Ten Steps to Starting a YoungLives Ministry

1. Prayer & Inquiry
   As you prayerfully consider starting a YoungLives ministry, spend some time researching your community. Investigate where teen moms are at and what resources are available to them. Make some calls to community organizations that would be potential partners. Think through church relationships and who might be on board to help start this ministry. Recruit a team of people who will pray with you for clarity and confirmation before starting YoungLives.

2. Committee Support
   Your committee will need to be on board and stack hands with you in starting a YoungLives ministry. You’ll need their contacts and community relationships to get things going, as well as their commitment of time, prayer and financial partnership. YoungLives has many needs that are different than a traditional Young Life Club, and your committee will need be aware of these when considering starting YoungLives. Consider having a point person on the local Young Life committee who head up a YoungLives sub-committee to focus on the individual needs of the ministry.

3. Finding the Right Leader
   Especially key to this process is finding the right woman to lead. This person can be part-time or full-time depending on the size of your area and your vision for the ministry’s growth. They might come on staff as an intern, mission staff, or a committed volunteer. Take your time in looking for this person. Use your committee and leaders to think through people they know who might be a fit for this role. (For additional information see document: Top Ten Things to Look for When Hiring YoungLives Staff)

4. Funding
   One of the challenges to starting any new ministry is funding. There are resources available to YoungLives that are less available to traditional Young Life - church missions support, grants, foundations and donors who have a heart for teen moms and have not given to Young Life before. Think through the contacts you have, and places you might look for new support. YoungLives draws new people and financial support because of the audience it reaches.

5. Church and Community Partnership
   Identify who is working with and supporting teen moms within your community. Seek to build partnerships with community organizations and ministries to work together to meet the needs of teen moms. Work to build relationships with churches that have a heart and passion to reach out to teen moms. You’ll need their resources to build your mentor and support teams, and you’ll be providing them with a new and exciting way to reach out into their community.

6. Building a Mentor Team
   Healthy YoungLives ministries are started with a team of women who are passionate about walking alongside teen moms. Recruiting, training and investing in these women are some of the most important roles of your YoungLives staff. This team will initially be built through the people you and your committee know, and the church partnerships you build. Having this team in place before starting contact work with teen moms is essential to healthy ministry. This team of mentors will be the most essential piece to the longevity of your YoungLives ministry.
Reaching Teen Moms
The next step in your process involves building your strategy for reaching the teen moms in your community. Do your homework in figuring out the most effective place for you to start. It might be a school specifically for teen moms. Your local high school might provide a day care for teen moms so they can continue attending. You might find your best places are through community partnerships, crisis pregnancy centers or hospitals. Initiate relationships where you can work alongside people who are already seeking to care for teen moms. Be creative in thinking about how you will approach the administrator or director to build a solid partnership and earn the right to care for their teen moms.

Mentor Relationships
As with any Young Life ministry, relationships are the key to successful YoungLives ministry. The foundational piece to YoungLives club is the intentional contact work being done throughout the week by mentors with their teen moms. Whether one on one, or in small groups, the time mentors spending investing in the lives of teen moms is the groundwork for all further ministry.

Once you’ve recruited and trained your mentor team, your staff person will spend time getting to know them and will facilitate them starting contact work either individually with a girl, with several girls, or at the school you have targeted.

Starting Club & Campaigners
As with any Young Life ministry, Club is an essential tool for outreach. After contact work has been established, and mentors are building relationships with teen moms, work towards starting Club. One difference in YoungLives is that Club happens less frequently, usually once a month. It is like traditional Young Life Club in many ways – music, games, skits, and message – but with a few extras added in to meet the unique needs of this audience. Club is typically longer than traditional Young Life Club due to time allotted for transportation, accommodating babies, crafts, donations and meals. You’ll also provide childcare during Club.

Many YoungLives ministries also do another organized event during the month to give mentors more opportunities for contact work, and build community within the group. Game nights, movie nights, scavenger hunts, zoo trips, meeting at the park, scrap booking, cooking meals together, parenting or childbirth classes, etc...

After Club is up and running, or after returning from your camp trip, you may begin to have girls who are ready for Campaigners. Campaigners generally meets twice a month rather than weekly. Transportation, childcare and meals are key elements to successful campaigner meetings in YoungLives. Think creatively about groups in your community and churches that can help you meet these additional needs.

Getting to YoungLives Camp
Pregnant teens, teen moms and their children have the incredible opportunity to attend a YoungLives week that is designed and run with their needs in mind. Teen moms and their mentors are able to experience the adventure and significance that Young Life camping offers because of Childcare workers who are recruited to care for their children. These camp weeks are held at Young Life properties across the country. Contact your Divisional Coordinator for help in choosing which camp week is the best fit for your area.