

# A Leader's Guidebook

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## for a Connected Ministry

GINA MCCLAIN



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Based on a work at [www.ginamclain.com](http://www.ginamclain.com).



## What's the Problem?

You're a ministry leader with a ministry that just took a turn you didn't expect. One week you're running your ministry like you always have. Preparing for weekly experiences, connecting with volunteers, looking ahead toward upcoming events. It was ministry as usual. Though it's a rare day when you feel like you've got it all together, you (at least) have your head wrapped around things.

Then your senior leader pulls you into a meeting and makes an announcement you never expected. We're cancelling all services and events for the next few weeks. The pandemic is growing and the best response is to eliminate public gatherings.

Suddenly conversations and planning shifts from in-person gatherings to online venues. Though your church has leveraged online resources to reach your community, it's never been the primary avenue. Now it is. And you feel very unprepared.

So you shift gears and start communicating with your people. You put together a short-term plan to connect with your kids, students and families via online platforms and you brace yourself to ride this thing out.

But a few weeks turns into... well, more than a few weeks. With every news update you read it's hard to know if this thing will last another month or even longer. You're working crazy odd hours just trying to put together content and resources to keep volunteers and families connected.

And though you're doing everything you know to do. There's something nagging in the back of your brain wondering if there is something better. Something that takes what you're doing and drives it deeper. Something that can connect the online content you provide with the real-life challenges families face.

With each day that passes, you're seeing likes, comments and clicks that tell you people are engaging. But of all the kids or students that call your church 'home', how many are actually showing up online?

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Prior to the pandemic, you could talk to a parent in the lobby and gain an understanding of where they are, the conversations they're having at home and how you might resource them, pray for them, encourage them. But today? How do you know?

In the midst of the pandemic, those opportunities don't exist.

You have this idea that personally connecting with each family would give you insight into how they're doing, what they need and how you can pray for them. But that list is a mile long. You could spend your entire "shelter in place" time just making those phone calls.

And with a family's reality changing dramatically one week to the next, how can you connect with each frequently enough to know? Personal connection is the key but the task feels insurmountable.

**Personal connection is the only way to know the needs of your families, connect them with resources and each other.**

But you can't get past it. Personal connection is the only way to know the needs of your families, connect them with resources and each other.

But how? Is it possible to create a system that allows you to accomplish this level of connection?

The answer is yes. And we want to help.

The Leader's Guidebook for a Connected Ministry provides a framework and resources you need to establish that system. From volunteer role descriptions, to scripts, to recommended platforms, this Guidebook will help you create deeper connections with the families and volunteers you lead. In fact, it holds the potential to create momentum as you approach the weekend when you get to open your doors again.

***Stop wondering if your online game plan is working. Start building a framework that turns the tide on disconnection in your ministry.***

# Step 1: Build Your Team

To get the ball rolling, this may be the EASIEST step you take! Great news, right?

How is it the easiest? Because there's a good chance you already have a lot of this in place. But we want to show you a different way to look at it.

You have a team of volunteers. In fact, you've been in touch with them during this time. Checking in, encouraging them, and praying for them. You may have even invited them to check on the kids or students they lead. That's great!

The following will build on what you have. It's a basic structure to help you visualize your span of care within your ministry. We'll call this your Volunteer Care Structure. It might look a lot like your Coaching Structure, if you already have one. If you don't... that's okay. This will set you up to build one when the doors of your church open again. And care for your people will increase exponentially.

**A Coaching Structure is a fancy way of referring to a layer of volunteer leaders you empower to train and equip your volunteer team. For more information about how to build a Coaching Structure, visit [ginamcclain.com/free-resources](http://ginamcclain.com/free-resources).**

The structure is based on how many people someone can reasonably and meaningfully know. We have a limit to the number of people we can know about their journey, know their challenges, know what needs they have or how they might meet the needs of others. So, let's set up a structure that sets a reasonable limit from the beginning.

The structure includes the following volunteer roles:

- Connection Coach
- Family Connection Volunteer
- Data Entry Volunteer

## Connection Coach

This is a high-level volunteer that is good at leading people. They're a natural networker and good at helping people see the 'bigger picture'. They are empathetic yet good at keeping a cool head in intense moments, communicate well up the chain and simply want to make the people around them better.

