

CORE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

CORE INVITATION (AKA RECRUITMENT)

Once you know what you are looking for in a Core Member, how do you find them? Core invitation is a vital (and often challenging) part of establishing and maintaining a healthy Life Teen program. The first thing we need to remember when finding and inviting Core Members is that enthusiasm is contagious.

While you do not want to come off as “too” overzealous, you do want to share with others the importance of the ministry. So, before you approach a single person, be aware of your goal... to utilize other people’s time and talents in such a way that they will help walk our young people closer to Christ. Let that goal dictate your attitude, your message and your strategy. Below is a basic Core recruitment plan that can be adapted to meet the needs of your parish.

lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos/core-recruitment-part-2-recruit-core-members/

“COME AND SEE” - CORE RECRUITMENT PLAN

PHASE 1 - POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

The goal of this phase is to gather names of people who may be good working with teenagers. The only qualifications are this people need to be Catholic, be 21 or over, and have a love for Christ and young people. Gathering of names could happen over a two month period.

Ask the question, “who do you think would be good working with teenagers?”

- Ask for names from the Parish priests, staff and other ministries.
- Youth Minister asks anyone who might be called to this ministry. For example high school teachers, Confirmation sponsors, daily Mass attendees, etc.
- Youth Minister asks teens for names of people that they think would be good Core Members.

After the 4-6 week period, the Youth Minister (and/or possibly current Core Members) would speak at each Mass for that weekend.

- They would describe where Youth Ministry has been and where it is going. The goal of this would be to get people excited about the future of Youth Ministry.
- The speaker would also announce that teens and adults from Life Teen will be outside the church with all the (first) names of the teenagers in the parish in baskets. The speaker would encourage each person or family to take a name or two out of the baskets and pray for the teenager this week. Also, the speaker would ask them to bring to prayer how they can be involved in Life Teen.

PHASE 2 - COME AND SEE

The goal of this phase is to bring those who are seriously discerning the call to work in Life Teen together for further prayer, information, and fellowship.

Invite the list of people gather from phase 1 to a BBQ/potluck.

- This would be a time for informal gathering, fellowship, with a short presentation about Life Teen.

- Parish priests and Core Members would be present to answer any questions that potential core may have.
- Also, this potential Core would be invited to a Life Night where they would shadow a Core Member.

PHASE 3 - DISCERNMENT

The goal of this phase would be to finalize discernment as an active core team member for one school year.

The Youth Minister would call each person that was involved in phase 2, as well as those who may still be on the list from phase 1, to see where they are at in their discernment.

- During this conversation, an informal interview would be set up with each person and the Youth Minister. Here is where the potential Core Member and the Youth Minister would sit down and talk about the Core commitments, as well as any question the potential Core Member may have. Most importantly, they would pray together about the potential Core Member's involvement in Life Teen.

Those who have responded positively to core team involvement would be invited to a one-day Core team training/retreat where they would be trained on relational ministry with teenagers.

- Also during this retreat, the core values and commitments would be outlined and signed. The commitment would be for one year and each year, there would be a core retreat for recommitment for the core team for one year.

MORE CORE INVITATION IDEAS

PRAY - Before you do anything else, you must begin in prayer. Involve others by asking other ministries in your parish to pray for the teens and for the youth ministry program.

GET TO KNOW YOUR PARISH COMMUNITY - Become visible within your Church beyond the parish office and youth ministry gatherings. Get out to those morning Masses, stand outside as people exit and introduce yourself. Be visible at other parish events, make your way by the coffee and donut table and get to know parishioners and their families by name.

HAVE SOMETHING TO GIVE THEM - A business card, a sample semester calendar, some statistics on youth or a bulletin with your contact information all can work well.

GET INFORMATION FROM POTENTIAL CORE MEMBERS - Get an email address or a phone number, and follow up with them quickly. Don't wait a week or two to call. They will think you are uninterested.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK PEOPLE FOR HELP OR TO CALL THEM TO SERVICE - Many people are willing to help but are waiting to be invited. Remain positive and enthusiastic about the direction the ministry is headed and how you're going to get there. Have courage!

