms as a group they are not effectively reaching. However, do not get discouraged if it takes a while to get your foot in the door at a church. It often takes time and persistence to get an audience in a church.

### Tips for Presenting the Ministry

If you get a meeting with a church representative, see it as the first step in the process of building a relationship with this person and church body.

**Keep the following in mind as you prepare:**

- Find out about the church's congregation and what current ministry opportunities they have for their members. Show interest in what they are currently doing to serve the needs of women. Don't assume they are not already making an effort to serve Christ in their community.
- Be specific about the *YoungLives*

mission and your most urgent needs. It is important to focus on your need for volunteers first. As you develop this church relationship, you will earn the right to ask for funding.

- Bring pictures and stories about teen moms whose lives have been impacted by the ministry. If you are starting out, feel free to use stories and pictures from other areas. Stories make an impact!
- Emphasize the growth in Christ that volunteers will experience as they are stretched and challenged to love teen moms. Tell them about the training and support that volunteers will receive from you and other mentors.
- If they are willing to further pursue involvement with *YoungLives*, ask for a chance to present the ministry and the need for volunteers (not to ask for funding) to their congregation or in a smaller group setting (Bible studies, missions team meeting).
- If speaking to their church is not an option, come up with an alternative plan such as a meeting with the women's pastor, an announcement in



the bulletin or a table at their missions fair.

- Regardless of the plan you leave with, be sure to follow up. Thank them for the meeting and then keep them regularly informed on progress in the ministry. You never know when a church may be ready to engage with *YoungLives* on a deeper level.
- If you do have the chance to speak to their church or small group, be sure to have an informational meeting planned (bring flyers and a signup sheet) so potential volunteers can sign up to attend after your presentation. Whenever possible, bring a teen mom or mentor with you to tell her story.

Once you have a relationship with a few churches, cultivate those relationships well. Treat these contacts the same way you treat your volunteers and donors. As some of their members begin to get involved in *YoungLives*, have a plan in place to keep them excited and interested.

## FORMING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

While our focus is on meeting the spiritual needs of teen moms, they have many practical needs that will need to be met along the way. Knowing where to have those needs met is vital. Otherwise, your mentors and volunteers will begin to feel they need to recreate social services that may already be available in your community. Organizations and programs that are like-minded and already established can be a tremendous blessing to the girls you are reaching, and connecting with them can enhance the ministry's overall effectiveness. Identify and begin networking with other programs and ministries that already reach teen moms and others in poverty; look for ways that you can share services and resources with each other.

### Some community connections to consider include:

- Pregnancy resource centers.
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- State-run programs for pregnant and parenting teens.
- Church outreach programs.
- Food pantries.
- WIC (provides check-ups and vouchers for nutritional food to low-income families).
- Group homes and/or shelters.
- Nurse Partnerships (provides in-home nurse visits for low-income pregnant women).
- United Way programs (211.org).

Pregnancy resource centers are a particularly valuable connection to make. They are often excited to learn about a ministry they can refer girls to after they have their babies. Many *YoungLives* ministries have collaborated on parenting classes, shared office space, offered mentoring to pregnant teens and partnered on volunteer training with pregnancy resource centers. Pregnancy resource centers are also generally willing to offer their services (including pre-natal classes, counseling and access to baby supplies) to *YoungLives* girls. This is a natural connection to make in your community and should be one of the first ones that you pursue.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Products and Resources — *YoungLives* Adult Brochure, *YoungLives* Banner, *YoungLives* Teen Brochure, *YoungLives* Poster, *YoungLives* DVD
- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Community Partnership, Sharing *YoungLives*, Start-Up



# Step 6: Building a Volunteer Team

Every YoungLives ministry needs mentors, a committee, childcare volunteers and adult helpers to be successful. These roles can be filled with people of all types — men and women, different personalities, different church denominations, different age groups and life situations, different ethnicities and racial backgrounds, and varying familiarity with Young Life. Do not set limitations on the type of person you think would be best as a YoungLives volunteer. Different gift sets serve the ministry in different ways.

**The four most important roles you will need to fill before you can start reaching teen moms are:**

- **Mentors:** Women who will commit to pursuing and loving teen moms through contact work, at all of your events and one-on-one.
- **Committee:** A group of local adults who care about kids and are committed to Young Life's

mission. Committee is active in supporting the local ministry by fundraising, securing administrative resources and encouraging staff.

- **Childcare volunteers:** Men and women who can provide a consistently safe and caring atmosphere for the children of teen moms.
- **Adult helpers:** Men and women who provide transportation, bring dinner, set up and clean up, run crafts and do other “behind-the-scenes” jobs for events but who are not entering into the lives of teen moms.

## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Whether you are looking for mentors, committee members, childcare volunteers, adult helpers or all of the above, the same basic principles apply to volunteer recruitment.

