

BE THE CHURCH

Building a Thriving

Church Residency Program

A Practical Guide to Developing Future Church Leaders

Launching a Thriving Church Residency Program

Creating a residency program can be a powerful way to raise up new leaders, enrich your ministry, and make a lasting Kingdom impact. This guide is designed to equip your church with the foundational elements needed to develop a successful residency program.

Why Start a Residency Program?

A residency program offers a unique opportunity to invest deeply in emerging leaders. It's a chance to:

- **Cultivate Leadership:** Provide hands-on experience and intentional development for those called to ministry.
- **Strengthen Your Church:** Infuse fresh energy and new perspectives into your existing ministries.
- **Expand Kingdom Impact:** Equip individuals who will go on to serve the broader Church and make a difference for Christ.

We believe God is going to do more than you expect as you pour into the next generation of leaders!

Designing Your Program

A well-defined residency program sets clear expectations and fosters a rich learning environment.

Program Focus

Your residency program should be designed to help participants grow in leadership, ministry, and their personal walk with Jesus. Emphasize opportunities to serve the Church, develop gifts, and build meaningful relationships.

Values Integration

Purpose:

Embed your church values into the culture and structure of the residency.

Example:

- Transformed Followers of Jesus
- Relational Discipleship
- Spirit-empowered Leadership
- Multiplication Mindset
- Biblical Truth

Action Items:

Develop teaching topics, mentorship rhythms, and experiences tied to each value.

Include reflective journaling, team huddles, and projects that embody these values.

Program Structure

Key Components:

- **Duration:** Define the length of the residency (e.g., 8–12 weeks summer, 9-month school year, 2-year leadership track).
- **Weekly Rhythm:** Outline the recurring components of a resident's week:
- **Ministry Placement:** Hands-on experience in a specific ministry area.
- **Class & Discussion:** Focused sessions on leadership, theology, and church values. (e.g., every Wednesday from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM).
- **Mentorship Meeting:** Regular one-on-one time with a designated mentor.
- **Spiritual Formation Practices:** Dedicated time for personal spiritual growth and reflection.
- **Theological Training / Potential Classes:** Old and New Testament Survey, Systematic Theology: Church, Understanding the Trinity, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, Evangelism, Discipleship, Missions, Identity in Christ, Spiritual Gifts, Discovering your Calling, or Preaching and Teaching God's Word.
- **Capstone Project:** A practical ministry initiative or team leadership assignment to apply learning and demonstrate growth.

Resident Expectations

Clearly communicate what is expected of your residents to help them make the most of their experience: Professional Presence: Dress in a way that shows respect for the ministry environment and the people you serve. Casual but put-together.

- **Punctuality:** Be on time, showing you're dependable and honoring those investing in you.
- **Teachable Spirit:** Come ready to learn with a curious and teachable heart.
- **Active Engagement:** Actively take notes, ask questions, and contribute to discussions. Don't just be in the room—engage!
- **Commitment to Learning:** Take any coursework seriously, completing all homework on time.

- **Enthusiasm & Community:** Be excited, have fun, and make friends. Lean into laughter and community.
- **Spiritual Foundation:** Keep Jesus at the center of all you do; serve the Lord with all your heart, mind, and soul.

Ministry Placements & Locations

Define the areas where residents will serve and learn. If your church has multiple locations, consider how residents might engage with different contexts:

- Residents will have a full weekly schedule provided by their ministry manager.
- They might be asked to visit or observe another church location on a Sunday to see how ministry looks across different contexts.

Building a Supportive Environment

Intentional support systems are vital for resident growth and program success.

Mentoring & Supervision

Purpose: Build intentional, relational discipleship into the program.

Plan Includes:

- Assign every resident a personal mentor or coach.
- Provide mentors with a simple guide: check-in prompts, prayer focus, character development goals.
- Include peer-to-peer encouragement opportunities.

Communication & Feedback

Purpose: Keep everyone aligned and equipped.

