

CRADLE ROLL/ NURSERY

GUIDEBOOK

CAN  BDA
YOUTH

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This guidebook presents ideas to assist you in creatively ministering to children ages 0-5 and their families. It is hoped that the information contained within will help as your corps/church seeks to fulfill its own local commitment.

This guidebook is to be read in conjunction with Orders and Regulations for Work Among Young People.

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PURPOSE

The purpose of a solid Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministry in your corps/church goes beyond simply good childcare. It should be quality care for the children, so they are experiencing God's love through the hands of others starting at birth. It should also be a resource ministry for the parents of the child. It can help new parents gain confidence in caring for a new life and find encouragement for dealing with parenting issues. For parents who are believers it can encourage them in their relationship with Christ. For non-Christian parents, it may be a doorway to introduce them to Christ.

This ministry can provide a solid foundation for the family to build on as the children grow older and parents face new life situations. If you have good quality ministry with children starting from birth, you can attract and keep young families which will build a solid foundation for your corps/church.

Your work with families of young children can involve a variety of components. The purpose of this resource booklet is to share suggestions and ideas that may be helpful to you.

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

(Proverbs 22:6, NIV)

"... how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"

(2 Timothy 3:15, NIV)



PRENATAL MINISTRY

You don't need to wait for the birth of a child to begin your ministry with families and young children. There can be an opportunity to work with parents during the pregnancy. This can be an excellent time to offer parenting classes, as most parents will begin to think about parenting as they are awaiting the arrival of the new baby. They may also have more time during this period than after the baby is born. If you are working with parents who already have children, you could encourage their participation in such a group as resource people for new parents.

If this type of ministry is an option for your corps/church, consider the following suggestions:



Gather good parenting resources such as books to borrow, podcasts and videos for parents to access and informational brochures they can keep. Check out www.ThinkOrange.com/collections/Parents resources, "www.FocusontheFamily.ca/parenting" resources, talk to healthcare professionals for suggestions of good health care pamphlets, or browse through www.gospel.com/ministries. This is a Christian resource website that contains numerous members and links through which you can look up parenting resources.



Form a parenting group or class. This could involve childbirth classes with a qualified instructor, informational nights to cover specific topics with qualified leadership as necessary, or more informal discussions and fellowship for expectant parents.



Pair up expectant parents with those who already have children or older "grandparents" who have had many life experiences. They can be prayer partners and simply give words of encouragement throughout the pregnancy.



Hold a baby shower before the baby is born. This could be done for more than one baby at a time. If you are working with needy families, work with your corps/church members, a local family services office or other community organizations to gather baby items







MINISTRY IDEAS

There are a variety of aspects to your Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministry. You will have to determine what is most important and workable for your congregation. You may be able to use many ideas in conjunction with each other or only one or two. The following are a variety of ideas that may be helpful.

Give A Warm Welcome to Newborns

-  You could place a flower arrangement in the sanctuary the first Sunday after the birth of a new baby and then have someone deliver that to the family along with other items. Things such as a basket of useful baby items, a devotional book, treats just for mom such as foam bath, a pamphlet about the nursery and a welcome card or letter from the corps/church would all send a welcoming message.
-  Look in the local paper/social media for new births in your neighbourhood and use this as an opportunity for outreach. Deliver a welcome pack to the new parents which could include a small gift, a pamphlet explaining what is available at your corps/church, an invitation for them to join you, as well as a stamped response card that the family could send back to request further information or contact.
-  Design a bulletin board to welcome new babies to your corps/church. You could use a section of a bulletin board used for the nursery or Sunday school. Use the space to put up the baby pictures and birth announcements. You could feature all the family members on this board with pictures and some basic information about everyone. Change the board as necessary.
-  Hold a baby shower for a new baby. You could do this for a few babies at a time. Or you could hold one large shower a year for all moms who are expecting or have recently had a baby.

Things To Do at Any Time

-  Have some corps/church members deliver a homemade meal to the new family or a gift card for a restaurant. This will help them out and could be done more than once for a family.
-  Utilize Parent Cue website that holds lots of resources, e.g., blog, videos, podcasts, etc., that are helpful to support parents. In the video section there are six clips that would be helpful for parents as they explore some key parenting strategies to support their child (www.theparentcue.org).



Invite families to participate in the First Look Sunday school class for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants. "First Look" will help children get a strong start by experiencing the wonder of God's love for them each week.

Learn more about First Look here: www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework



Host a Baby Song program. Invite parents of babies and toddlers to help their child in language development and interaction through music; and provide them an opportunity to build relationships with other parents.