### 1. Share the story.

Present the story and needs of YoungLives in multiple group settings (churches, Bible study groups, women's groups, family gatherings, other agencies and organizations that serve teen moms and/or those in poverty). Present the ministry at the local Young Life banquet or other fundraising events. Don't forget media — Christian radio, the non-profit section of your local newspaper and social media can all be good ways to get the word out, too.

### 2. Invite friends and family.

Besides presenting the vision within the community at large, start brainstorming about people you already know who could be a good fit for YoungLives. Be prayerful and intentional about recruiting people who could fill specific roles. Don't be afraid to share your vision with personal



friends and family and to inspire them to get involved. Sometimes people need to be reminded of their unique gifts and shown how valuable their gift set could be in meeting specific needs. Encourage any existing volunteers to think about any of their friends and family who might be a good fit.

### 3. **Communicate regularly.**

Start to collect contact information for those people who express interest in getting involved. This is a great time to come up with a communication plan for community agencies, potential and current volunteers and donors. A monthly email newsletter with updates and pictures is a great way to keep people in the loop and keep excitement growing about your new ministry.

### 4. **Host informational meetings.**

Host informational meetings in a home or church for people who express interest. This should include an overview of the vision of Young Life and *YoungLives*, your vision for and the need for Young Life and *YoungLives* in your community, the importance of volunteers and descriptions of the ways people can get involved. If possible, have an existing staff or volunteer share her story about how being involved has had an impact on her life.

### 5. **Invite potential volunteers to observe.**

Invite those who are interested in becoming involved to observe the ministry first-hand — whether through club, Campaigners, committee or mentor meetings. They may agree to bring a meal to club and discover that *YoungLives* is a place where they want to keep serving.

### 6. **Interview those who are ready to commit.**

Take time to sit down with anyone who is considering becoming a mentor or committee member. Ask enough questions to be comfortable with the person's faith, testimony, family, work, other commitments, church involvement, strengths and interests and why the person wants to be involved. Listen to the answers! Answer concerns about time commitment, what parts of town ministry will be in, meeting with teen moms and any questions they may have.

As you get to know potential volunteers, watch for areas of their lives that might be “disqualifiers” for ministry. Help to guide them toward the volunteer positions that would be the best fit for them. If you do not think the person would be a good fit for a role on the committee or working directly with teen moms, be prepared to guide them toward a different position (i.e., craft helper, childcare volunteer, meal provider). If the person's attitude, beliefs or background convince you that the person should not be involved at all, let him or her know that you do not think his or her involvement is a good fit at this time, but you would be willing to re-evaluate at a later date. It is much easier to let people go before they have started than after they have started serving and potentially caused problems. It is vital to be up front and honest in the recruiting process.

Go over the Young Life volunteer application process, the mentor covenant (if the area or coordinator chooses to use it), and upcoming trainings and events. When you are ready to

invite someone onto the team, give the person a specific role. Volunteers who don't engage in activity outside of meetings or take ownership of the mission do not feel as valuable.

Remember, volunteers will have varied backgrounds and be in different life stages. Don't assume that being a mother, being married or being a certain age or race is a qualifier for volunteering. God can use anyone with a heart that loves Him and seeks His will for his or her life.

## **TRAINING AND EQUIPPING VOLUNTEERS**

Those who are new to Young Life will need to become familiar with the organization as a whole and trained in the Five C's: contact work, club, camp, Campaigners and committee. Collaborating with the local Young Life area and their leader training can be a great way to introduce new volunteers to the bigger picture of Young Life in their community.

New volunteers will need to sign up on the staff website and complete the Faith and Conduct Statement, Criminal Background Check and Driver Questionnaire. They also need to complete the Young Life Volunteer Application and Character References.

In your region or area, look for a person qualified to help you train your new volunteers. Ask your supervisor who this person might be and ask him or her to help you lead your initial training sessions.

## **RETAINING VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteering as a mentor to teen moms is challenging and can be heart-breaking at times, so caring for, training and appreciating your

volunteers is just as important as recruiting them! It is not enough just to recruit volunteers; the coordinator must continue to cast vision, provide monthly mentor trainings and validate volunteers by recognizing accomplishments and providing them with honest feedback. You can give volunteers a sense of belonging in ministry by including them in decision-making and giving them ownership of tasks when possible.

**The following lists show some of the reasons that volunteers will stay committed or lose interest in a ministry.**

### **Volunteers Stay Committed When They:**

- Feel appreciated and valued.
- See that their presence is making a difference.
- Have opportunity for more responsibility.
- See opportunities for personal growth.
- Receive recognition for their work, privately and publicly.
- Are able to complete the tasks.
- Have a sense of belonging in the group.
- Are involved in problem-solving, decision making and goal setting.
- Recognize the significance of the group's existence.
- Have their personal needs met.

### **Volunteers Lose Interest When They:**

- Experience discrepancies between expectations of their relationship with their teens and the reality of the situation.
- Don't feel like they are making a difference — no praise or reward.
- Lack variety.
- Lack support from or feel tension between mentors.
- Are not thanked and appreciated enough.

- Do not grow in their personal relationship with Christ.
- Do not feel personally fulfilled in what they are doing.
- Do not have opportunity to demonstrate initiative and creativity.

