



# Family Friendly Lions Club Concept “How to Guide”



## Incorporating Families Into Your Lions Club

Incorporating families into your Lions club is an outstanding way to grow your membership and take your club in a fresh direction. It introduces your Lions club to previously hard to reach demographics and will affect everything from the members who will be a part of your club to the types of service activities your club provides. Lions clubs that have converted to this model have found their clubs enriched and strengthened by the addition of family groups to their clubs.

### Benefits Of Families In A Lions Club

Including families in your Lions club has considerable benefits for everyone involved:

- Your Club** benefits by increasing its membership and attracting younger members.
- Your Members** benefit by the infusion of new, enthusiastic members, different service activities and a fresh direction for your club.
- Adult Family Members** benefit by having a volunteer activity that fits their lifestyles and needs for flexibility and offers them more opportunities to spend time with their families.
- Younger Family Members** benefit by being exposed to the importance and joys of volunteering at a young age.
- The Family** benefits by spending more time together and sharing the volunteer experience.
- Your Community** benefits by having more members involved in activities to help meet community needs.
- Lions Clubs International** benefits by the legacy of volunteerism being created through family centered Lions clubs, which can help grow Leo and Lions clubs well into the future.

## What is a Family?

As defined by the Vanier Institute, family is:

***“Any group of two or more people that consider themselves to be a family: parents, children, siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and any other who consider themselves a family.”***

One of the best attributes of the family concept is that it encompasses a wide range of families, including:

- Nuclear family
- Married, childless couples
- Step family
- Retired couple
- Guardian and child/children
- Grandparents and grandchildren

### Family Concept: A Step by Step Checklist

- Introduce the idea to your club. Explain the Family Concept and how it would impact your club.
- If your club membership is in favor of exploring the idea further, form a committee to explore all the important issues that will impact your club. Set a deadline for the committee to present its findings.
- If the club membership is in favor of proceeding, list goals and create an action plan to implement the necessary changes within your club.
- After the changes have been made and your club has comfortably adjusted to its new schedule, plan and implement activities to promote the family friendly club.

## Where to Begin

Even with its many benefits, the concept is not right for every club. In order to successfully implement the family friendly club concept, you need the acceptance and enthusiasm of your entire membership. Before proceeding, make sure you thoroughly understand, and are prepared to make, the changes necessary to foster families within your Lions club.

There are several issues that need attention before adopting the family friendly club concept. The form in the back of this guide can help you plan your new club format. After completing the form on page 9, you may find that introducing the family friendly club concept is a very natural fit for your club.

**Club Meetings:** Club meetings would need to be altered so that they offer a hospitable environment for families and still be productive. Some considerations include:

- Club meetings will need to take place at a time that is convenient for families to be involved.
- The meeting location will need to be appropriate for children.
- Traditional sit down dinner meetings would not necessarily be conducive to meetings with younger children. Consider something more casual, such as a buffet or pot-luck type of meal.
- Meetings would need to be shorter.
- While children would be part of the meeting, their attention spans are such that childcare and alternative activities will be needed to keep them interested and allow the adults to finish the business at hand.

**Service Activities:** Club service activities would need to be family-friendly. The following elements are generally NOT conducive to family-centered service activities:

- Those that require involvement of the entire family all of the time.
- Mixing families with young children with community agencies with small children (supervision becomes an issue).
- Fixed, recurrent assignments.
- Single function tasks that cannot be broken down.
- Projects that take place over several hours may not be appropriate for families with young children.
- Projects that have a great deal of physical movement may not be suitable for senior citizens.

**When considering activities, keep the following in mind:**

- Is it a fun, hands-on opportunity for children?
- Does the experience allow for multiple skills, talents and knowledge?
- Is the schedule flexible? Can more than one family be involved at one time?
- Will the family work together and will they be able to share the experience?
- Do the activities have a direct impact on the community?

**Projects that DO work well for family involvement include:**

- Lions Clubs International Youth Programs
- Other community children's activities – scouting, sports, schools, etc.
- Helping senior citizens
- Working with the homeless
- Literacy projects
- Environmental projects
- School sporting events
- Teen babysitting clinics

These projects are available in most communities.

**Leadership:** To help facilitate the family friendly club concept, it would be helpful to add a few leadership positions within your club, such as the Service Event Coordinator, who schedules families for service activities and the Family Coordinator, who is responsible for setting up activities and childcare for children during meetings.

**Legal/Insurance Issues:** When involving children in community service activities, it is wise to investigate local child labor laws and acts. It is also important to review any insurance liabilities and increase insurance coverage, if necessary.

Also, when involving children in volunteerism activities, it is important to perform background checks on the adults that will be participating in activities with children. Local officials should be consulted about the best course of action regarding how to proceed.

**Fiscal Responsibilities:** In addition to the potential increased insurance costs as mentioned above, other financial considerations include the possible cost of childcare during meetings and changing the dues structure to offer a family discount (dues should not be levied on minor children).

**Reporting:** Reporting the activities of the club will be similar to that already used by other Lions clubs. You'll want to keep track of which family members participated in activities.