*Again, if you already have a coaching structure in place, these may be the people that transition to being a Connection Coach in this season.*

## Family Connection Volunteer

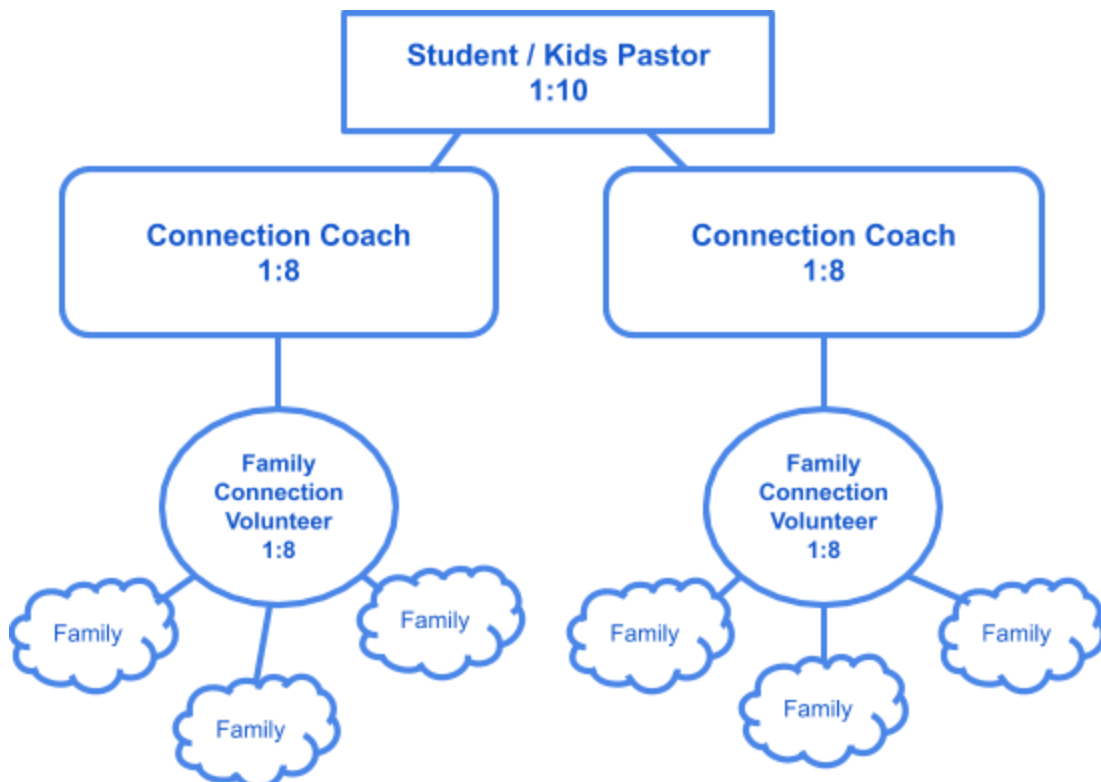
This is a volunteer that has a heart and passion for kids, students and families. Empathy is a known trait and they show a genuine interest in the next generation. Listening skills are high and they view kids, students and families as people to love, not problems to solve.

*If you already have a Small Group Leader structure established, then this role easily translates. The key change to this role is the SGL is intentional about checking in with the kid/student AND the parent.*

## Organizational Chart

Below is a visual of how each role works together.

- Ministry Leader = 1:10 ratio / The Ministry Leader leads ten Connection Coaches. When the number exceeds 10 consider introducing another layer of Coaches (ie Senior Coach) to reduce the number of people for which you are caring.
- Connection Coach = 1:8 ratio / The Connection Coach leads eight Family Connection Volunteers.
- Family Connection Volunteer = 1:8 ratio / The Family Connection Volunteer is responsible for the care of eight kids/students and the parent.



## Role Descriptions

This is where we see a slight departure from our volunteer role descriptions when our primary avenue of connection depended on a live gathering. Covid 19 has changed the dynamic. In-person is replaced with online. Circles now gather around a screen rather than a carpet. Conversation occurs via text than face-to-face.

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*Our best adjustment  
is to re-recruit our  
team to a new role.  
One where intentional  
connection is the  
primary goal.*

## Connection Coach Role Description

### WHAT'S THE WIN?

The Coach's primary responsibility is to lead a team of 8 Family Connection Volunteers. As a coach, we need you to both manage and shepherd the volunteers in your care. You win when a volunteer feels known, equipped, and celebrated so that they can do for their few what you do for them.

### A COACH CONNECTS WITH THEIR FAMILY CONNECTION VOLUNTEERS:

- Connects individually via text, email, FaceTime, mail, etc.
- Connects the team to build and strengthen relationships via Zoom calls, private Facebook group, etc.

### A COACH PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR THEIR FAMILY CONNECTION VOLUNTEERS:

- Listens and knows their personal journey.
- Connects them with practical resources to meet their personal needs.
- Connects them with practical resources to meet the needs of their group.
- Actively prays for each volunteer.