Download the Baby Song Resources here: www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework



Design a newsletter/social media post to send out to parents on a regular basis. These could include information on things happening that are relevant to parents and young children in the corps/church, devotionals, suggested resources, information on specific topics, etc.



Visit families with babies or young children. You can make an initial visit as a welcome to the new baby and then drop off a newsletter at other times. Make sure you call ahead to arrange a time that is good for the family.



Enroll any babies and young children up to the age of five on the Cradle Roll of your corps/church with parental permission. This can provide opportunity for future visitation and involvement with the family. Be sure to send birthday cards to the children up to the age of five.



Have a party or luncheon for all children in Ready to Crawl and Ready to Play (ages 0-5) once a year or more. Doing this around the month of May, close to Mother's Day is a good idea. You could plan some activities for the parents and children to do together and other activities for them to do separately. These activities could include bringing in special guests such as a Public Health nurse for the parents while providing games for the children, or crafts to be done together. See section on Connection Ideas for further cradle roll celebration and promotion suggestions.



Design a photo bulletin board, which could include pictures of those children in cradle roll (up to age 5). Update these pictures every year. You could use different themes such as placing the children's photos on sheep in a pasture or apples on a tree.

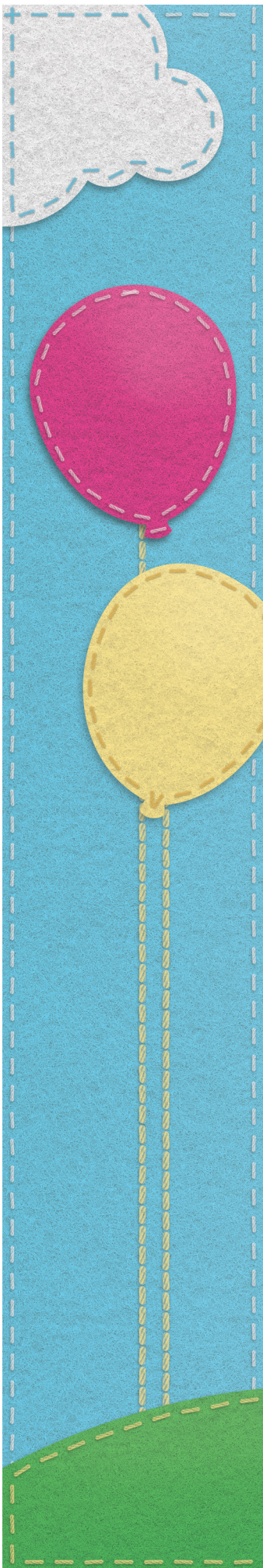


Invite children to Sunday school once they turn age two, provided there is a class for them. If you don't have Sunday school for children this young, consider starting a class. Sunday school material is available for children as young as age one.

Contact CANBDA.youth@salvationarmy.ca for more information on First Look curriculum.



Use babies and young children in your Christmas play, if possible, even if it is only a brief part such as having them all come forward to be a part of the manger scene while one song is sung. Parents will need to come forward with any little babies.