RCIA - Some of the most on fire Catholics around are the newly initiated. Offer to do a teaching with the RCIA candidates of your parish during the year and continue to support them on their journey towards Easter. Invite them to be a part of your ministry during and after their Sacramental initiation. They make amazing Core Members.

INVITE ANOTHER MINISTRY OR GROUP TO PRAY - Ask them to pray for the Lord to provide workers to serve in the field of youth ministry. The other groups could be a rosary prayer group, men's group, mom's group, Knights of Columbus, etc.

LIFE TEEN PROMOTIONAL VIDEO - If you have the technology (video projectors and sound hook-up) and your pastor allows, show the Life Teen Promotional Video at Mass. It will get the parishioners and teens excited about Life Teen coming to the parish and will help recruit Core Members.

CREATE A VIDEO WITH YOUR TEENS - You can use photos from past events, write a script and have teens act it out of something else. Get creative and in the end have the teens ask for people to say yes to serve on the Core Team.

LOOK OUTSIDE THE PARISH - Advertise in the local college with flyers on campus or the campus paper. If you notice someone outside Church, teens and adults, approach them and invite them to Life Teen.

PROTECTING THE MINISTRY

Just because someone says they are interested in being on the Core team or involved in Life Teen doesn't mean you have to take every last applicant. You know the saying, "beggars can't be choosers"? Well then don't be a beggar, and then you can be choosy!

- Be clear and choosy before making anyone official
- Have all potential Core team members fill out a Core Application.
- Interview each candidate face-to-face.
- Explain Diocesan Safe Environment Training and fingerprinting policies.
- Provide them with a calendar to make sure they can commit to training, meetings, and your Life Teen schedule.
- Check out Facebook and Twitter pages to see if they are projecting the lifestyle of a Catholic Christian.
- Ask them to prayerfully consider being on the Core team.
- Be very clear about expectations and commitment level.

TRAINING YOUR CORE TEAM

A Life Teen program is only as strong as its Core Team, which makes training and maintaining a Core Team an important role of the youth minister. The youth minister is called to minister and support a Core Team so that they in turn can effectively minister to teens.

Modeling ministry is the easiest and most effective way to properly train Core Members. It has to come from the "top" so to speak. This applies to appropriate behavior, punctuality, relational ministry, and even spiritual growth. A holy example goes much further than words. Model holiness in your own prayer, posture and humility, and realize that the most effective training can be through simple daily example, like attending daily Mass, spending time in Adoration, spending significant time daily in the Sacred Scriptures, reciting the Liturgy of the Hours, or renewing your rosary devotion. The Core cannot be expected to go where the youth minister is not willing to go himself or herself.

The Core requires ongoing spiritual and catechetical formation and ministry training. To pull this off without going crazy, it is important to have an intentional and systematic plan in place, to be sure that the Core is being given what they need to grow in knowledge, and challenged effectively to grow in holiness. While the youth minister cannot, and should not, act as the spiritual director for each and every Core Member, they can offer some practical ongoing opportunities for the Core to continue to grow.

Ideas to Strengthen a Core Team

- Hold a Core retreat once or twice a year. Bring in someone outside your parish community to give the retreat for the team.
- Have regularly scheduled one-on-one “check-ups” with each Core Member at least once a semester to pray and refocus. Help the Core Member set attainable goals both personally and in ministry.
- Seek out training opportunities for the Core team. Life Teen offers one-day trainings called Empower that are hosted in several cities every year. Check out lifeteen.com/cym/events for a list of locations and dates.
- Encourage your Core Members to watch the online Core Training streaming videos on lifeteen.com/cym together or at home and have a discussion as a team or individually as new members join Core.
- Find someone in the parish who can offer some Core enrichment sessions. Try one every couple of months. Nothing too extravagant or time-consuming, just an hour, maybe, on an off-night, when the Core can go, listen and learn about some tenet of the faith, not just about youth ministry.
- Seek out opportunities to affirm the Core, especially in front of the teens and parish community. Let them know that their role is important and appreciated.
- Encourage Core Members to have a spiritual director.
- Have fun as a team! Plan a surprise social night for the Core.