### BEHAVIORS THAT LEAD TO SUCCESS AS A COACH

- *Engaged relationally*- A coach is in touch with their team
  - Make sure to connect with your volunteers on a regular basis.
  - Meet via video at least one time monthly
- *Empowers others*- Coaches give their volunteers the opportunity to use their gifts and be successful
  - Watch for opportunities to lead your volunteers to meet the needs of others
- *Communicates proactively*- A coach makes sure to keep the Ministry Leader informed and prepared to lead through any situation
  - Regularly update your ministry leader on what's happening with kids, students and families.
- *Curious attitude*- A coach is a good Question-Asker, not Answer-Giver.
  - Look for opportunities to ask more questions and help them arrive at the best conclusion.
- *Pursuit of spiritual growth*- Model the spiritual growth that you hope to see in your team.
  - Invest in your personal journey with Christ

# Family Connection Volunteer Role Description

## WHAT'S THE WIN?

The Family Connection Volunteers' primary responsibility is to connect with a group of 8 kids or students and the parent. As a Family Connection Volunteer, we need you to shepherd the kids/students and parents in your care. You win when family feels known, heard and connected. Connected to your church and to each other.

## A FAMILY CONNECTION VOLUNTEER CONNECTS WITH THEIR KIDS/STUDENT:

- Connects with kids/students individually via *(insert the approved platforms you encourage your volunteer to use. See 'Recommended Platforms' section for ideas)*
- Connects the group via *(insert the approved platforms you encourage your volunteer to use. See 'Recommended Platforms' section for ideas)*

## A FAMILY CONNECTION VOLUNTEER CONNECTS WITH THE PARENT:

- Listens to the parent and knows their current challenges.
- Connects the parent with practical resources to address their needs (when possible).
- Connects the parent to the wider community via *(insert platforms you define for group connection. See 'Recommended Platforms' section for ideas.)*
- Actively prays for each family.

## BEHAVIORS THAT LEAD TO SUCCESS AS A FAMILY CONNECTION VOLUNTEER:

- *Engages relationally*
  - Connect with your kids and on a regular basis.
  - Meet via video at least one time monthly
- *Equips for Conversations*
  - Listen for opportunities to resource for quality conversations between parent and kid
- *Communicates proactively*
  - Regularly update your Coach on what's happening with kids, students and families.
- *Curious attitude*
  - You're a good Question-Asker, not Answer-Giver.
  - Families are not problems to be solved, just people to be loved.
- *Pursuit of spiritual growth*
  - Invest in your personal journey with Christ



## Step 2: Assign Them a Group

Okay. This might be one of the more challenging steps you take. But don't worry! You can do this! It just might take a minute.

The idea here is to attach a Family Connection Volunteer with each family. Again, if you have a small group structure in place, then this step is simpler. Each family should already have a Small Group Leader connected to them. You can skip Step 2 and go straight to Step 3!

If you don't have Small Group Leaders assigned the kids or students specifically, then here are some ways to accomplish the task.

“The idea here is to attach a Family Connection Volunteer with each family”

### Database Reports

The first step is to collect data from your church management system (ChMs). Consider the following criteria:

- Kids or students that have checked in eight times in the past 12 months. Considering “monthly is the new weekly” when it comes to church attendance, a family that comes to your church eight times a year would call your church ‘home’.
- Sort the list by:
  - Grade
  - Gender
  - Most consistent service time attended (if applicable)

### Group with a Family Connection Volunteer

For this step, you can sort this out on a Google Sheet, Excel or within your ChMs. Whatever is the best long-term solution for you. The goal is to document the kids/students and parents a Family Connection Volunteer is assigned.

*\*Consider how long you want this information to exist. For example, if you want these connections to extend beyond this “shelter in place” season then it should be documented in your ChMs. So, consider a way to integrate this information for reference beyond this season.*

Once you group kids/students in groups of eight, you have a clear picture of how many Family Connection Volunteers you can recruit. The beauty of this system is... as your volunteers begin to connect with parents, you'll discover more parents willing to serve in this role. *People want to be seen and known. We want to feel connected. And when someone experiences connection, it's easier to see how they might provide connection for someone else.*

## Ready to Roll

Once you have kids/students and parents assigned, you're ready for the next step!

## Step 3: Give Them a Script

Sometimes the biggest fear can be setting someone free to represent your ministry. Even the most well-intentioned person can come across in a way they don't intend. Our aggressively friendly ones might come across a little too... well, aggressive. While our more sensitive volunteers may communicate so vaguely, you're not sure the call was worthwhile.

Rather than wonder if your team is equipped well for these calls, go ahead and give them a script. In fact, help them understand the progression of contacts that leads to the most productive connection.

### Text

"Hello \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from *(name of your church)*. I'm part of a team that's checking in on all of our families to see how you're doing. We know this season has introduced challenges for many of our families. We just want to make sure you are doing well. I'm going to give you a call in a few days. If you need anything before then, please let me know."

### Phone Call

"Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ from *(name of your church)*. I'm calling to introduce myself. I sent you a text a few days ago. It was great to hear from you. We know this season of "shelter in place" has introduced a lot of challenges for families. Do you mind if I ask, how is your family?"