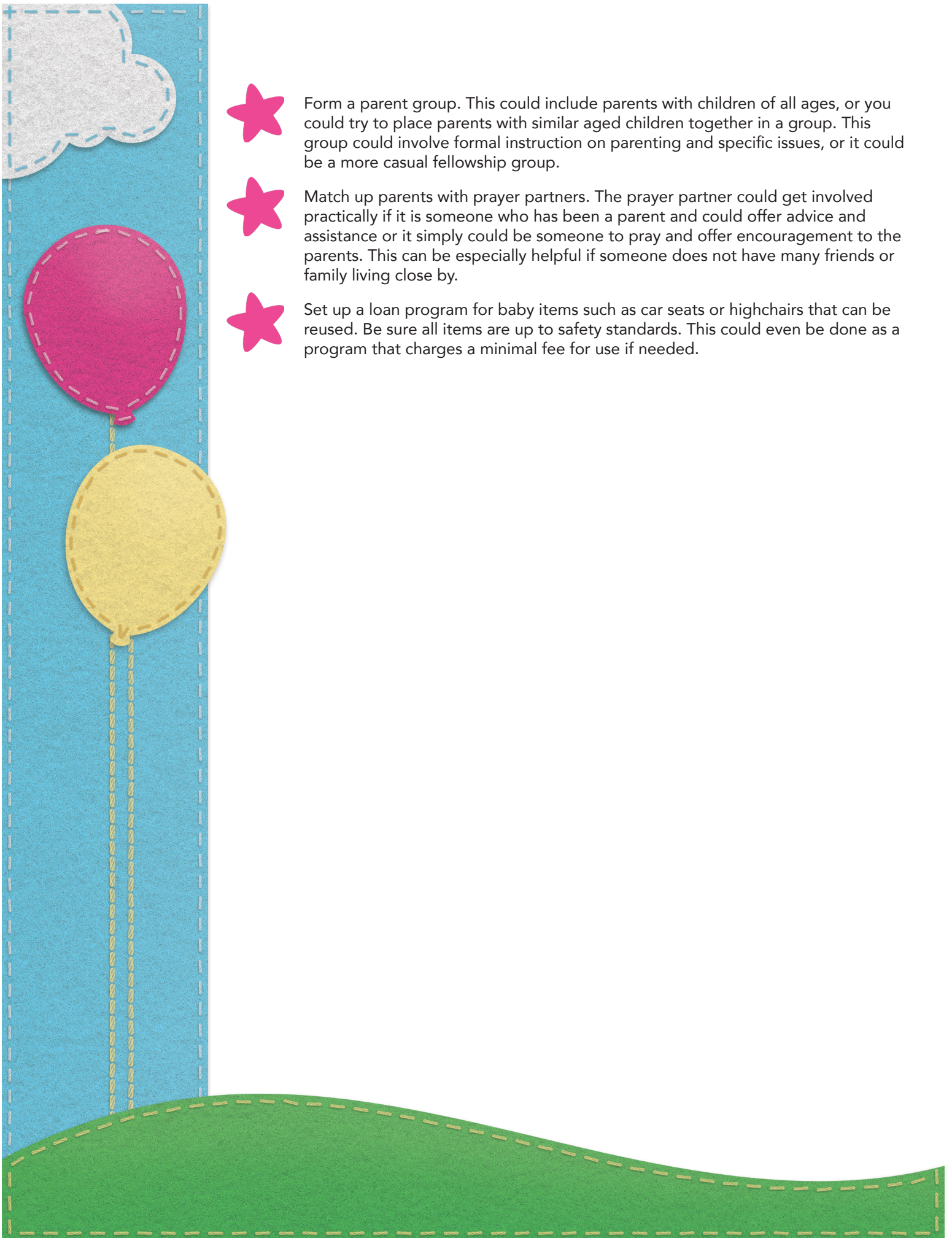
Form a parent group. This could include parents with children of all ages, or you could try to place parents with similar aged children together in a group. This group could involve formal instruction on parenting and specific issues, or it could be a more casual fellowship group.



Match up parents with prayer partners. The prayer partner could get involved practically if it is someone who has been a parent and could offer advice and assistance or it simply could be someone to pray and offer encouragement to the parents. This can be especially helpful if someone does not have many friends or family living close by.



Set up a loan program for baby items such as car seats or highchairs that can be reused. Be sure all items are up to safety standards. This could even be done as a program that charges a minimal fee for use if needed.





DEDICATIONS

Dedications are a significant ceremony for a family. They are a time of celebrating the new life and committing to raising the child as God would desire. They are primarily for the family of the baby, but they can also be a time of celebration and challenge for the entire dedicated. As a part of this process, there is further opportunity for ministry to the family.

This ceremony can also be a great outreach to families not involved in a corps/church. Many parents, on arrival of a baby, may feel the need for dedication regardless of their own lack of interest in God or the church. The miracle of childbirth can soften people's hearts and open the door for ministry with them.

Corps Officers are primarily the ones involved in the dedication ceremony, but anyone can work along with the corps officer to reach out to a family at this time. When you are aware of a baby dedication consider the following suggestions as possible ways to reach out with God's love.

- ★ Consider the key questions that need to be discussed with parent/s when deciding to dedicate their child. Use this resource "[Preparing for a Dedication or Thanksgiving Ceremony](http://www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework)" (www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework) as a tool to guide you.
- ★ Use this as an opportunity to visit and inform parents about what is available at your corps/church for the whole family. Invite them to become involved in relevant activities or programs if they are not already.
- ★ In addition to the Dedication and Welcome to Ready to Crawl certificates, give a small gift to the family, such as a devotional book, Bible or even a flower/plant. It doesn't have to be anything expensive, just an expression of care that will help them feel special about the day.
- ★ Plan a luncheon or fellowship time for the family, significant friends, Cradle Roll Sergeant, nursery workers, YPSM or children's ministries coordinator, etc., on the day of the dedication. Many families may plan their own celebration for this day. A family with no connections to your congregation though, may not do this. This can be a great opportunity to have them meet people and have further contact with your corps/church. This time could include a baby shower or be part of a Cradle Roll celebration for all members and their families that honours the newest member. By using this idea, you may help to connect young families to each other.
- ★ Focus the morning service on children, parenting or something related to these issues. You could focus on the wonderful gift of babies and how any child could grow up to do amazing things. You could use stories from the Bible of people such as Moses, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus who were all first introduced as helpless little babies who then went on to accomplish many great things.



