

maximizing stewardship

Benevolence Ministry Development

Why a financial benevolence Ministry? What's the end goal (to get them off your back OR give them a hand up with love, discipleship and assistance?)

Qualifiers to receive assistance:

- All personal resources exhausted
- Unable to obtain a job or 2nd job
- No family assistance available
- Faithful to have done their part

Policies for members, attenders, staff, non-members and transients

What expenses will the program pay?

What expenses will not be paid?

Limits for benevolence (determined by church ministry budget or limits per family)

Types of Assistance

1. On-the-spot gift cards
2. Major Financial Assistance
3. Hands-On Coaching with Discipleship

Gift Cards

1. Make color copy of government ID to retain
2. Write reason for requested gift card(s)
3. Make 4 phone calls: w/ local Law Enforcement, community assistance organization and 2 nearby churches: Are they wanted by law enforcement – advise police they are on your property if “yes”, but do not attempt to restrain them. Have they already been served by another org or church?
4. Document Dollar Amount of Gift Cards Given with names of persons handing out the cards plus date and time. Note: Person receiving gift cards must match ID provided and recorded. Have two-person rule for all “stranger” gift card transactions including interview, ID check and record keeping, handing out cards and logging transactions (w/ serial numbers if desired).
5. If possible, make all transactions in plain view of recorded security camera.
6. Did someone ask the person about their spiritual journey. Be ready to present the gospel if accepted. Record verbal decision for Christ in gift card log. If available, invite to discipleship for materially poor as appropriate.
7. Covenant not to sue signature on back of one-page request form. Signed?

Major Requests

What information will be required for requests over a pre-determined dollar amount?

Proof of identity, income & assets verification, signature with covenant not to sue or agreement to binding arbitration.

Will membership, giving record, small group or attendance be verified?

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Have they asked for assistance in the past? What happened?

Did they follow-through on their end with recommended discipleship and recommended actions?

Interview Questions:

What self-help have they taken, how long have things been going this way, from whom have they requested assistance?

Do they have any family nearby?

Application Documents

Does the benevolence application state in writing that no promises are being made by completing the application or coming to an interview? Is there a place for them to sign the agreement with a copy kept on record?

Does the application list local community assistance resources for food, temporary housing, medical care and job training?

Program Policy Considerations

What written policies are in place for not giving cash directly to the applicant?

What's the process for gift cards? Who is authorized to give hand out? Tracking required?

What is the policy for a "NO" response to their request, while still showing love and respect?

Who can serve on the benevolence team? Qualifications and training required? Are ministry team members trained to be familiar with nearby community organizations & resources?

Who will follow-up with applicants and when?

Is gift card inventory checked periodically and verified with cards given vs cards ready to be given. Are new gift cards logged into inventory? What is the policy when gift card stock does not match inventory log?

Policies for face-to-face meetings (meeting with someone of the opposite sex or different race or origin or skin color? Is there a "two-man" policy to protect staff and volunteers from being accused of wrongdoing in the meeting and a policy for approved meeting locations and hours to meet applicants?

Is the plan of salvation presented in written form to the applicant?

Are the applicant's social media accounts checked to get an independent sense of what is going on?

Recommended Resources

Ministry Specializing in Serving the Materially Poor: www.Chalmers.org Chalmers specializes in church program training, volunteer/staff training and program curriculum.

Informational Website: www.ChurchLawandTax.com

Book: Church Finances: The Complete Guide to Managing Ministry Resources, by Michael E. Batts & Richard Hammar.

Articles: Christianity Today, Benevolence Fund Basics, Giving Help the Right Way, What Your Church Needs to Know about Benevolence Ministries by Frank Sommerville.

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