## **VOLUNTEER-SPECIFIC IDEAS**

### **Childcare Team**

Having a reliable childcare coordinator and identifying a core childcare team are essentials to providing the highest quality of care. Give the childcare portion of your ministry priority attention and ensure that you have taken all the necessary precautions to safeguard the ministry — including background checks and appropriate orientation and training for childcare volunteers. Competent and reliable adults who love children should be the base of your childcare team. Having a consistent core team will build trust with the children and their mothers. Your core childcare team can be supplemented with Campaigners kids and other irregular volunteers.

If you have children older than age 2 coming to childcare, consider using a Sunday school or VBS curriculum with them. What better way to reach two generations for Christ than to effectively use the time we have with the children to teach them about Jesus' love for them?

### **Committee**

The committee or sub-committee shares ownership of the ministry with local staff and is responsible for supporting *YoungLives* leadership and ministry development. The strength of the committee depends on having the right people in the right places. If you are putting together your own committee, be sure to seek out a diverse group that can fulfill the main functions of committee. The chairperson

greatly influences the character and effectiveness of your committee and partners with you to lead the committee, develop ministry strategies, and fulfill the area's vision. He or she helps to place committee members in positions to utilize their talents and holds them accountable to fulfill their roles. Keep in mind that a healthy committee will strive toward diversity — finding representatives from both genders, different churches and/or denominations, different racial and cultural backgrounds and different age groups. It is important to include fellowship and relationship-building as part of each meeting and to think of creative ways to continue building community outside of meetings.

The *Young Life Committee Handbook* is a must-have resource for each of your committee members. Be sure to read through this handbook in its entirety, as it provides essential details about the formation and management of committees.

### **Mentors**

Mentors are essential to the effectiveness of *YoungLives* and form the heart of your leadership team. These are the women who will go into the neighborhoods, homes, and lives of teenage mothers with you to form lasting relationships with them.

#### **Mentors must commit to:**

- Maintain a healthy, growing personal relationship with Christ.
- Actively initiate and develop relationships with teen moms.
- Walk with at least one teen mom in a mentoring relationship for at least a year.
- Regularly plan, attend, participate in and bring girls to club and/or Campaigners.
- Attend all monthly mentor training times and any required *Young Life* training.
- Promote and attend (if possible) *YoungLives* summer camp.

- Participate in special events — field trips, parenting classes, other events.
- Pray for teen moms, for the ministry and for each other.

For your initial training of mentors, utilize the nearest Young Life area director or regional director to help provide the Young Life philosophy and foundation of ministry. Supplement this Young Life leader training with the *YoungLives Mentor Training Handbook*.

Too often mentors are recruited, interviewed, trained and then left on their own. Providing ongoing monthly mentor training and support time for mentors and checking in with them one-on-one is as important as running club. The monthly mentor meetings should include time for prayer, questions, idea sharing, training on relevant topics (abuse, sex, discouragement, boundaries, camp, discipleship, cultural sensitivity), recognition/appreciation and friendship building.

### Adult Helpers

For those who cannot commit to a consistent role but want to help in a behind-the-scenes or less-involved

way — or for those who aren't a great fit for mentoring, committee or childcare — consider placing volunteers in “Adult Helper” roles. This can include those who help with transportation, meals, crafts, set up and clean up. It is still important to acknowledge and appreciate these volunteers and to make sure they feel included on the team — but they should not be considered “mentors” and should not be given the same leadership on the team as mentors and committee.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Human Resources — Volunteer Application
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Products and Resources — *YoungLives Adult Brochure*, *YoungLives Mentor Training Handbook*, *Committee Handbook*, *Committee Chair Handbook*
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Leader Tools — Committee
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): *YoungLives — Mentor Covenant*
- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Community Partnership, Recruiting, Sharing *YoungLives*, Start-Up



# Step 7: Contact Work with Teen Moms

Once the ministry foundation has been built, it is time to start reaching out to teenage mothers. *YoungLives* uses the same relational, incarnational philosophy of ministry that has driven Young Life since its inception. This method of ministry is referred to as contact work and consists of going where kids are, building relationships with them and earning the right to be heard. Developing relationships with adolescents on their turf is a key tool that we use to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to disinterested kids. Developing and doing great contact work is the framework for starting a good *YoungLives* club.

**Tom Hammon, senior regional director, says this about contact work:**



*There are an enormous number of Christian programs that say, 'Come to us.' Contact work puts the leader out there with kids. It puts flesh on the gospel. It's the most authentic you can get — the life of a person who goes into the world of lost kids.*



Contact work isn't just Young Life's invention — it is based on the example of Jesus Himself, as we see in John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the

neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish" (*The Message*).

As early as possible, it is important to start introducing mentors to teen moms. If the coordinator takes on too much of the contact work herself, teen moms will attach themselves to her and may have a difficult time developing deep relationships with other mentors.