Take time in the service before or after the dedication to highlight the Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministry in your corps/church. You could have an appreciation time for your workers as a part of this, or simply use it as a time to mention these ministries by letting people know what is going on with them and asking for continued prayer and support.

CONNECTION IDEAS

Making opportunity to focus specifically on the Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministries in your corps/church can provide many things. This can include outreach to families on the cradle roll who are not regular church attenders. It can also highlight and promote your Ready to Crawl ministry, which can help generate more involvement from people. It can also be a time of celebration and encouragement for young families.

The opportunities for this are many. It may be a part of the Sunday morning worship service, a special luncheon or party for those families that are on your cradle roll, or an invitation to include them as a part of another specific day such as a Rally Sunday. The time of year is whatever time will work best for your corps/church, i.e., having something in conjunction with Mother's Day or at Christmas, or you may want to simply choose some other time of year. The important thing is to advertise effectively and invite everyone well in advance.

The following are some suggestions that may be helpful for you in this area. Have a time of recognition for parents with young children and ministry workers who help with the young children during the Sunday morning service, during which you could do any of the following:



Present the parents and the workers with a prayer journal and briefly speak on the importance of praying for children before they are born and throughout their entire life. You may want to write out a few verses of scripture in the journal that speak on prayer and Christian life. Some possible scriptures are: Psalm 139: 13-16; Ephesians 2:9-10; 6:10-18; Deuteronomy 6: 5-7; Psalm 65:1-4; Philippians 4:6-7; and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.



Involve families with young children, expectant parents, and workers in the morning service. You could have them participate in leading the service or sharing a testimony related to the children.



Have a poem or special reading related to babies and children such as this one:

Jesus said "let the little ones come to me"
While the disciples didn't know what to do
He took them in his arms and listened
while they all wondered could this be true?
The great teacher is giving them his time,
When there are so many others.
Why was he doing this? Why would he even bother?
Then Jesus spoke to them as he so often did,
If you want to go to heaven then become like a kid.

Jesus taught us many things,
some still keep us guessing,
but children are no mystery -
they are a treasure and a blessing.
We are given them to love and care for,
to guide and teach what's right.
They are as important as anyone,
for they are precious in his sight.
The lesson the disciples learned that day-
let it be one that we learn too.
Bring the children to Jesus and
they'll be an example for you.

(Rachel Leis)



Plan a luncheon or party to celebrate with all those families involved in Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministries. This could involve many things, such as:

- Providing childcare for part of the time so the parents have time to mingle among themselves.
- Giving recognition to your Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/ Nursery) workers. You could have a parent present a small gift such as a devotional book to the workers.
- Plan the party or luncheon around a specific theme. Decorate according to that theme, have a craft or game and a devotional thought all related to the theme. You could have activities for parents only or for children and parents to do together. Some suggestions for party themes are:
 - Creation Celebration
 - Noah's Ark
 - Shepherd and Sheep
 - Children are a Gift from God (story of Samuel in 1 Samuel)
 - Birthday Party for Everyone - celebrate Jesus' birth
 - Springtime or Easter Celebration - new life theme
 - Love Celebration - God's love, parent/child love





