

Church Benevolence Ministry Checklist

Ministry Role:

Benevolence Leader / Benevolence Volunteer

Primary Aim of the Role:

To extend Christ-centered care and practical assistance to individuals and families in need while exercising wisdom, accountability, and discernment in ways that promote long-term health, dignity, and restoration rather than dependency.

Core Responsibilities Overview

Benevolence ministry exists to:

- Respond compassionately to needs while maintaining clear boundaries
 - Discern short-term relief versus long-term care needs
 - Coordinate spiritual, relational, and practical support
 - Protect the church, volunteers, and recipients through policy and accountability
 - Serve under elder oversight and established benevolence guidelines
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Step-by-Step Checklist

1. When a Benevolence Request Is Received (Initial Contact)

1.1 Intake & First Response

- Receive request via approved channels (office referral, pastoral referral, form, phone call)
- Respond with kindness, calmness, and respect

- Avoid promises of assistance before assessment
- Pray silently or aloud (when appropriate) for wisdom and care

1.2 Basic Information Gathering

- Name, contact information, household size
- Nature of need (financial, food, housing, utilities, medical, transportation, crisis)
- Urgency level (immediate, short-term, ongoing)
- Determine if individual is:
 - A church member/regular attender
 - A community member with no church affiliation

1.3 Immediate Safety Check

- Assess for:
 - Threats of harm to self or others
 - Signs of abuse or neglect
 - Medical emergencies
 - If immediate danger is present, follow emergency escalation guidelines (see Section 6)
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2. Assessment Phase (Discernment & Wisdom)

2.1 Listen Carefully

- Allow the individual to explain their situation without interruption
- Ask clarifying questions with compassion, not suspicion
- Observe emotional, spiritual, and relational indicators

2.2 Evaluate the Nature of the Need

- Is this a one-time crisis or a pattern of ongoing instability?
- Is the request addressing a symptom or an underlying issue?
- Are there contributing factors such as:
 - Job loss
 - Medical hardship
 - Addiction
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Poor financial management

2.3 Documentation

- Record objective facts, not assumptions
 - Maintain confidentiality according to church policy
 - Do not guarantee confidentiality if abuse or danger is disclosed
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3. Benevolence Care for Church Members

3.1 Guiding Philosophy

- Church members receive care that emphasizes:
 - Shepherding
 - Accountability
 - Restoration
 - Community support

3.2 Step-by-Step Response

- Verify membership or regular involvement
- Consult with pastor or benevolence leader as required
- Review prior benevolence history
- Determine appropriate assistance:
 - Emergency relief (utilities, rent, food)
 - Budget coaching
 - Connection to small groups, counseling, or discipleship
- Whenever possible:
 - Pay vendors directly rather than giving cash
 - Set clear limits and expectations
- Pray with the member and offer ongoing pastoral care

3.3 Follow-Up

- Schedule follow-up contact
- Coordinate with pastoral staff or elders if ongoing care is needed
- Encourage accountability and next steps

4. Benevolence Care for Community Requests (Non-Members)

4.1 Guiding Philosophy

- Community benevolence prioritizes:

- Compassion without dependency
- Clear boundaries
- Referral to appropriate resources

4.2 Step-by-Step Response

- Explain the church's benevolence process clearly and kindly
- Assess need using the same intake questions
- Offer limited, short-term assistance when appropriate
- Prefer assistance such as:
 - Food bags or grocery cards
 - Utility assistance paid directly
 - Referrals to shelters, agencies, or community partners

4.3 Boundaries

- Avoid repeat assistance without leadership approval
 - Do not provide:
 - Cash handouts
 - Transportation in personal vehicles (unless approved policy exists)
 - Offer prayer and spiritual encouragement without coercion
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5. Types of Benevolence Needs & Response Guidelines

Financial Crisis

- Verify bills or documentation

- Pay vendors directly
- Set clear one-time or short-term limits

Food Insecurity

- Provide food pantry resources or grocery assistance
- Connect to community food banks

Housing Instability

- Coordinate with shelters, housing agencies, or local ministries
- Avoid last-minute hotel placements without leadership approval

Medical Needs

- Encourage contact with medical professionals
- Assist with prescriptions or transportation only within policy

Relational or Emotional Crisis

- Refer to pastoral counseling
- Encourage professional counseling when appropriate

6. Mandatory Escalation Guidelines

(These protect the individual, volunteer, and church)

Immediately Involve Law Enforcement or Emergency Services If:

- There is a credible threat of violence
- Weapons are present and being discussed

- Someone expresses intent to harm themselves or others
- A crime is actively occurring

Immediately Involve Child Protective Services (or appropriate authority) If:

- There is reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect
- A child reports abuse
- Unsafe living conditions are described involving minors

Important Notes

- Volunteers do **not investigate**—they report
 - Do not promise secrecy in these cases
 - Notify pastoral leadership and follow mandatory reporting laws
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7. Decision & Assistance Phase

7.1 Internal Review

- Review request with benevolence leader or designated team
- Ensure consistency with policy and budget

7.2 Communication

- Clearly explain what assistance can and cannot be provided
 - Communicate next steps and expectations
 - Offer prayer and encouragement regardless of outcome
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8. Follow-Up & Care

8.1 Documentation

- Record assistance given and referrals made
- Maintain secure records

8.2 Ongoing Care

- Follow up when appropriate
- Connect individuals to:
 - Church community
 - Counseling
 - Financial coaching
 - Community resources

Guiding Principles for Benevolence Ministry

- **Compassion with wisdom**
- **Help without harm**
- **Dignity over dependency**
- **Truth with grace**
- **Policy protects people**