## THREE LEVELS OF CONTACT WORK

- **Being seen** — showing up where kids are.
- **Talking to a kid** — taking the first step to start establishing a relationship.
- **Doing something with a kid or group of kids** — going to the next level of deeper friendship.

All three levels remind us of our dependence on Jesus. We are able to go outside of our comfort zone because kids need love, and God wants to love them through us.

## MEETING TEEN MOMS

In *YoungLives* ministry, contact work must be intentional. *YoungLives* coordinators will often need to make initial contact with teen moms in a school specific to teen moms, through a school's counseling or nurse's office, through a pregnancy resource center, or through another program or organization that is already building relationships with teen moms. Mentors are introduced to teen moms through attending the school and club with the coordinator.

One effective avenue for contact

work in *YoungLives* is what we call "lunch club". Many school administrators are open to the idea of having *YoungLives* volunteers come to the school, but are unwilling to give out the names or contact information of pregnant and parenting girls. To avoid privacy issues, many *YoungLives* ministries offer to host a lunch club for pregnant and parenting girls in an empty classroom or office during the school's lunch periods. *YoungLives* leaders bring in lunch and prepare a few discussion questions, mixer, and/or a parenting topic and the administrators invite girls to attend during their regular lunch period. Lunch club is not a replacement for a full club meeting, which meets outside of school hours.

Some *YoungLives* ministries have built enough of a relationship with teachers and administrators that they are invited to come in and teach one or more parenting classes for the pregnant and parenting teens during the school day. There are several recommended parenting curriculums on the *YoungLives* blog that can help to form the basis for parenting classes if this becomes a contact work option in your area.

**Any time you have the chance to run a parenting class or lunch club, take advantage of the time that you have to get to know the girls personally.**

- Have them introduce themselves and tell you about themselves.
- Call them by name whenever you can.
- Try to have a discussion setting rather than classroom setup.
- Bring other mentors to introduce whenever possible.
- If appropriate, talk about the friendship, fun, adventure and meaning that *YoungLives* offers.

- Follow up individually with teen moms by phone or in person soon after meeting them. When trust is built, invite them out for ice cream or another social outing.

If organizing a parenting class or lunch club is not an option, find out if the school allows volunteers to visit classes or lunch periods. Finding the pregnant girls will not take very long! If the school has a daycare attached, volunteering in the daycare is a great way to meet teen parents as well.

Remember that schools, group homes and other agencies that work with teen moms will be more open to you if you ask how you can help them, rather than asking them to help you.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Leader Tools — Contact Work Tips, Help Your Leaders Be Successful, Youth Culture
- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Contact Work, Lesson Plans, Parenting, Working with Schools



# Step 8: Club

Once you have earned the trust of teen moms, it is time to start planning the first club. The goal of YoungLives club is to offer teen moms all of the elements of a typical Young Life club with the addition of childcare and a meal. All aspects of YoungLives club should work together to support the sharing of the gospel.

The first clubs may be more casual than they will be eventually — focused mostly on letting the girls have fun getting to know you and each other in an informal setting. As your group grows, you can start to incorporate more and more pieces of Young Life club. Regardless of how big or small the group is, the goal is to offer teen moms a friendly, welcoming, family-like atmosphere where they can interact with other teen moms and mentors and hear a clear and compelling presentation of the gospel by a leader who has invested in their lives. Club needs to be a place where they want to be.

Your mentors will be your greatest asset in putting together a great YoungLives club. Organize club at your monthly mentor meetings and delegate tasks. It is helpful to plan clubs a semester or year in advance.

## YOUNG LIFE CLUB ELEMENTS

YoungLives is Young Life and uses many of the same elements of a typical club.

### Club Talk

The club talk is the verbal proclamation of the love of Christ that teen moms have already experienced through the mentors in their lives. Club talks follow a progression through the semester or year.

**A sample sequence looks like this:**

- Three “Person” talks.
- One “Need” talk.
- One “Sin” talk.
- One “Cross” talk.
- One “Resurrection” talk.
- One to three “Application” talks.

You can find much more detailed descriptions of talks, example Scriptures to go with each talk and sample talks on the Young Life staff website, the YoungLives blog and in the *Mentor Training Handbook*.

### Games

YoungLives clubs use the same games that Young Life clubs use. Teen moms love to laugh and have fun just like any other teenager! **A few tips on running games:**

- Try not to use girls who are at club for the first time unless you have a relationship with them and know their personalities.
- Be prepared with clean-up supplies. Have props ready and skit items prepared ahead of time.
- Have fun prizes to give away. Make them “theme” appropriate to club whenever possible.
- Have help in setting up and explaining the game quickly to minimize “dead time” and keep club moving at a quick pace.
- Be enthusiastic when leading games and help the crowd get into the game — e.g., crowd countdown, crowd voting on winner.

