

Leader's Guidelines for First Family Group Meetings



At Formation of Groups

1. You will be given the names of the people in your group. Not all of these people may be present. In order for you to complete a correct list you need to confirm Christian and surnames, children's names, addresses and phone numbers.

You may like to add to this the birthdays, and in the case of children, dates of birth. A copy of this list is to be given to the Co-ordinators and each family in the group at your first planning meeting.

2. During this first introduction it will be necessary to set a date for your first planning meeting. Volunteer your own home for this first function and suggest everyone bring their diaries and a plate for supper afterwards.

The First Planning Meeting

1. Have name tags. After everyone arrives, invite each person to introduce themselves by taking turns to tell a brief story (eg. years married, number of children, where they've come from, how long in the parish, why they've decided to join a Family Group etc.) The leaders could start, and set a light tone. Humour is allowed!
2. Next is to start planning activities and this is where you need diaries. It is recommended the first one is for families and should take place as soon as possible; perhaps a picnic or barbecue. The second function could be for adults only. It is a good idea to alternate family/adult functions. Remember that right from the start you may never find a date that will suit everyone, so you just have to settle on something.



3. No minutes are taken, but it is a good idea to ask someone in the group to take notes of dates and venues, including who is responsible for organising each function so that a list can be made for later circulation to the members.
4. **Leaders do not organise all the functions.** Families can be asked to volunteer taking responsibility for organising the outings in turn. If no one volunteers you can always ask "Would you like to organise it, John?" This works quite well, especially if John suggested a certain function.

Two solo parents or two families might like to team together to organise something. It is not a rule that everyone must organise a function; there are exceptions such as with the elderly, disabled, those going through a stressful time etc.

5. With solo parents, singles, or senior citizens it's an idea to try to arrange transport by other members of the group to and from events.
6. **All functions are to be low cost.** It's best to gear any function involving money to the lowest common denominator so that nobody misses out due to funds.

7. **A family weekend away** is strongly recommended during the first 6 months. This is one of the best means of bonding the group. There are many inexpensive venues available that allow self-catering which cuts down on cost considerably. A list of these venues can be obtained from your Co-ordinators.



8. Your planning can take you to the end of the year or perhaps the next 6 months. Most groups find it impractical to have anything during the Christmas break. However a late January function to get the New Year going does work very well, followed, perhaps, by a February planning meeting for future functions.
9. Most groups like to have an annual home Mass if their Priest is willing and able. Don't be too quick to plan your first home Mass as it is necessary to be sensitive to the non-Catholics, but when you do you'll find it is the best attended function.
10. Your group may like to begin a 'family' photo album/diary of events. One way to do this might be by asking members to take it in turn to write-up the functions.