



MOPPETS
Handbook

Better Moms Make a Better World

MOPS International
exists to encourage,
equip and develop
every mother of
preschoolers to realize
her potential as a
woman, mother and
leader in the name
of Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of MOPPETS

Mothers care deeply about their children. They'll instinctively look to meet their child's needs before thinking about their own. A mom needs assurance about her child's well-being and happiness before she can get the most of her time in MOPS.

The MOPPETS ministry contributes to meeting the needs of children, as well as the needs of their moms. MOPPETS' quality care and biblical teaching impact the entire family.

The MOPPETS ministry provides a caring atmosphere for children which:

- ☉ Provides loving, quality care for each child. Mothers are most vulnerable where their children are concerned, so this care is an excellent witness of Christ's love.
- ☉ Teaches the Bible. MOPPETS programs can provide simple Bible stories or more complex programs that resemble Sunday School. For children too young for a structured program, the opportunity to teach them about the love of Jesus can be utilized whenever possible.

The MOPPETS Team Leader leads a group of talented and special people who directly and indirectly affect the lives of each MOPS mom and her children. A mother is often more open to spiritual teaching for her children than for herself. Often, the success of your MOPS ministry will depend on MOPPETS workers.

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:14



MOPPETS Team Leader Job Description

Personal Characteristics:

- ☉ Demonstrates a growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Because many women and children in MOPS may not have committed their lives to Christ, she is in an excellent position to encourage others to make this decision.
- ☉ Displays sensitivity to needs of young mothers, even if she is not a mother of preschoolers herself.
- ☉ Exhibits a dedication to meeting the needs of children and understands their eternal worth to God.
- ☉ Communicates well with children, peers and older adults, because building relationships with all of these people will be a part of her ministry.
- ☉ Understands what is involved in providing quality childcare to a group of small children.
- ☉ Thinks creatively about how to find and involve many people in a project.

Position Responsibilities:

- ☉ Works with the Chartering Ministry and Steering Team to establish policies and procedures for the MOPPETS program.
- ☉ Recruits MOPPETS workers, either volunteers or paid.
- ☉ Trains and encourages workers.
- ☉ Communicates with MOPS moms who leave their children in her care.
- ☉ Selects appropriate curriculum materials and develops programs and lessons for each class
- ☉ Serves on Steering and attends meetings.
- ☉ Reads the *MOPS Handbook* and the *MOPPETS Handbook*, and understands the vision of MOPS International and her relationship to the MOPS group.
- ☉ Disciples her team members and encourages each member to grow in her relationship to Christ.

MOPPETS Workers

MOPPETS workers are committed to the importance of providing quality child care for the MOPS program. They may be women, men or teenagers. Your MOPS group may pay them for their time, or they may serve as volunteers. Whoever they are, MOPPETS workers should demonstrate a love for young children and an understanding of their eternal worth.

Common position responsibilities include:

- ② Providing loving, safe appropriate care for the children
- ② Following the Chartering Ministry's established policies and procedures under the direction of the MOPPETS Team Leader
- ② Attending MOPPETS meetings and training sessions as required

Workers may be assigned to one class, or may move from class to class, providing a lesson or activity, while others remain as caregivers with a particular group of children. Most MOPS groups designate one person to be the lead teacher in each classroom and assign helpers as needed.

The lead teacher should demonstrate a growing personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to provide spiritual training and lessons for the children under her care. Requiring all MOPPETS workers to be Christians provides a deeper spiritual foundation for outreach to the children, but may create complications if your group decides to use MOPS moms, moms on a waiting list or home schooled children as workers. Consult with your Chartering Ministry to establish responsibilities or requirements for MOPPETS workers.

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I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing
when they, who are so fresh from God, love us.

Charles Dickens

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Building a MOPPETS Team

Recruiting MOPPETS workers is often one of the greatest challenges for a MOPPETS Team Leader. Building this team should not be a single-person effort, but is a project that should involve your entire Steering Team, your Chartering Ministry and possibly your entire MOPS group.

Recruitment is the process by which people catch the vision, get interested, become volunteers and get involved in doing a job. Recruitment doesn't just happen. It is a prayerful process that comes with a plan.

Begin this process by praying as a Steering Team for MOPPETS workers, recognizing that this "behind-the-scenes" team will have an enormous spiritual impact on your group. Pray that the right people would have a willing spirit and a heart for the ministry. Then organize a plan of action as a team, determining where and how you will recruit workers.

While final procedures and guidelines for recruiting and assigning MOPPETS workers will be established in consultation with your Chartering Ministry, here are some suggestions and guidelines to consider as you begin.