### Music

Using appropriate secular music that the girls recognize and enjoy will help them to let their guard down and will show them that you value them where they are. **Some things to keep in mind when planning music:**

- Have an enthusiastic leader! Enthusiasm up front and from the mentors in the crowd is the key to good club music. Incorporating dancing is popular with teen moms.
- If you don’t have someone who can lead music, consider using YouTube videos and mp3s of songs that are popular with the teen moms in your club.
- Be sensitive to the cultural diversity of your club. Choose songs that reflect the diversity of your group.
- Choose songs that focus on God loving us; songs about us loving God do not help convey the gospel message to a non-believer.

### Mixers

A mixer is an activity that the group does together or in team competition. It creates unity as a group and breaks down walls. The non-verbal message of a mixer is “we are all in this together.” We are seeking to bring the “furthest-out” girl into the group. Our willingness to become foolish speaks volumes. Teen moms and mentors need to laugh, play and experience fun adventures together.

Think through the details to make sure your mixers are excellent; include fun music when possible and prizes for the winning team. Be sure the mentors are involved in everything. Mixer ideas are available on the Staff Resources site.

### Skits

An entertainment skit brings mentors up front, gets them outside of their comfort zones, allows teen moms to laugh at them and not just with them. This also gives them something to talk and laugh about together later. There are many

entertainment skit ideas to use on the Staff Resources site. You can also be creative in using skits to help sell camp or even teach a parenting tip. Be as creative as you can with costumes and props, and practice and prepare well. Remember, it's about your willingness, not your skill!

## ADDITIONAL YOUNGLIVES CLUB ELEMENTS

YoungLives clubs include some additional elements to serve a teen-mom-specific audience. Not all of these elements are required. Some will make sense in a given area, and some will not.

### Baby Supplies

Although it is not necessary to give away baby supplies at YoungLives club, donations of diapers, baby clothes and car seats often start coming in as soon as the community hears about YoungLives' work with teen moms. Some areas set aside a storage unit, supply closet or basement for donations and give supplies out after club or on an as-needed basis. It is a simple and low-cost way for mentors to offer tangible help to girls in need.

Before choosing to include donation giveaways in the area's YoungLives ministry strategy, it is important to consider whether there are other resources already available to girls in the area and what kind of time and energy will be required to manage the donations.

### Childcare

YoungLives clubs always provide childcare. Often, everyone eats dinner together first, and then the girls drop their children off before club starts.

### Club Frequency

YoungLives clubs typically meet once or twice a month because of

the extra time involved in organizing and providing transportation, childcare and dinner.

### Club Location

Churches are ideal for YoungLives club since they are already equipped with a nursery, kitchen, and a large meeting space. Other options include community centers, YMCAs and homes. Holding club in the same neighborhood where most of your teen moms live will greatly ease transportation issues.

### Club Time

Club times range from right after school, to a weekday or weekend evening. Weekends can be easier for mentors who work full time, but they are also difficult because of family and travel schedules.

### Crafts

Girls love to make things with their hands, and it creates a relaxed environment for getting to know each other and the mentors. YoungLives clubs use crafts (making baby items, holiday decorations, photo frames, scrapbook pages) as an icebreaker when girls first arrive, as a transition between dropping off their children and starting club or at the end of club as a time for mentors and girls to discuss the club message.

### Dinner

Because YoungLives serves moms and their children, we always serve dinner (or an after-school snack) at club. Some clubs set up a rotation of church small groups to bring in a home-cooked dinner, some have a volunteer or group of volunteers who make dinner for every club and others have food donated by local restaurants.

### Transportation

Many clubs find that the teen moms they serve don't have reliable transportation. This often means that mentors and committee



The non-verbal message of a mixer is “we are all in this together.” We are seeking to bring the “furthest-out” girl into the group.



members pick up one or two girls for club and take them home afterward. Some areas hold their club near the high school, on a bus line or within walking distance of the neighborhoods where the majority of their teen moms live. Anyone who provides transportation needs to complete the Young Life Driver Questionnaire on the Staff and Resources Site.

### Additional Resources

- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Leader Tools — Drama, Games, Music, Program, Skits, Talks
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): YoungLives — Club
- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Club Music, Club Planning, Club Talks, Entertainment Skit, Games, Group Events, Large Club, Mixers, Run-Ons, Small Clubs, Theme Clubs
- *YoungLives Mentor Training Handbook*

# Step 9: Camp

A *YoungLives* camp week consists of the same elements as a traditional Young Life camp, adjusted for pregnant teens, teen moms and babies. Teen moms attend camp with their babies and mentors, and enjoy a respite from the chaos of their daily struggles. Once a girl becomes a teen mom, she is often forced to give up typical teenage experiences and become an adult in many parts of her life. *YoungLives* camping provides teen moms with the opportunity to have fun and act like a teenager again while they hear and grasp the gospel in a new way. In addition, they enjoy time with their mentors and peers as they experience camp with their children. The relationships built at Young Life summer and weekend camps play a major role in creating momentum once girls return home. This momentum most often results in Campaigners and increased discipleship.