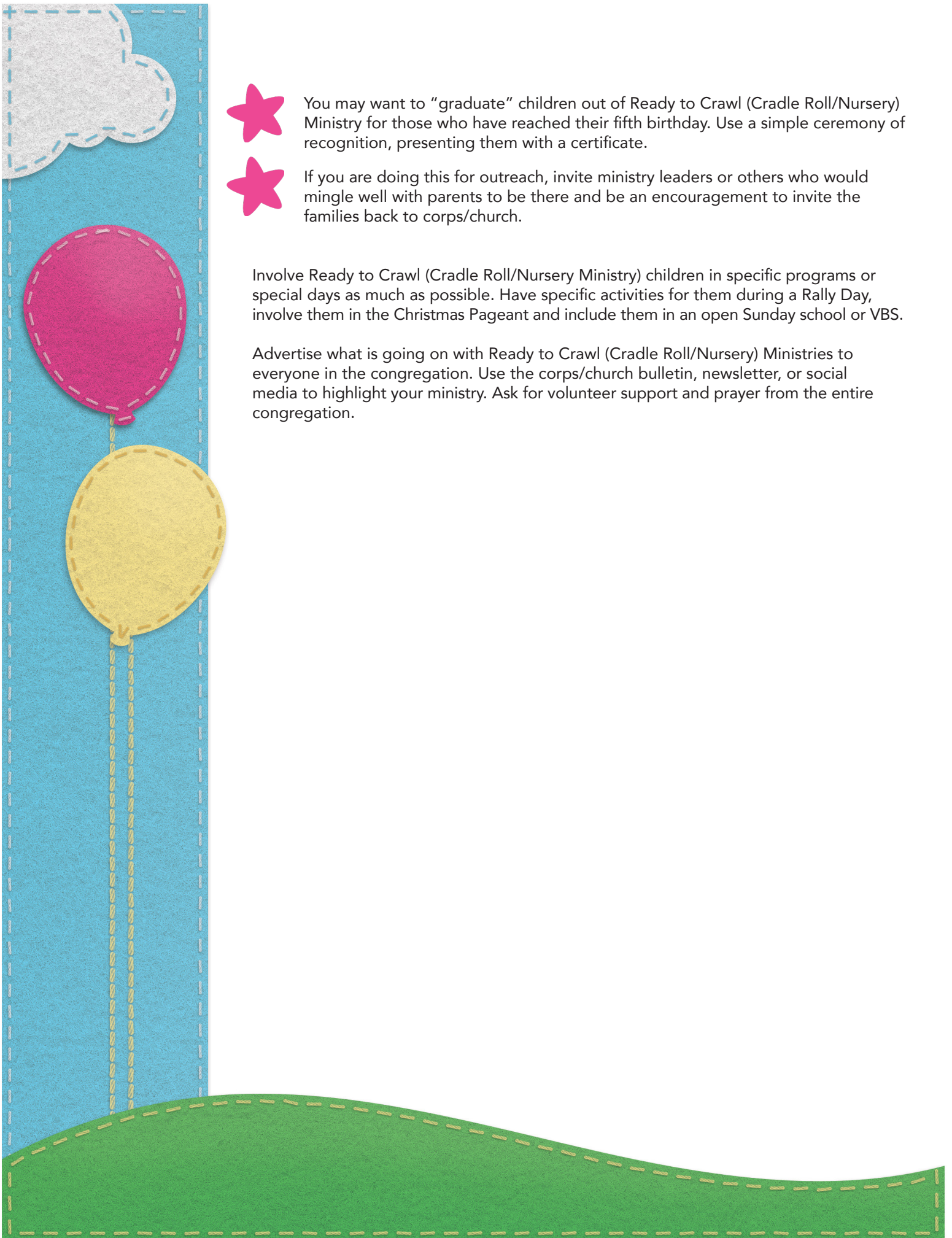
You may want to “graduate” children out of Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) Ministry for those who have reached their fifth birthday. Use a simple ceremony of recognition, presenting them with a certificate.



If you are doing this for outreach, invite ministry leaders or others who would mingle well with parents to be there and be an encouragement to invite the families back to corps/church.

Involve Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery Ministry) children in specific programs or special days as much as possible. Have specific activities for them during a Rally Day, involve them in the Christmas Pageant and include them in an open Sunday school or VBS.

Advertise what is going on with Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) Ministries to everyone in the congregation. Use the corps/church bulletin, newsletter, or social media to highlight your ministry. Ask for volunteer support and prayer from the entire congregation.





CONSIDERATIONS

If you are working on your Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministry in your corps/church, there may be some important issues to consider that haven't crossed your mind. Here are some items to consider if you haven't already.

Be sensitive to a variety of needs. Families today are a changing structure. While a traditional two parent family is desirable, the reality is that this is not always possible. Be sensitive to things such as single parent issues, teenage pregnancy, miscarriages, and birth/infant diseases or defects. If you are working with any specific issues out of the ordinary, get informed. There are endless resources available to you. Talk to people who may know things, search the Internet, go to the local library, and check out a local Christian bookstore. Be proactive in helping people regardless of the situation. The expectancy and arrival of a baby is a great time for the corps/church to impact peoples' lives.