Who to look for:

- 🕒 Mothers of older children
- 🕒 Dads
- 🕒 Senior citizens
- 🕒 Teenagers
- 🕒 College students
- 🕒 Women without children
- 🕒 Anyone with a heart for children

Commit to the Lord
whatever you do, and
your plans will succeed.

Proverbs 16:3



Where to look for MOPPETS workers:

- ② **Your Chartering Ministry.** The best place to look for MOPPETS workers is within your ministry. MOPS is an outreach ministry that they, as a body, have committed to, and a place where they can see firsthand the benefits of reaching women and families with the love of Christ. Advertise in bulletins or newsletters, speak to classes or clubs or ask your pastor or ministry leader to publicly address the opportunities for MOPPETS outreach. Review lists of volunteers who have helped or are helping in nursery or Sunday School ministries, if applicable, and approach them specifically.
- ② **Previous Workers.** If you are part of a MOPS group that has been meeting for some time, focus on retaining workers. Contact previous workers who may have left, and ask current workers if they can suggest others who may be interested.
- ② **Students.** Recruit teenagers or local college students. Some schools have early childhood education programs and may be interested in giving their students some “hands on” experience. Post job descriptions in colleges, universities and seminaries, especially in early childhood and education departments.
- ② **Personal Referrals.** Ask Steering Team members and MOPS moms to share the names of people they believe would be good MOPPETS workers and then approach them, explaining that they were recommended personally.
- ② **MOPS Alumni.** Women who have graduated from MOPS appreciate the importance of MOPS. Invite them to offer something back by supporting moms now coming to MOPS.

- ④ **Other MOPS Groups.** If you have multiple MOPS groups in your Chartering Ministry or community, trade MOPPETS time. One group provides volunteers during the other group's meeting time and vice versa.
- ④ **Other Churches and Ministries.** Contact churches or other local ministries without a MOPS group. Employees of Christian ministries in your area may also be interested in reaching out to children.
- ④ **Your Community.** Place announcements on radio stations, advertise in the newspaper and put up fliers. Contact preschools in your area that may have extra staff available during MOPS meetings. Retirement centers and Senior citizen groups also may be interested in spending time with infants and small children.
- ④ **MOPS Moms.** Rotate women in your MOPS group as MOPPETS workers. Provide incentives, such as waiving fees for a MOPS meeting in exchange for one day of help. Some groups assign a Discussion Group to work together in MOPPETS for one meeting per semester or year. This

way the women are still with others they know, and they can enjoy each other's company during the meeting. Consider recording the speaker and make copies available to moms working in MOPPETS.

After consulting your Chartering Ministry's policies, set a ratio of workers and teachers to children. Infant classes usually have no less than one adult for every three infants. For children ages two to six years old, there should usually be one adult for every six to seven children.



Ways to communicate the importance of MOPPETS:

- 🕒 Show a DVD or a photo presentation of MOPPETS in their classrooms.
- 🕒 Use a MOPS International resource, like a DVD or published article.
- 🕒 Prepare and distribute a brochure or flier describing the MOPPETS ministry.
- 🕒 Post pictures of MOPPETS workers and kids on bulletin boards or display them in an album.
- 🕒 Share quotes and stories from MOPS moms about the benefits of MOPPETS.

General recruiting guidelines:

- 🕒 Always consult with your Chartering Ministry before recruiting MOPPETS workers. They may have specific childcare policies and procedures for you to follow.
- 🕒 Interview and screen potential recruits. Request and check references. Ask how applicants interact with and treat children, and follow up on any background issues.
- 🕒 Listen to potential recruits. If someone is not ready to serve or work now, they may be willing to consider it in the future or recommend someone else.
- 🕒 Potential workers may feel inadequate or unqualified to work in MOPPETS. Encourage them with your faith in their abilities. Let them know that you believe they are qualified to do the job, sharing specific qualities you see in them, and explain your training procedures.

A MOPPETS Worker Application is available on the MOPS Leaders' website.



Training MOPPETS Workers

Set clear expectations for each MOPPETS team member. If possible, get together before the first MOPS meeting and hold periodic training meetings throughout the year. Provide both motivation and instruction to build skills and encourage commitment.

Ways to Motivate:

- 🕒 Share testimonies from MOPS moms about the difference MOPS and MOPPETS makes in their families.
- 🕒 Ask workers to tell stories about the joys of helping in MOPPETS.
- 🕒 Provide reports from your MOPS group about the development or positive experiences of children in MOPPETS.
- 🕒 Continually grow awareness and understanding of the importance of the early childhood years.