## DIFFERENCES IN YOUNGLIVES CAMPING

### Children

- We accommodate the children of teen moms, in addition to the campers themselves, by providing quality childcare for infants and toddlers up to 48 months of age.
- Nurseries are set up throughout camp (in lobbies, cabins, meeting rooms) to accommodate all of the children.

### Childcare

- Childcare volunteers pay or fundraise their own way to come serve at *YoungLives* camp for the week.
- Childcare volunteers have their own club, and they participate in some of the group activities during the week along with watching the children.
- Childcare is provided during scheduled morning and evening activities. Moms and their children still eat meals together,

sleep in the cabins together, and have free time together in the afternoon.

- The camp facility is equipped with enough nursery equipment, high chairs, strollers, pack n' plays and other baby supplies to accommodate all of the children who come to camp.
- Each area is responsible to recruit childcare volunteers to meet the childcare quota. Please see the full policy in the *YoungLives* Camp Toolbox on the Staff Resources Site.

### Mentors

- It is typical to have more leaders (mentors) at camp during *YoungLives* weeks. A ratio of at least one mentor for every three teen moms is recommended.

### Program and Schedule

- The camp week is typically shortened by one day to become a six-day camp compared to a seven-day camp.



- The program and schedule are adjusted to a slower pace than a traditional camp week. The slower pace allows time to move from activity to activity with babies and also provides moms with more time and experiences with their children.
- Certain camp events and “rides” are adapted to better fit an all-girls camp that includes some pregnant girls.
- The assignment team and speaker are specifically chosen to best meet the needs of this audience.
- There are some limitations regarding the age of campers, the age of babies and pregnant campers at YoungLives camp. Please refer to the YoungLives Camp Toolbox on the Staff Resources site for details.

## WEEKEND CAMPS

Fall and winter weekend camps are also a great way to share the gospel with teen moms. They are often held at a non-Young Life camp property, unless you are in close proximity to a Young Life camp. Consider taking teen moms to a Young Life weekend camp offered by your area or region.

## FUNDRAISING FOR CAMP

When planning for your camp trip, keep in mind that YoungLives camping involves extra costs — including scholarships for the many teen moms who cannot afford the cost of camp, scholarships (potentially) for childcare volunteers and the cost of bringing extra baby supplies. Start planning fundraisers early in the year.

### Tips for Camp Fundraising

- Fundraising for camp is easier than raising money for operating expenses!
- Give the teen moms sponsorship letters they can take to teachers and family members to solicit small donations. Girls

can easily raise \$100-200 with these letters. (Find a sample letter on the YoungLives blog).

- Ask supporting churches and donors to consider providing a full or partial scholarship for camp. Break scholarships down by specific amounts: for example, \$500 for a full scholarship or \$100 for a seat on the bus.
- Plan fundraisers teen moms can participate in and take ownership of. This allows them to feel invested in the trip and increases the chances they will actually go to camp. Examples include car washes, pancake breakfasts, hoagie sales and candy bar sales.
- Give your mentors ideas and opportunities for fundraising with their teen moms. This is a great opportunity for them to build excitement with their teen, spend time together and raise funds themselves (one example would be to hold a yard sale together).
- Collect deposits on a regular schedule (for example, \$25 per month for six months before camp), and keep an ongoing chart so girls can see who is going and how fundraising is progressing.

## FOLLOW-UP

You will be emotionally and physically exhausted when you get back from your trip, but you don’t want to lose the momentum that you gained at camp, so have your follow-up and discipleship plan ready before you leave for camp.

### What to Include in Your Follow-Up Plan

- Plan a camp reunion event within the first week of being home. This is also a great time to invite the families of teen moms and those who weren’t at camp to help them feel included.



support during this time.

### Additional Resources

- Teen moms often start a relationship with Christ at Young Life camp, and with the proper tools in place, this is the perfect time to start your Campaigners Bible study.
  - Every girl who went to camp with you should be contacted individually during the week of returning home. Re-entry into the “real world” can be difficult, and it is important to offer extra
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): *YoungLives* — Camp Toolbox
  - *YoungLives Mentor Training Handbook*: Training Your Leaders for Camp section
  - [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Camp Childcare, Camp Follow-Up, Camp Fundraiser, Camp Prep, Camp Sell Ideas
  - [younglife.org/younglives/campchildcareopportunities](http://younglife.org/younglives/campchildcareopportunities)

“  
YoungLives camping provides teen moms with the opportunity to have fun and act like a teenager again while they hear and grasp the gospel in a new way.  
”



# Step 10: Discipleship of Teen Moms

Up to this point, every step has addressed laying the foundation for a strong *YoungLives* ministry and then accomplishing the first half of our mission statement — introducing teen moms to Jesus Christ. This last step addresses the second half of our mission statement: helping teen moms to grow in their faith. *YoungLives* uses mentoring, Campaigners and a variety of other discipleship methods to instill in teen moms core values about herself, her child, her relationships and her world. When a teen mom accepts and acts on these truths, she will be equipped with the skills, assets and attitudes she needs to reach her full God-given potential.