### Voicemail

"Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ from *(name of your church)*. I sent a text a few days ago. As part of a volunteer team checking in on our families, I want to let you know we are here and want to know how we can help in this season. Feel free to return my call or text this number. Looking forward to hearing from you."

Here are some key thoughts around these phone calls!

- Be yourself. They want someone who is real, not perfect.
- Ask questions that invite the parent to share how they're doing.
- Give the space to share what they'd like to share. But don't pry.
- Listen for needs that your church could address, then offer help.
- Listen for needs for which you could pray, then offer to pray.

## Step 4: Equip Them to Respond

As Family Connection Volunteers engage in conversations they will discover needs a family is encountering. Anything from financial needs due to job loss, counseling needs due to emotional strain, tutoring needs for kids due to the adjustment to homeschooling or simply community needs due to this unfamiliar "shelter in place" lifestyle.

The variety of needs requires a variety of resources for the Connection Volunteer. But great news! You don't have to create the resources. You only need to curate them.

### Conversation Guides

Parents are navigating conversations that are harder than we realize. From financial strain, job loss, fears around the growing pandemic, or concerns for sick family members, there are a variety of challenging conversations they face. As Connection Volunteers discover topics of concern, they can access a database of guides that can help them.

Consider resources like [Growing Leaders Home Chats](#), [Orange's GoWeekly conversation guides](#), or [Axis resources](#). Create an online location (i.e. Google folder, website, etc) where you can allow your Connection Volunteers access to a variety of tools that can help a parent connect better with their kid around the most relevant conversations under their roof.

### Online Community

#### Let Them Connect

Your families need to connect. For encouragement, empathy and camaraderie.

#### Facebook Group

Maybe you've created that Facebook Group for parents to connect to each other. But we can no longer assume that "if we build it, they will come". They may not come. Maybe they don't see the point. Maybe they haven't discovered it yet. Who knows! Maybe all they need is an invitation to join.

## Online Small Groups

Maybe your church has launched online groups via platforms like churchonline.com or zoom. This is a great way to create ongoing connection for a parent.

The point is, equip your Connection Volunteers with how to connect a parent with these avenues and you set them up for long term connection.

## Let Them Be Generous

Here's another thought! Connection takes on a new level when families are given the opportunity to be generous with each other. If you can successfully connect MORE parents to your online communities, you set them up to help each other in meaningful and practical ways.

## Counseling

This could be a practical need. Don't shy away from it. Just prepare your people for it. Have a list of approved counseling centers/therapists your church would recommend.

## Bill Assist Programs

Let's face it. It's possible your Connection Volunteers will encounter a parent in need. It will serve your team well if they can be prepared. The good news is... someone at your church has knowledge of financial assistance programs that exist in your community. Ask them to put together a one-page document that highlights assistance programs.

# Step 5: Equip Them to Collect

The value of this system is in it's ongoing nature. The game plan is not just a one-and-done phone call. It's a consistent connection where you place a volunteer in the life of every family that will choose to be present through the hard and the not-so-hard. And in today's climate, a family's circumstance can take a dramatic turn in just a few weeks!

So, provide an avenue for your team to document their calls. You can keep track of stories, circumstances and challenges your volunteers are leading through and your families are facing.

You could stick with something simple like a Google Sheet that's shared with the Coach & Family Connection Volunteer. As the information is captured, your Database Volunteer can transfer it to the attendees church database profile.

Or consider adding your Family Connection Volunteer as a user to your church management system with restricted access. Allowing them to document each call directly into the database.

You'll need to decide how you want to collect the information. Just be sure the system you use respects the privacy of everyone involved. Their information and stories are not for public consumption.

## Recommended Platforms

Below are platforms that we have identified for you that are useful for engaging groups of people online. In particular these systems make it possible for members of the group to actively engage with any other member of the group simultaneously. Just like when we meet in person. This is a key consideration when working to establish or maintain a community online.

### Facebook Groups

- Ideal for broad communication with any size group.
- Allows for discussion
- Can be made private
- You can Live Stream in to the group (Note: this is not two way video chat, think one to many)
- Instructions on how to create a group are [here](#)
- Use the "Watch Party" feature to watch a video together (Great for weekend or student services)
- Free

### Group Me

- Excellent tool for smaller groups
- Functions as a real time private chat room
- Works using text, mobile app, and computers
- Free

### Zoom

- Real time video chat
- Private or public
- Two way video chat, all users can see and hear each other
- May be chaotic with groups beyond 10-15
- Free up to 100 users

### Google Hangouts

- Real time video chat

- Private one on one video chat
- Free with a google account

## Security Considerations

Be mindful of security and privacy settings within any of these platforms. Better to take a few minutes to understand security settings than have to explain an unwanted incident later.