Once you've recruited a MOPPETS Team, keep them motivated and dedicated through regular encouragement. Well-timed notes of appreciation, a warm smile, small gifts of gratitude—little gestures go a long way. Work with your Steering Team to ensure that workers are recognized in a special way.



Ways to Train:

- ☉ Orient to policies and procedures
- ☉ Share age-level characteristics
- ☉ Share the curriculum and structure of the MOPPETS program
- ☉ Prepare a sample lesson
- ☉ Develop story-telling skills
- ☉ Demonstrate craft ideas
- ☉ Provide ideas for introducing young children to Jesus
- ☉ Demonstrate group games and activities
- ☉ Teach basic first aid
- ☉ Share music and finger plays
- ☉ Train in positive approaches to discipline

Take advantage of local education experts and experienced teachers from your Chartering Ministry, specific MOPPETS materials prepared by MOPS International and information provided by children's curriculum publishers.

At the end of each MOPS year, meet individually with MOPPETS team members to evaluate the MOPPETS program.



Do you make yourself available for your team? Focus on being an encouraging listener, giving suggestions in a thoughtful manner and handling difficult situations with prayer and tenderness. Always follow through with what you have promised.



MOPPETS Policies

Create clear policies for MOPPETS before your MOPS year begins with your Steering Team and Chartering Ministry. This will help the program run smoothly and help eliminate many misunderstandings with MOPS moms. Clearly communicate policies to the MOPPETS team and the moms. Distribute written copies to each person at the beginning of the year and to women and workers who join throughout the year.

You may want to include:

- ☞ Registration
- ☞ Signing children in and out of classrooms
- ☞ Bringing sick children to MOPS
- ☞ Feeding, changing and dispensing medicine
- ☞ Bringing personal items, such as toys, food, bottles
- ☞ Discipline
- ☞ Bringing babies into MOPS meetings
- ☞ Accommodating women who care for other children in their homes
- ☞ Accommodating older children
- ☞ Child abuse


Be aware of legal limitations regarding childcare in your state or area. Develop your policies in accordance with these limits and in line with the guidelines of your Chartering Ministry.



Helping Moms Feel at Home with MOPPETS

Mothers of preschoolers will relax and enjoy MOPS if they know the MOPPETS program is caring for their children in the best possible way. They may require reassurance, since for some moms this will be the first time they are separated from their children. Here are some suggestions for helping MOPS moms feel comfortable with MOPS:

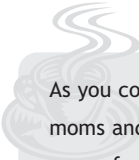
- ② **Show her that you understand.** A mother's most pressing concern is her children. Make her comfortable with your MOPPETS program. Encourage her to leave her child quickly, letting her know she will be summoned if needed. After the meeting, take the time to share stories of her child's experiences or present the craft that the class made. This lets her know that while she was enjoying her time, so was her child.
- ② **Communicate.** At the first MOPS meeting of the year, and whenever MOPS reconvenes after a break, explain the MOPPETS program and policies to the entire group. Provide information about MOPPETS lessons and activities in your MOPS newsletter, if applicable, or in other ways.



Consider special MOPPETS presentations in MOPS meetings. A song by the children in a Christmas meeting, a children's fashion show or special activities together can help moms feel more connected to the MOPPETS program.



- ☉ **Provide practical help.** Clearly mark classrooms. Provide extra policy sheets and registration materials. Be available to answer questions, give directions or help a mom get her child settled in a classroom.
- ☉ **Help moms and teachers get to know each other.** Have all teachers and workers wear nametags.
- ☉ **Create a MOPPETS packet** to give to each mother the first time she comes to MOPS. You may include:
 - Welcome letter from the MOPPETS Team Leader
 - Registration card for each child; requesting name, address, phone, birth date, parents' names, special needs/comments/allergies
 - Medical release form (if mothers are ever off the premises)
 - Introduction to each class and the lesson plan for the year
 - Map of the ministry
 - MOPPETS policies.



As you consider the needs and temperaments of the moms and MOPPETS, consider the special needs of moms facing particular pressures. Single moms, moms having financial or physical problems or moms with stressful personal situations may need extra attention and reassurance that both the mom and the child are welcome at MOPS and will be loved and cared for.



Classroom Activities

Preschoolers are full of energy and easily distracted. A regular schedule and standard activities is needed to keep them engaged throughout the MOPS meeting time. Your plan and schedule for your MOPPETS program will depend on the length of your MOPS meetings, the curriculum you use and the space and resources that are available. Consult with other children's programs in your Chartering Ministry, if applicable, to see how they structure time with preschoolers.

Here are some general ideas for what preschoolers enjoy:

- 🕒 Supervised free play
- 🕒 Play at designated learning centers (play dough, bubbles, etc.)
- 🕒 Singing/music (action songs with motions and finger plays)
- 🕒 Story time
- 🕒 Snacks
- 🕒 Craft projects
- 🕒 Group games

Consider the developmental stages for each age group and plan activities accordingly. A regular routine provides stability, especially for younger toddlers.

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When I pick my two-year-old son up from MOPPETS, he is always so excited to sing the songs he learned and show me the motions that go with them. He gets really into it, and even though I can't always understand the words, I know that the lessons that he hears in MOPPETS are getting through.

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Lively Bible Lessons for MOPPETS is available in the MOPShop.



MOPPETS Curriculum

A MOPPETS curriculum provides lessons and activities that help MOPPETS workers provide an environment where young children can learn and discover more about the love of Jesus.

There are many prepared curriculum options that will make this task easier. Sunday School and Vacation Bible School curricula can be modified to fit the time frame of your MOPPETS program.

If you have a creative and talented team of MOPPETS workers and/or limited finances to spend on prepared curricula, you can plan your own program. Choose a simple theme around which to plan MOPPETS classes. Select a short Bible verse that emphasizes the theme, and use songs and finger plays to teach it. Have the children make a craft to take home which reminds them of the truth they have learned.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts ... talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Deuteronomy 11:18-19



Special Needs Children

Many mothers have children whose needs go beyond the everyday situations of preschoolers. This includes physically challenged, emotionally disturbed and children whose development is delayed for a variety of reasons. These moms need MOPS, perhaps more than any other woman who will come to your group.

How can you welcome and care for a special needs infant or child in MOPPETS? Commit yourselves to accomodating every child, no matter what their needs or requirements. Be prepared to show love and care graciously, letting both the mom and child know that they are welcome. Tact and sensitivity are important.

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As I lived through the daily ups and downs of raising my daughter and meeting her special needs, what encouraged me most was when someone said, ‘I don’t know what to say.’ Also when someone came with tearful eyes and open arms and didn’t say a thing, I was somehow encouraged. When your life is very dark and doesn’t make sense, it’s nice to have someone just stand and shine near you.

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The diversity of special needs situations and disabilities makes it difficult to offer simple answers. Here are some basic suggestions:

- 🕒 If your group pre-registers moms and children for MOPS, include questions on the registration form asking if any child has special needs that caregivers should know about.
- 🕒 Contact moms of special needs children before the first MOPS meeting to clarify the situation and ask about specific needs, such as one-on-one care or symptoms of which to be aware.
- 🕒 Reassure all moms that their children are a joy and not an inconvenience. Explain that you are simply finding out the best way to provide for each child.
- 🕒 Ask the lead teacher in the classrooms with special needs children to call the moms before MOPS starts, as well. This will make the mom more comfortable, knowing that your group really cares.

Ask for a brief medical history of the child's condition and about any emergencies that may occur while the child is in MOPPETS, clarifying what the workers should do.



*Let All the Children Come to Me:
A Practical Guide to Including
Children with Disabilities* by
MaLesa Breeding, Dana Hood
and Jerry Whitworth, Nexgen



Accommodating Older Children

As the number of children being home schooled and the number of MOPS groups meeting in the evening rises, many MOPS groups are faced with the question of what to do with the grade school age children of women attending MOPS. Coming up with creative solutions to meet the needs of moms is a challenge for your Steering Team and Chartering Ministry.

Here are some ideas:

- ☉ If there are several mothers with older children who need to bring them to MOPS, consider adding an additional teacher to your MOPPETS program for children at the grade-school level, with games, snacks and activities for older children.
- ☉ If you are not able to find a volunteer teacher for the school aged children, ask the mothers to take turns teaching the children.
- ☉ Older children are often willing and eager to spend this time helping with the preschoolers in the MOPPETS program. Discuss this with their mothers and check the childcare policies of your Chartering Ministry to make sure this is in compliance with their guidelines/policies.

According the U.S. Department of Education, 1.96 million children were home schooled in 2003. Many more are being raised by single mothers or women whose husbands work in the evening, when children are not in school. As a Steering Team, consider how your group can meet the unique needs of these women.



Discipline

All children need discipline at some point in their growing up, and those in your MOPPETS program are no exception. Perspectives on and parenting styles in discipline vary widely, so clearly explain your discipline policies to the MOPS group, making sure that the mothers have a clear understanding of what is expected of their children while they attend MOPS.

Here are some basic guidelines for you to consider:

- 🕒 Be consistent. Set classroom standards and follow them with every child.
- 🕒 Be observant. Watch for potential problems and/or conflicts and step in when necessary.
- 🕒 Be in control of your emotions. Model good behavior and show your emotions in positive ways.
- 🕒 Don't ignore problems. Deal with problem situations immediately.
- 🕒 If discipline is necessary, be sure that the child clearly understands the issue. Show appreciation of efforts in the right direction. When the incident has been dealt with, it is over. Always follow up with acceptance and love.
- 🕒 Never use physical punishment. Instead, use "time outs," or remove a child from a situation to a safe place where you can gently correct their behavior.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:11



Abuse

Situations may arise in MOPPETS that require diplomacy and God's grace. One of these situations is child abuse—dealing with suspected abuse within the home and the potential of abuse within MOPPETS. Following are guidelines and suggestions for addressing this issue in your MOPS group.

- ☉ Consult with your Chartering Ministry to become familiar with and follow their policies and procedures.
- ☉ Prepare yourself and your team by becoming knowledgeable about child abuse and neglect. Realistically face the possibility that it can and does occur in homes everywhere, with families of various backgrounds.
- ☉ Recognize the signs of physical neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.
- ☉ Become familiar with your state or area's law regarding liability and reporting. Keep a list of local resources and agencies for help if a situation arises.
- ☉ Train your team. Hold a mandatory orientation meeting where you discuss how to spot inappropriate behavior and physical signs of abuse, and how to report specific situations.
- ☉ Keep all situations of abuse and suspected abuse confidential.

If a situation of suspected abuse in the home does arise, consult your Coordinator and Chartering Ministry leader immediately and follow the policies that have been established. Be careful not to jump to conclusions, but document everything.

Dealing with the possibility of abuse requires a great deal of spiritual wisdom and sensitivity. If a situation arises, go first to God, and spend time honestly laying the situation and your own reactions before him.



Initial policies and procedures should also be established to reduce the potential for abuse within the MOPPETS program. Here are some initial guidelines to help:

- ④ Identify potential “danger zones” within the MOPPETS facilities that can be eliminated. For example, if it is necessary to change diapers, be sure changing tables are in the open, not in obscure corners.
- ④ Screen workers. Guidelines for volunteers should be the same for all team members. Require an application with personal and professional references. Follow up by calling references. When interviewing potential workers, ask about their childcare experience and specific questions related to abuse. Take advantage of free or inexpensive background checks for childcare workers offered by some states and communities.
- ④ Be proactive by developing an action plan. Consult your Chartering Ministry board and an attorney.



Guidelines for MOPPETS workers:

- ④ Be tenderhearted.
- ④ Walk and talk softly.
- ④ Get down on the floor with kids.
- ④ Look children and parents in the eye.
- ④ Do not work alone in a room with young children.
- ④ Do not take children to another room, including the bathroom, without another worker along.



More Suggestions for MOPPETS Team Leaders

- ☉ Be flexible and creative. Make the best of the facilities you have. Consider the special talents of MOPPETS volunteers and highlight them.
- ☉ Keep payroll organized for paid workers, with a list of workers and substitutes, pay scales, extra attendance sheets and any other important items. Work with your Finance Team Leader and Chartering Ministry on any tax issues.
- ☉ Communicate regularly with your Steering Team. Share stories, experiences and needs. Avoid the tendency to make MOPPETS an “island” by itself, separated from the rest of the MOPS program. Remind the team of the importance of MOPPETS to the overall ministry of MOPS.
- ☉ Make nametags for each child. Include the name of child, mother’s name, birth date, any allergies and their classroom. Put nametag on back of each child (so that the child can not remove it) when they arrive. Collect nametags after each meeting to track who has been checked out and to prevent nametags from getting lost.
- ☉ Put together a “substitute” notebook. In the event you are unable to attend, this notebook should outline your MOPPETS program routine, the names of the teachers and workers, class locations and substitute lists. Keep it in a place where your substitute can find and use it.

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At the end of a particularly frazzling MOPPETS class, I was feeling discouraged. But as I watched the smiling faces of the moms leaving with their children, I realized that our time had been a success. We had offered a quality children’s program, the teachers and mothers were satisfied and happy, and, most important, we moved one step closer to our goal—saved lives!

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MOPS International, Inc.
2370 S. Trenton Way, Denver, CO 80231-3822
Phone: 303-733-5353 Fax: 303-733-5770
www.MOPS.org