## DISCIPLESHIP VALUES

We believe that when teen moms encounter Jesus Christ in a real way, their relationship with Him will transform how they love themselves, their family, their friends, and their world (see Romans 12:2). Our prayer is that by the time teen moms graduate or move on from *YoungLives*, they will have internalized and be ready to live out the core values illustrated on this page.



**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).**



## Core Discipleship Values

### Self

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

I am a new creation in Christ, forgiven and loved by God, and I know that He has a plan and purpose for my life.

### Child

**Proverbs 22:6**

My child is a gift from God, created for a God-given purpose, and I will train my child to know and follow God.

### Relationships

**Ephesians 4:32**

I am a treasured child of God who deserves to be treated with dignity, love, and respect, and I will treat others in the same way.

### World

**Ephesians 5:1-2**

I will be a source of life, hope, love and service to others just as Christ loved me and gave His life for me.

## DISCIPLESHIP METHODS

The following discusses some of the discipleship methods that *YoungLives* areas use to help girls begin to grow in and walk out their faith. Each of these methods has the goal of teaching and reinforcing the Discipleship Values of Self, Child,

Relationships and World. Teen moms do not have to have accepted Christ to participate in these discipleship avenues — the goal is that all of these methods will help move them closer to Him, whether or not they have already accepted Him. *YoungLives* areas often use more than one of these methods depending on the needs of their girls and the makeup of their group.

## Campaigners

In most aspects, *YoungLives* Campaigners is no different than traditional Young Life Campaigners. But there a few changes we make to accommodate the unique needs of teen moms and their children.

For instance, *YoungLives* Campaigners groups usually meet less frequently — often only once or twice a month, rather than weekly. We also accommodate childcare needs and provide a meal or a snack.

## Tips for an Effective Campaigners

- Encourage Campaigners involvement for all mentors. Having a mentor involved in Campaigners even when her teen mom is not ready to attend will help her to gain a bigger picture of the ministry and to feel encouraged by the teen moms who are pursuing a relationship with Christ.
- Begin and end on time.
- Make the study discussion-oriented, with teen moms doing the majority of the talking. Prepare your mentors to not fill in “dead space” with their own remarks.
- Never tell what you can ask. Kids are much more likely to remember a truth they thought of themselves. Ask open-ended questions to avoid “yes” and “no” answers.

- Be sure that each girl has an opportunity to share. Direct questions to different girls, and break into smaller groups if necessary.
- Practice active listening. Repeat back what a girl has said to acknowledge that you heard her. Help fit her response into the big picture of what the study is about.
- Discuss relevant topics from a biblical standpoint (e.g., premarital sex, finances, marriage, parenting).
- Train your mentors to lead Campaigners. Set them up to succeed. Have them observe you leading and meet with them to help prepare a lesson that you are confident they can lead.
- Train your maturing teen moms to lead a study as they become junior mentors and peer leaders.
- Pray together.

## Church

Effective discipleship involves plugging teen moms into a place where they can have long-term growth after their involvement with *YoungLives* is over. As your Campaigners girls begin to grow in their personal relationships with Christ, emphasize how important it is for them to be connected in a church. Help them to find a church home where they feel comfortable and welcomed. Look for churches with good childcare, small groups, culturally relevant services, access to bus lines and Saturday night or late Sunday morning services.

Ideally, look for a small group or home group that is willing to “adopt” a couple of older girls and help them to get plugged in. Encourage girls to get involved in church activities besides just Sunday morning. Once one or two teen moms find a church where they feel at home, this can help to create a culture of church attendance in your *YoungLives* group. Teen moms inviting each

other to church is even more effective than mentors inviting girls to church!

## Mentoring

Mentoring relationships can turn into the perfect avenue for discipleship when a girl is ready for it. Consider doing a book study or Bible study together, setting goals together, going to church together or serving in the community together.

## Life Skills Classes

Life skills classes are not essential, but many *YoungLives* areas find they are a helpful tool in the discipleship process. Classes can be offered monthly in rotation with club and Campaigners (for instance, some areas meet weekly but have a different focus each week: club, Campaigners, life skills and mentor meetings); as special seminars offered quarterly; or as a weekend retreat with multiple speakers and topics. If there are already resources for this in the community, then *YoungLives* does not need to duplicate efforts, but can instead focus on helping girls to utilize what is already available to them.

### Examples of life skills topics include:

- Finances
- Nutrition
- Parenting
- Pursuing post-secondary education
- Job and career skills
- Health
- Conflict resolution

Ask experts (Community Services Board members, pediatricians, dieticians, counselors) for help in preparing these classes so you do not have to recreate material that already exists. Be careful when bringing in outside speakers — they often need to be coached in ways to make their presentations more appealing to a teenage audience, keep their topic simple and cover relevant issues for

teen moms in a way that they can understand. Also keep in mind that girls are much more likely to listen to someone with whom they already have a trusting relationship.