Balancing the time between ministering to teens and ministering to the Core can be difficult, to say the least. We must also realize, however, that the stronger the Core is, the more teens will be reached, so in essence when we strengthen our Core ...we ARE strengthening our teenagers.

“The central point of the great challenge of the transmission of the faith to young generations is to offer them the Lord’s friendship and love that He has for them, in the church.”

– Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

BASIC CORE TRAINING TOPICS

Whether it happens at a national Life Teen training, a Empower Training for Core Members, or on a parish level, there are four basic topics that all Core Members need training in. Below is an overview of these four topics:

WHAT IS LIFE TEEN

This session will address the mission of Life Teen as well as your personal mission for your youth ministry program. We have a variety of tools for you to use to share the mission of Life Teen:

- Check out Why Life Teen? (lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos/why-life-teen/)
- Core Handbook: 10 Things Every Core Member Should Know – We strongly suggest purchasing one book for every Core Member so that they are able to understand the fullness of Life Teen at their parish and as a movement of the Holy Spirit
- Encourage your Core to read chapter 1 “About Life Teen” to understand the 5 pillars of the Life Teen movement

WHAT IS CORE?

- Check out the “A Core Member Is...” lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos/core-member-core-recruitment-video/
- Encourage Core to read chapter 3 “Core Identity” in Core Handbook: 10 Things Every Core Member Should Know

- Life Teen Core Values Retreat - This is a great retreat to help Core Members understand fully the core values of the Life Teen movement

WHAT IS A LIFE NIGHT?

This session will cover the basics of a Life Night: Gather, Proclaim, Break and Send.

- Check out the Life Night: Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send training video in the Training page on lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos
- Encourage your Core Members to reach Chapter 8: Core Skills in Core Handbook: 10 Things Every Core Member Should Know. This helps explain the breakdown of a Life Night from Gather to Proclaim and from Break to Send

RELATIONAL MINISTRY

This session should cover the importance of relational ministry, how to do it and safe environment training for your diocese. Have the Core come up with creative ways to reach out to the teens of the community.

- Encourage your Core Members to reach Chapter 9: Core Outreach in Core Handbook: 10 Things Every Core Member Should Know. This helps explain the importance of Relational Ministry in a Life Teen ministry
- Check out the Relational Ministry training video lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

This session should explain the importance of small groups in Life Nights and retreats. It should also give practical tools to help facilitate small groups.

- Check out the Small Group Facilitation training video on lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos

Additional training videos are online to help train your Core Team on a variety of topics ranging from pastoral care to understanding youth culture to presenting to teens.

Check out lifeteen.com/cym/training-videos for some fantastic training videos to keep your Core Team trained and empowered to minister to your high school teens.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

One of the most common questions is what are the responsibilities and time commitment required to be on Core. Youth ministry is a demanding ministry and it is important that the responsibilities of a Core team member are clearly defined.

The responsibilities of a Core Member will be different in each parish, but generally there are three areas of commitment: to God, to the teens, and to the program.

COMMITMENT TO GOD - A Core Member must first and foremost have a commitment to God, the Church, and their spiritual growth. They need to have an active prayer life, frequent the Sacraments, and continue to grow in their understanding of the Church and her teachings. People serving as Core Members must be willing to live in accord with the teachings of the Church. Core Members do not need to be perfect, but they do need to be striving for holiness.

COMMITMENT TO THE TEENS - This ministry demands a willingness to dive into the lives of young people. A Core team member must be involved in relational ministry with the teens - willing to connect with teens not only socially but spiritually as well. This commitment lies at the heart of everything we are at Life Teen.

COMMITMENT TO THE LIFE TEEN MINISTRY - Finally it is important that Core Members work as a team with the youth minister to provide quality ministry to teens. This includes being present every Sunday, helping to plan Life nights and retreats, and being present and involved with other weekly activities. Although there are significant time commitments, this ministry should never supersede a Core Member's primary vocation to family.

Core Covenants are an effective way to hold Core Members accountable to these commitments. Allow them to have a copy of a Core Covenant and to take time praying about it before they sign and return it. It is a good idea to have Core Members renew their commitment to the ministry each year. See the appendix for a sample "Core Covenant".