**Recognition:** As with other Lions club members, family club members appreciate being acknowledged for their hard work and dedication to your club. However, you might consider some different types of recognition for family members, including:

- Certificates
- Coupons/discount cards for local restaurants
- Inclusion in public relations materials
- Special meals and gatherings
- Unexpected notes of appreciation
- Recognition during club meetings
- Holiday cards
- Sporting event tickets
- Movie tickets

**Continuing the Legacy:** As younger members grow up with the club, having learned the importance of volunteering, it is important to have a way of continuing their involvement. If your club does not yet sponsor a Leo club, this would be a very natural progression for older children. From there, young members can consider involvement in a Campus Lions Club or New Century Lions Club.

### **Making the Necessary Changes**

Once you've determined that your club would like to try instituting the family friendly club concept, you need to develop an action plan and timeline for implementing the necessary changes. An action planner is included in this guide to help with this step.

### **Marketing the New Club Structure**

While you adjust your club structure to accommodate families, you will need to make plans to market this new endeavor to the community. Some ideas for promoting families in your Lions club include:

- Plan a Family Involvement Event where prospective families can interact with current members (see next section for planning details).
- Invite interested families to "try out" the club by participating in a service activity to see if the club is a right fit for them.
- Educate your members about the family concept and how to effectively invite new families into your Lions club.
- Write an article or place an advertisement in local government, school, church, and community group newsletters.
- Write and distribute news releases about the club changes (see example at the end of this guide).
- Publicize your service activities to increase awareness about your club.

### **Planning a Family Involvement Event**

A Family Involvement Event is an outstanding opportunity to introduce new community members to your club and promote the family concept. Similar to hosting a membership night or dinner, a Family Involvement Event opens your club to a large number of interested individuals at one time.

**Set the Date/Time:** You will need at least six weeks to properly plan, make necessary arrangements and effectively promote the event. When selecting a date, make sure it does not fall on the same date as a competing event – a school fun-fair, community festival, etc. Keep in mind that weekend days are particularly hectic for today's busy families and consider holding your event over several hours so that people can drop in at their convenience. Holding the event on Friday afternoon-early Friday evening might be a good alternative for many families. It's not a school night and the event would not be competing with weekend activities.

**Find a Location:** If your club has its own meeting space, where to hold your event is not an issue (providing it's large enough to accommodate families and children). If you need to find a space, look into community center multi-purpose rooms, school gymnasiums, church social rooms, etc. While, some rental facilities will offer a discount to non-profit groups, weekends are typically booked way in advance at full price for parties and weddings. A Friday afternoon/evening event might be a good option for a rental facility.

**Plan Event Activities:** Since this is a family-centered event, lengthy speeches and testimonials would not be appropriate. An open-house type event might work best. Consider having stations that families can rotate around, such as:

- ❑ **Sign In/General Club Information:** It is important to have a sign-in sheet to capture the name, address and phone number of every family in attendance for future reference. You might also want to ask attendees how they heard about the Family Involvement Event. Have your club's brochure and fact sheet available, as well as some publications from Lions Clubs International (including a few copies of THE LION Magazine). Also have information regarding the family concept and how it will work. If your club has a video, it can be shown at this station. Have a gregarious member available to answer questions and solicit discussion about your club.
- ❑ **Club Activities:** Have photos of club activities on display (either posted or scrapbook-style), have a knowledgeable Lion sharing anecdotes about club projects, people who've been helped by your club, etc. If your club will be pursuing new activities through the family concept, highlight those activities at this station. Consider making a sign or display that shows the number of people your club has served over the years.
- ❑ **Presentation:** Have a short PowerPoint or similar presentation prepared about the family concept and your club. Allow time for questions and answers.
- ❑ **Registration:** Have membership applications available for those who would like to apply on-site. If they aren't ready to commit at this time, be sure to get their name and number for follow-up, answer any questions they may have and invite them to your next club meeting. It is also a good idea to have a service activity scheduled close to the Family Involvement Event so that families can sign up to participate and get a first-hand look at your club in action.
- ❑ **Kids' Corner:** Have a variety of fun activities available for children – such as coloring pages and crayons, puzzles, blocks, a simple craft project, etc. A club member that loves to read aloud can have a story area. If your budget allows, consider hiring a children's entertainer or face painter. Another suggestion is to engage children in a service activity, such as putting together food baskets for people in need or something similar. Have plenty of volunteers available to supervise activities.

- Refreshments:** The time and duration of your event will determine your refreshments. If you have an event over a mealtime, be sure to include some more substantial offerings. If you have an open-house type event, make sure the food doesn't require the extensive use of utensils.

**Physical Arrangements/Decorations:** When setting up the room, be sure to have tables and chairs available at strategic locations to encourage families to visit with one another. Have tables and chairs available in the children's activity area for comfort. Consider having plastic bags available for participants to carry literature and their children's projects home. Keep decorations simple and festive.

**Greeters:** Have club members stationed at the door to welcome participants and explain the set up. Have other members float from station to station to encourage interaction, answer questions and promote a welcoming atmosphere.