## Work Crew Weekends

Taking a few teen moms (without their children) to do work crew at a Young Life weekend camp or Committee Leader Weekend can be a tremendous growth opportunity. Not only do you have the chance for lots of discipleship-oriented conversation with them throughout the weekend, but they get to experience service and leadership from a whole new perspective.

## Goals Program

Creating a goals program in your club is a simple way to incentivize girls to move ahead, give mentors something specific to work on with their teen moms, create a culture of goal-setting and celebrate girls’ successes publicly. It’s also exciting to be able to share with volunteers and donors about the specific achievements that girls are making in their lives!

At the beginning of each quarter, invite girls to participate in setting one or two very specific goals (either with their mentor or individually). You can provide a list of examples of measurable goals in the areas of education, parenting, spiritual growth, relationships, finances, independence and job/career. Work with your teen moms on setting up SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) and make sure to approve and record each goal.

At the end of the quarter, celebrate girls who have achieved their goals. Honor them during club and present them with an appropriate gift or reward.

### Specific goals can include:

- **Spiritual Growth** — Attend eight church services, Bible study classes, or Christian small group sessions (give a five-minute testimony based on what you learned after having attended).
- **Education** — Nine weeks of good attendance according to school policy (show report card).
- **Parenting** — Six educational events with your child in a span of two months. Show proof of tickets stubs, brochures or pictures taken. Can include the library!
- **Personal Achievements** — Get driver's license.
- **Career** — Twenty hours of volunteering in two months (show proof of attendance).
- **Money Management** — Set up automatic deposit of paychecks, and save \$250 in savings account.

### Graduation

As teen moms get older, there are signs it is time for them to transition. These include:

- Older, more “established” teen moms start to feel too comfortable in the group and monopolize conversation and the attention of the mentors, which discourages younger girls from wanting to participate or even come at all.
- A mentor and girl may have been together for so long that they have stopped making progress.
- Mentors can become so comfortable in their relationships with the older girls that they don't move on to relationships with new girls.
- Older girls can create extra drama — about the way things “used to be,” not being able to go back to camp or other issues.
- Younger girls look up to the older ones, whether or not the older girls are making good decisions.

- Younger girls may look to the older girls as role models rather than the mentors.

To remedy these issues, many *YoungLives* areas have begun to set an age limit for their club and hold a graduation celebration at the end of each school year to honor and “phase out” those young moms who have reached a certain age or milestone. Girls should be aware of the graduation plan when they enter *YoungLives*. Their graduation date should also be a regular conversation with their mentor. Mentors can stay involved with graduated girls, but they are no longer officially their mentors. There are several possible ways for graduated moms to stay involved — including as junior leaders or helpers (if appropriate), as Campaigners participants, or in an alumni group.

You can plan an annual or bi-annual graduation celebration as a special event or as part of your regular club schedule.



**A graduation celebration can include:**

- Invitations to the family of teen moms to join in the celebration.
- Special guest speaker and special music.
- A brief introduction and celebration of the accomplishments and value of each individual girl who is graduating.
- Diplomas or certificates of accomplishment and a small gift.
- Picture slideshow of their time in *YoungLives*.
- Prayer for each graduating girl.
- Explanation of the ways girls can stay involved.

### **Alumni Group**

Create a small group just for your senior and alumni girls, or suggest that one of your graduated girls organize and lead it. They can have their own Campaigners, go to church together, plan play dates together and have other outings.

Sometimes a mentor who is ready for a change will be willing to lead this group.

### **Junior Leaders or Helpers**

Many *YoungLives* areas set up a way for older or graduated teen moms to serve side by side with *YoungLives* mentors. This not only teaches them about the responsibilities and expectations of being a mentor, but it also helps them to grow in their relationship with Christ. It also provides a way to hold girls accountable. It is important to provide some kind of training and to have clear expectations set up ahead of time for this role. For instance, some areas have junior helpers make a commitment to regularly attend and serve at events (through set up/clean up, dinner, childcare, or program), set a positive example in their speech and example, and be respectful. If they consistently fail at following through, they will be asked to step down.

Providing a way for girls to serve and contribute not only helps them to

gain confidence and leadership skills, but it also provides a stepping stone for them toward independence and even potentially toward becoming a *YoungLives* mentor in the future. Continue mentoring these girls one-on-one and investing in them as much as possible.

### **Support Network**

Look for classes or groups for single parents, programs for mothers, Bible studies, and support groups at churches and pregnancy centers that the girls can join after they graduate from *YoungLives*. Or if they are married, help them to find a married couple's Bible study to join with their husbands.

### **Additional Resources**

- [ylvs.blogspot.com](http://ylvs.blogspot.com): Discipleship, Transitioning Older Moms, Campaigners, Parenting
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): Leader Tools — Campaigners
- [staff.younglife.org](http://staff.younglife.org): *YoungLives* Tools — Campaigners Lessons, Discipleship Values

**While you have completed this book and maybe even all the steps within, your *YoungLives* journey is just beginning! Your effort to follow and complete the steps will set up *YoungLives* ministry in your area with a strong foundation. The fruit of your labor will be evident in the months and years to come!**