RUNNING CORE MEETINGS

As a general rule of thumb, a Core Team that prays as long as they plan is stronger. We encourage that if you are holding an hour long meeting every week that you pray before the Blessed Sacrament for 30 minutes and then plan for 30 minutes. When your entire Core Team is discerning of the same Spirit, planning runs smoother and your time doubles in its effectiveness.

If you have an hour and a half meeting, spend 45 minutes in prayer and 45 minutes planning. Take the Life Night that you are planning before the Lord and ask Him to clarify what He desires of this night for your teens. We must remember that, "I can do all things through God who strengthens me." Phil 4:13.

Prior to any Core Meeting you have with your team, do the following:

- Confirm meeting 3 days prior with your Core team via phone calls, email, text message or Facebook message
- Copy Life Night planning guide to hand out to your Core team
- Read through the entire Life Night so you are familiar with it
- Create an agenda

Life Teen advises holding weekly Core meetings to evaluate, plan and prepare for your Life Nights. When you hold Core meetings less often, your evaluation of previous Life Nights will become less effective and honest.

You will forget situations from week to week and the nights will grow stagnant verses strengthen and improve. If weekly meetings are not possible, monthly or bi-monthly Core meetings can work as well (you might just need to rely more on emails and other means of communication).

Many youth ministers gather with their Core prior to the Life Night to review future and current Life Nights. At the close of the Life Night they gather to clean up, evaluate and then pray. Whatever works for your teams schedule is what you need to do. Be flexible for your Core.

Please utilize the "Sample Core Team Meeting Agenda" available from your Life Teen Coach.

At your weekly Core Meeting you will want to:

- Pray
- Evaluate the past Sunday's Life Night
- Review the upcoming Sunday's Life Night schedule and plan
- Plan the Life Night 2 weeks ahead
- Review any other calendar items

By planning your Life Nights 2 weeks ahead you will have more time to pray and make necessary preparations such as teen witness talks, promotion, skits, props, decorations, food and video. The more time you have to prepare, the more participation and enthusiasm you will see in your teens.

MAINTAINING AND SUSTAINING CORE

Once you have a Core team established, you want to do certain things to maintain and sustain them in the ministry. Here are a few suggestions on what you can do to communicate, affirm and support your Core team over time.

BE GENEROUS WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

Recognize the ordinary things your Core Members do.

FACILITATE “OUTSIDE” ENCOURAGEMENT

When someone compliments a Core Member, ask them to write a letter of encouragement to the Core Member and/or the Pastor.

GIVE AWAY PRAISE

Give “minister of the month” awards. Find out how leaders are ministering and highlight “I overheard” awards. Mail hand written notes to Core Members highlighting their strengths and their spirit.

DESIGN ENJOYABLE LEADER MEETINGS

Begin with a positive atmosphere. Keep it moving. Delegate responsibilities. Make faith development a priority over training (but still train).

CREATE TIME TO PLAY!

Create a play day for your Core team. Take a Life Night off or do a Core appreciation Life Night that the teens help create and put on.

COMMUNICATE WELL

Email details about upcoming Life Nights and events. Remind them of any meetings or rehearsals that are coming up. Include the evaluation of the past Life Night. Announce any birthdays of teens or Core Members coming up. Affirm and communicate!

CORE SUPPORT

This is usually a married couple who will support the Core Members by having a once a month dinner or prayer night at their home for the Core team. They will, in a sense, be spiritual support for the Core and take part of the burden off of you as the youth minister. Core Support needs to be willing to minister to the Core and offer support beyond the once a month gathering.

CORE RETREAT

Life Teen provides an annual Core retreat resource for a reason. Use it to keep your Core personally and spiritually on the path God has for them. Remember, they can't give to the teens what they don't have themselves.

COMMUNICATE CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

Surprised people aren't always happy people. As things change (and they will) make them clear and known

GIVE THEM ACCESS TO YOUR LIFE

Relationships are the number one way to keep people involved. Be vulnerable and be able to be honest when things are hard and you need them. Remember, you must lean on your Core if you want them to lean on you.