**Promoting the Event:** Once you have your date, location and activities planned, you'll want to invite people to attend. There are several ways to do this:

- Begin by asking current club members to list families they feel would be interested in attending. Issue personal invitations to those families.
- Encourage your members to issue invitations to families they encounter throughout the community. Print invitation flyers for members to carry with them.
- Post flyers in area businesses.
- Ask local schools to include flyers in student backpacks (they will often do this for non-profit groups) or ask to include information in the school's monthly newsletter.
- Post information in community, church and other organization bulletins or newsletters.
- Include the information on your club's web site.
- Purchase ad space in the local newspaper.
- Send a news release to local newspapers, television and radio stations to have the event listed on the community calendar. (See examples on pages 13 and 14.)
- For an additional incentive, hold a raffle eligible to all families attending. The prize could be dinner at a local restaurant and movie tickets for a family of four (or some other family-centered activity). Publicize the raffle in all your communications regarding the event.

**After the Event:** Follow up immediately with families that indicated interest in your club or signed up to participate in a service activity. Consider pairing a new family with a current member's family to help them transition into the club, much like a sponsoring Lion would.



## Family Involvement Event Timeline

**Six Weeks Prior:** Set date, time and location; begin planning activities

**Five Weeks Prior:** Finalize activities; create drafts of promotional materials and invitations; create invitation list; create detailed responsibility list with deadlines

**Four Weeks Prior:** Distribute media materials, flyers and invitations; begin creating displays for event

**Three Weeks Prior:** Continue working on event arrangements and displays; encourage members to invite families to attend; follow up with media contacts

**Two Weeks Prior:** Reconfirm all arrangements; finalize all details

**Week of Event:** Finish last-minute items; hold an outstanding, successful event!

## Resources

The following resources will be helpful as your club adapts to inviting families into your Lions club.

- Pocket-Size Membership Application (ME-6B) – Contains everything needed to invite new members into your club
- Club Public Relations Chairperson’s Guide (PR710) – Filled with helpful information regarding public relations and samples of PR materials
- Orientation Guide (ME-13) – This publication will help you plan and conduct effective new member orientations

# Family Friendly Lions Club Concept Planning Form

Current

Proposed

Club Meetings \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time/ \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Format \_\_\_\_\_

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Service Activities \_\_\_\_\_

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Leadership \_\_\_\_\_

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Childcare \_\_\_\_\_

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Insurance \_\_\_\_\_

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Financial Concerns \_\_\_\_\_

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Marketing \_\_\_\_\_

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# Family Friendly Lions Club Concept Action Planner

Item \_\_\_\_\_

Priority: \_\_\_\_\_ Timeframe: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Family Friendly Lions Club Sample News Releases

**Example 1:** Promote Family Friendly Lions Club Concept to media

### **Lakeside Lions Club Offers Volunteer Opportunities for Families**

The Lakeside Lions Club is now offering an excellent opportunity for families to become involved together in community service. The club is now welcoming family groups to become a part of their organization. This new concept allows families to spend quality time together volunteering on community projects as members of Lions Clubs International.

The Lakeside Lions Club has made changes in its meeting structure and club activities to encourage family involvement. "We're very excited about the opportunity for more families to become involved in our club," said Patty Marshall, Lakeside Lions Club President. "Research shows that families that volunteer together have stronger family bonds, and organizations such as ours benefit from creating a legacy of service beginning with the younger generation."

For more information about the Lakeside Lions Club and their family concept, contact Membership Chairperson Jack Thomas at 555-1234.

The Lakeside Lions Club has been serving the community for more than 43 years. It is actively involved in community projects such as the Lakeside Food Bank, collecting used eyeglasses for those in need in developing countries and offering sight and diabetes screenings at the Lakeside Township Health Fair. The club recently raised funds for the renovation of the playing fields and playground at Jefferson Park.

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## **Example 2: Promote Family Involvement Event**

### **Lakeside Lions Club Holding Family Involvement Night**

The Lakeside Lions Club is holding a Family Involvement Night to introduce community members to the volunteer opportunities available through its club. The event will be held on Friday, May 14 from 4:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. at the Lakeside Lions Club Hall, 300 W. Jefferson Street.

The club recently made significant changes to its meeting time and structure as well as its service activities to encourage the involvement of families. "Bringing family groups into our club is an exciting change for us," said Patty Marshall, Lakeside Lions Club president. "The Family Involvement Night gives us the opportunity to introduce our club to families within the community and showcase our excellent volunteer activities."

The event will have information about the Lakeside Lions Club, multi-media presentations, refreshments and activities for children, including an appearance by local singer and storyteller Mary McGuire. "It will be a fun as well as educational event for every member of the family," said Marshall. Families that participate in the event will be eligible for the drawing of a family entertainment package, including a restaurant gift certificate and movie theater tickets for a family of four.

For more information about the Lakeside Lions Club's Family Involvement Night, contact Membership Chairperson Jack Thomas at 555-1234.

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