Be sure to have safe, up to standards nursery and childcare. Be aware of any specific requirements for childcare in your province and country. Whether you have known the families for years or you are working with outreach programs for new families, the children in your care need to be safe and well cared for. Check out the resources section for books with suggestions in this area.

Have good communication with parents. The parents are just as important as the babies or young children to your Ready to Crawl (Cradle Roll/Nursery) ministries. It is vital to have a good relationship with the parents. It is beneficial to make sure your ministry is balanced in what it can do for the entire family. Parents will be concerned about how their child is being looked after. Be sensitive and patient with their concerns. You are caring for the most important person in their lives.

When posting to your social media or website be sure to have consent from both parents before you share photos of a child. You can find a Media Release form on [page 15](#).



RECORDS

Names of all children should be managed as follows on the Official Rolls and Registers at the corps.

Friends Roll: Infants and Children are tracked on the Friends Roll (one of the five official membership rolls) until their membership changes. Names should be removed from the Friends Roll and added to the Jr Soldier, Sr. Soldier or Adherents roll if/when enrollment takes place. Otherwise names stay on this roll as long as there is affiliation with the corps.

Cradle Roll/Register: All infants/children who are 0 – 5 yrs old should appear on this roll/register (as well as the Friends Roll as mentioned above). The Cradle Roll/Register provides a useful contact list for engaging families in any special infant/toddler events or programming (Nursery, Baby Song, Moms & Tots, etc.). Once infants/children reach their 5th birthday they should be removed from this roll/register and their group memberships should be tracked on other registers depending on their involvement at the corps (Sunday School, Ready To Serve, etc.).

Dedication Register: Infants/children whose parents choose a Dedication or Thanksgiving Ceremony should have their names entered on this register. Names remain on this register as a permanent historical record of all dedications conducted at the corps.

You can find information on the Official Rolls, Rolls and Registers at www.saMissionResource.ca/membership

RESOURCES

The following resources are available for purchase from Trade North (Supplies and Purchasing) by:

Phone: 416-422-6100
Email: orderdesk@salvationarmy.ca
Website: store.salvationarmy.ca

For information regarding Dedication/Thanksgiving Ceremonies please refer to pages 8-13 in the Salvation Army Ceremonies book. Remember to include the details of any ceremony in the Dedications Register and/or Cradle Roll Register. There are some helpful guidelines about meeting with the family to prepare for the ceremony in "Preparing for a Dedication or Thanksgiving Ceremony" (www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework).

Dedication Certificate (Ready to Crawl)

This certificate may be used for families that wish to make meaningful Christian promises around the raising of their child.



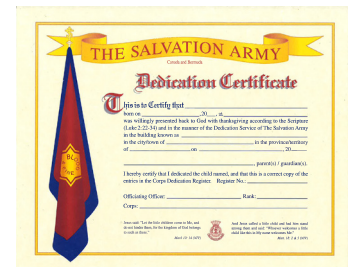
Thanksgiving Certificate (Ready to Crawl)

This certificate may be used for families that wish to give thanks to God for the gift of their child.



Dedication Certificate (Salvation Army)

This certificate may be used for families that wish to make significantly Christian promises around the raising of their child and would like a Salvationist look to their certificate.



Welcome to Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play Ministry Certificate

This certificate welcomes a child into the Ready to Crawl/Play Ministries of the corps/centre. They do not need to have a Dedication ceremony or Thanksgiving ceremony to receive this certificate. For example, these certificates could be given to families who join Baby Song or Moms and Tots.



"Dear Little One" Frame (Download)

This frame is designed for use with a personalized prayer or blessing for the child. These could be words of encouragement offered from the parents, the Ready to Crawl Coordinator and/or Corps Officer. See examples in "Preparing for A Dedication/Thanksgiving Ceremony" resource. A fill-in PDF version of this resource can be downloaded here: [DearLittleOne_FillablePDF.pdf](#).

(www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework)



Colouring Pages (Download)

These Ready to Crawl and Ready to Play colouring sheets may be given out or used in Nursery, Baby Song, Moms and Tots program.

Click to download: [RTC-RTP_ColouringPages.pdf](#)
(www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework)



Birthday Card (Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play)

This birthday card has been designed to fit with the Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play graphic theme and may be sent to any child associated with your corps/centre. We recommend that this card be mailed to the child as receiving their own personally addressed mail can be a significant joy!

(Order this card from Trade North. Corps can easily purchase additional cards locally.)



Social Media Release Form (Download)

Share this form with parents and receive consent before posting any pictures of their child/family on your social media or website. Download here: www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework