

COMPASSION MINISTRY RESOURCES

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# First Meeting Agenda for a New Compassion Ministry Team

*A practical guide for gathering people, praying together, listening well, and choosing the first faithful step*

**Pray first. Listen well. Begin wisely.**

## Purpose of This Resource

This agenda is designed for churches, nonprofits, small groups, ministry leaders, volunteers, and community partners who are exploring the possibility of beginning a compassion ministry. It can be used for ministries serving men, women, children, families, senior adults, people in poverty, people in recovery, returning citizens, families in crisis, neighbors needing food or basic resources, people needing mentoring, or anyone in need of practical help and gospel-centered care.

The first meeting does not need to answer every question. Strong compassion ministries often begin small, with humility, clarity, prayerful dependence on God, and a willingness to learn before acting.

### Meeting Outcome

By the end of this meeting, the group should be able to name the people or need it wants to explore, identify what still needs to be learned, choose one realistic next step, assign responsibility for follow-up, and set a next meeting or decision point.

## Before the Meeting

- Pray for wisdom, unity, humility, and clear direction.
- Invite a small group of people who care about the need and can listen well.
- Include different perspectives if possible—church leaders, volunteers, community workers, educators, recovery leaders, social service partners, or people with lived experience.
- Bring any notes from conversations with community leaders or people already serving in this area.
- If available, bring the completed or in-progress Community Needs Assessment and Church Ministry Assets Assessment.
- Prepare to listen more than you talk.
- Decide who will facilitate, take notes, keep time, and lead prayer.

## Meeting Guardrails

A first meeting can create excitement, but enthusiasm can also lead a group to promise too much too soon. These simple guardrails keep the conversation prayerful and realistic:

- Do not promise services, money, transportation, housing, counseling, or other help before the ministry has approved policies and resources.

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- Do not assume you know what people need without listening to those affected and to people already serving them.
- Do not try to solve every problem or serve every population in the first plan.
- Do not build the ministry around one person's availability; begin thinking about shared leadership and accountability.
- When the group does not know enough to decide, make learning the next step instead of launching prematurely.

### A Helpful Reminder

The first meeting is a discernment meeting, not a promise meeting. The group is free to learn, pray, adjust, partner with others, or decide that a different response would be wiser.

## Meeting Details

**Ministry idea or possible name:**

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**Date:**

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**Meeting location:**

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**Meeting facilitator:**

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**Note taker:**

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**Expected meeting length:**

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**People Present**

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### Suggested Meeting Length

Plan for 60 to 75 minutes. If the group is large or the need is complex, schedule a second meeting rather than rushing into decisions before people have listened well.

## Opening Prayer

Begin by asking God to guide the conversation, reveal the real needs, guard against pride or assumption, and help the group serve with compassion, wisdom, truth, and love.

**Prayer focus for this meeting:**

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## Sample 60-Minute Agenda

| Time   | Agenda Item                                     | Purpose                                                                                                   | Notes / Decisions |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 5 min  | <b>Welcome and Opening Prayer</b>               | Set a humble and prayerful tone. Ask God for wisdom and unity.                                            | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 10 min | <b>Share the Burden or Calling</b>              | Allow the person who initiated the conversation to explain the need or burden briefly.                    | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 10 min | <b>Name the People You Feel Called to Serve</b> | Clarify the population or group the ministry may be called to serve first.                                | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 10 min | <b>Discuss What Is Already Being Done</b>       | Identify churches, agencies, nonprofits, schools, or ministries already serving in this area.             | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 10 min | <b>Identify Gaps and Barriers</b>               | Discuss unmet needs and the barriers people may face in receiving help.                                   | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 10 min | <b>Choose One Small Next Step</b>               | Choose one wise action to complete before the next meeting; do not try to build the whole ministry today. | <hr/> <hr/>       |
| 5 min  | <b>Assign Follow-Up and Pray</b>                | Assign responsibilities, establish a next decision point or meeting date, and close in prayer.            | <hr/> <hr/>       |

## Conversation Questions

Use these questions to help the group listen, discuss, and avoid rushing into activity before understanding the need. You do not have to answer every question in the first meeting.