Include:

- **Orientation Guide:** A comprehensive document outlining what to expect and casting the program's vision.
- **Weekly Communication Rhythm:** Establish consistent communication practices with staff and residents.
- **Evaluations:** Conduct mid-residency and end-of-residency evaluations.
- **Feedback Forms:** Utilize forms for both residents (to provide feedback on the program) and staff (to provide feedback on residents).

Program Support Contacts

Designate key individuals as points of contact for residents. Make it clear that program directors are here to help.

- **Director**
- **Mentor**
- **Ministry Manager**

Getting Started Considerations

Before launching, consider these practical elements to ensure a smooth start.

Application & Selection Process

- How will you recruit potential residents?
- What is your application process (e.g., forms, interviews, references)?
- What criteria will you use to select residents?

Financial & Resource Considerations

- Will the residency be paid, stipend-based, or volunteer?
- Are there funds for resident development (e.g., books, conferences)?
- Will you provide housing assistance or recommendations?

Legal & HR Reminders

- Familiarize yourself with any relevant employment laws or volunteer guidelines.
- Consider background checks for all residents.
- Define roles and responsibilities clearly to avoid misunderstandings.

Next Steps

This guide provides a foundational framework for developing your church's residency program. As you move forward, prayerfully consider the specific needs and resources of your church to tailor a program that will best serve your community and the emerging leaders God is calling.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Here are some common questions churches have when considering or developing a Residency Program.

1. What is the main goal of a Church Residency Program?

The primary purpose is to help emerging leaders grow in leadership, ministry, and their personal walk with Jesus. It provides hands-on experience, intentional development, and aims to equip individuals for lasting Kingdom impact, both within your church and beyond.

2. How long should our residency program be?

The duration can vary based on your church's goals and capacity. Common structures include shorter summer programs (8-12 weeks), a full school year (9 months), or even longer leadership tracks (1-2 years) for deeper development.

3. What does a typical week look like for a resident?

A weekly rhythm generally includes Ministry Placement (hands-on service in a specific ministry area), Class & Discussion (focused teaching on leadership, theology, and values), dedicated Mentorship Meetings, and time for Spiritual Formation Practices.

4. How are residents supported and disciplined throughout the program?

Every resident should be assigned a personal mentor or coach to provide guidance and relational discipleship. Regular check-ins, prayer, and focus on character development are key. Opportunities for peer-to-peer encouragement also build a strong support system.

5. What are the core expectations for residents in the program?

Key expectations typically include professional presence, punctuality, a teachable spirit, active engagement (asking questions, taking notes), commitment to any coursework, enthusiasm, community participation, and keeping Jesus at the center of all they do.

6. Do we need to pay residents or offer stipends?

This is a critical consideration. Residency programs can be unpaid/volunteer-based, offer stipends, or provide a salary, often depending on the program's duration and scope. It's important to define your approach and consider any financial resources needed for resident development or housing.

7. How do we find and select suitable residents for our program?

Establishing a clear Application & Selection Process is vital. This typically involves defining how you will recruit candidates, creating an application form, conducting interviews, checking references, and setting clear criteria for who would be a good fit for your program and church culture.

8. How do we ensure our church's core values are integrated into the residency?

Your church values should be embedded into the program's culture and structure. This can be achieved by developing teaching topics, mentorship rhythms, and experiences that are explicitly tied to each value. Reflective journaling, team huddles, and specific projects can also help residents embody these values.

9. What kind of communication and feedback should we implement?

Effective communication includes providing an Orientation Guide at the start, maintaining a consistent weekly communication rhythm with staff and residents, and conducting mid-residency and end-of-residency evaluations. Using feedback forms for both residents and staff is crucial for continuous improvement.

10. Can residents serve at multiple church locations or ministries?

Yes, if your church has multiple campuses or diverse ministries, residents can gain valuable experience by visiting or observing different contexts. This provides a broader understanding of how ministry operates across various settings.