

HYPHEN RETREAT GUIDE

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Let's set up a Hyphen Retreat.

For Hyphens, special gatherings can be some of the most memorable times of their lives. This is exactly why it is up to us as district leaders to make the decision to make these things happen! But, obviously, we need some help along the way with a plethora of different issues, so let's get started.

What is a retreat?

Retreats are typically 1–2 nights at the most and can be at a location of your choosing. Some may choose to hold a retreat at a hotel, resort, state park, or campground. Retreats give your group time to set aside the cares of the world and focus on themselves and their spiritual lives, while having fun with friends in the process. So the best possible scenario for your district might be to have an overnight type of gathering.

Set a time.

Hyphens can be the toughest age group for which to organize retreats because their lives are jammed with work, school, ministry, responsibilities in their own church, and the list goes on. Therefore, when planning a retreat, it's important to allow your Hyphens ample planning time in advance. We recommend six months of notice for planning overnight events. However, be very careful about giving yourself smaller amounts of planning time because it may cause unexpected roadblocks that may not get you the desired results you would like to see (attendance, music, event games/activities).

Set a place.

Your location can be one of the biggest draws or negatives to a retreat. If your Hyphens are not intrigued by your location or if it is too far to travel for a single- or a two-night event, then they may think it's just not worth it to them to make the trip. So think large-scale central location for inclusion purposes and, depending on your group, choose wisely for campground versus hotel conference room. Either choice has its own positives, depending upon your group and central geographical location (large city vs. rural campground) because it may dictate your options/choices in our next topic...

Set up activities.

Your Hyphen retreat is all about gaining an audience with Jesus. Period. With our generation we cannot afford to lose sight of that and know that if our services are not Spirit filled, then our retreats are not worth our time. However, our generation is also all about instant and constant entertainment. Without cell phones and tablets to keep us connected to the world around us, we would all surely perish into oblivion. Just kidding...sort of.

Your activities are dependent upon your location. If you have a campground-based event, then think about bonfires, s'mores, water fights, boat rides around the lake, and other fun summer activities. Your budget is dependent upon these things, but I believe we can get together to build a fire and make some water balloons. Sometimes the most fun is created in the small, inexpensive things. Don't be afraid to check on some of your best resources for this style of retreat: your connections to your friends. Your connections are sometimes more than willing to donate time, services, supplies, and money if we just ask.

If your location is based inside the city limits, then think of your activities in a different, but just as fun way. Event centers are popping up all throughout cities and can provide all types of fun for young adults. Just because we may be in our twenties doesn't mean we don't have fun playing laser tag or



riding go-carts and bumper cars. If you are relatively local to an amusement park, a day trip there may not be out of the question, depending upon your schedule. (They may even give you a group rate.) It is your event and you know your group best, so ask your Hyphens and branch out. Set up a Twitter pole or send a group text to your local Hyphen leaders to see what they do with their Hyphen groups for fun. The thing is, there isn't really a wrong answer here as long as they are together and have something to occupy their time.

Set up the food.

No matter the location, but very dependent upon it, you need to give your camp cafeteria/concessions or local restaurants plenty of heads-up for a large crowd. There is nothing worse than walking in with twenty-five people into an already crowded restaurant and having that staff caught off guard. If you're in a camp-style location they will need at least six months to plan, order, gain staff, set up, and prepare your meals. In a city-style location you won't need as much time, but still plan at least a month in advance so they can prepare, depending on how large your crowds are.

Set a theme.

The GYD is great at setting themes every year for our SFC campaigns, so when setting a theme for your retreat, I would recommend thinking along those lines. For many, that is how they enter into the services for their mindset and may also dictate your speaker's message direction. In Kentucky we started with "Impact" for our first district rallies to put the idea out there that we were here and this ministry was going to be here to stay. This was the new "college and career" ministry that was going to change the world around us, and we wanted to make known to this age group that we were here to make an immediate impact.

By now your group may have been around for years and may require something different. Through prayer and understanding your Hyphen ministry, you may need something like "Aim" to better point them in the direction in which you feel led, or you might feel as if you need something to ignite the fire in their spirit to create momentum for both the current time and future.

Set up your services.

This includes the speaker, the musicians, and the team around you. These three integral parts of your Hyphen ministry are the biggest parts of your retreat. They garner the Spirit into your services and create the atmosphere necessary to provide individuals with spiritual breakthroughs. So take time to pray, fast, and communicate your ideas with your pastor, youth pastors, Hyphen teams, and youth presidents because two or more heads are always better than one.

Give these people plenty of time (six months) of notice also. They, just like your Hyphens in attendance, need that time to plan for any and all circumstances.

Set up everything else.

This process will allow you plenty of time to think of different ideas, so if you think a retreat is a good idea for you, then start planning a year in advance. It has to be cleared with your district board and your youth committee in most instances—and your own circumstances depend on this as well. Create a list, a folder, or whatever works best for you because once you realize there are things like setting up registration, working with a host hotel to get a block of rooms, dorm room placement, creating a stage design, renting music equipment, writing thank you notes, making gift baskets for your team/speakers/musicians, setting a budget, promotion, creating your Hyphen team work assignments, and a plethora of other things to plan for, the better off you will be to start planning sooner rather than later.

One last word of advice...Don't get overwhelmed. This is one of the greatest pieces of ministry you can ever be a part of, and your hard work will be blessed.

"Show me someone who has done something worthwhile, and I'll show you someone who has overcome adversity." –Lou Holtz