**1. What need has God placed before us?**

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**2. Who are we most burdened to serve?**

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**3. What do we know, and what are we assuming?**

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**4. Who is already serving this group well?**

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**5. What barriers might keep people from receiving help?**

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**6. What would a small, wise beginning look like?**

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## A Simple Decision Filter

Before choosing the first action step, use these questions as a filter. A “not yet” answer does not mean the ministry should stop; it may simply show what needs to be learned or strengthened first.

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| Question to Consider                                                                                       | Yes                      | Not Yet                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Is this a real need supported by what we have heard, rather than only an assumption?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does this possible ministry fit the church or organization's mission, calling, and values?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do we have—or can we reasonably develop—the people, space, funds, and leadership needed to begin?          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Can we serve safely and protect participants, volunteers, confidential information, and vulnerable people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have we considered partnership instead of duplicating a ministry that already exists?                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Can we begin with a small step that is realistic enough to sustain and evaluate?                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### **If Several Answers Are “Not Yet”**

Choose a learning step rather than a launch step. The wisest next action may be a listening interview, site visit, policy review, resource check, or partnership conversation.

## **Decisions From the First Meeting**

Record only what the group actually decided. It is appropriate to leave some areas open until more listening or assessment is completed.

| Decision Area                                           | What We Decided Today |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Who we feel called to serve first</b>                | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| <b>The need we will explore first</b>                   | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| <b>One small beginning step</b>                         | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| <b>Who else should be invited into the conversation</b> | <hr/> <hr/>           |

| Decision Area                                            | What We Decided Today |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| What we need to learn before moving forward              | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| What resources or church assets may already be available | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| Questions about safety, boundaries, or referral needs    | <hr/> <hr/>           |
| Next meeting date, decision point, or follow-up date     | <hr/> <hr/>           |

## Possible First Steps

- ☐ Schedule listening conversations with pastors, community leaders, school counselors, nonprofit leaders, law enforcement, recovery leaders, social service partners, or people with lived experience.
- ☐ Visit or interview another ministry that serves a similar population.
- ☐ Create a prayer team before creating a program.
- ☐ Complete or review the Community Needs Assessment.
- ☐ Complete or review the Church Ministry Assets Assessment.
- ☐ Clarify the church or organization's approval, oversight, budget, and leadership process.
- ☐ Host a limited pilot event, class, meal, listening session, resource distribution, or prayer gathering after basic safety and responsibility questions are addressed.
- ☐ Identify a safe location and basic volunteer needs.
- ☐ Begin drafting simple boundaries, safety guidelines, referral procedures, confidentiality practices, and volunteer expectations.
- ☐ Gather a small planning team for a second meeting.

## Action Steps Before the Next Meeting

Keep the action list short enough that the team can realistically complete it. Three to five meaningful actions are usually better than a long list no one can finish.

| Action Step | Person Responsible | Due Date | Follow-Up Notes |
|-------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
|             |                    |          |                 |
|             |                    |          |                 |
|             |                    |          |                 |
|             |                    |          |                 |

## Prepare for the Next Meeting

- ☐ Share brief notes from the first meeting with the planning team.
- ☐ Complete assigned listening conversations, assessments, or site visits.
- ☐ Bring back facts, not just impressions.
- ☐ Gather any needed information about church approval, insurance, budget, background checks, facility use, or volunteer policies.
- ☐ Identify questions that require professional or community referral guidance.
- ☐ Begin the Compassion Ministry Planning Guide when the team has enough information to move from discernment into planning.

## Closing Prayer Guide

- ☐ Pray for the people who may one day be served through this ministry.
- ☐ Pray for wisdom to see real needs clearly.
- ☐ Pray for unity among the planning team.
- ☐ Pray for the right volunteers and partners.
- ☐ Pray for protection from rushing, rescuing, pride, fear, or discouragement.
- ☐ Pray that the ministry will point people to hope, dignity, practical help, and the love of Christ.

### **Final Encouragement**

You do not have to build the entire ministry in the first meeting. Begin with prayer, honest listening, wise questions, and one faithful next step. Compassion ministry grows best when it is rooted in love, guided by truth, protected by healthy boundaries, supported by accountable leadership, and strengthened by people who are willing to serve together.

### **Recommended Next Resources**

- Community Needs Assessment
- Church Ministry Assets Assessment
- Compassion Ministry Planning Guide
- Compassion Ministry Boundaries Guide
- First 90 Days Launch Plan