

# **The Longbrake Family Foundation**

## **Retreat Manual**

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## **Before Retreat**

The board typically sets the date and location for the following retreat during the previous retreat. Start retreat planning 10-12 months out from the retreat. The first step is to review the previous retreat's evaluation materials and make any adjustments to the retreat planning based on that feedback. After this is done begin planning by simultaneously setting up the Retreat Committee and looking for accommodations.

### **Set Up Retreat Logistics Committee (6-8 months in advance)**

Make calls to board members and secure at least three members for the Logistics. The Logistics Committee must include at least one parent from each family group with young children. The committee will need to agree to the following tasks:

- Committee calls or email conversation as needed with staff as convener
- Review and choose from lodging options provided by staff
- Review and approve the menu from the caterer
- Direct staff on planning and securing appropriate babysitting
- Determine if and how much of a donation to be made to the service project site
- Plan free time (defined as time designated for building relationships with extended family)

### **Accommodations (6-8 months in advance)**

Confirm the date and location of the retreat with the board (typically the retreats are from Friday night dinner to Monday afternoon lunch on Memorial Day weekend). Then research several options in order to present at least three viable options to the Host committee.

Things to keep in mind when researching locations:

- The location must be within a two-hour drive of a major airport (an airport that will have direct flights from whatever location the family may be flying in from).
- The facility needs to have enough rooms and beds to accommodate each family group (be sure to check with each family group to confirm how many rooms they will need). It is understood that children under 18 and singles under 30 will share rooms. Those over 18 are next expected to share with those under 18.

As of this writing the room configuration is:

- Individual #1 – 1 room/1 bed
- Individual #2 – 1 room/1 bed
- Family #1 – 2 rooms/4 beds (1 is at least a queen or bigger if possible)
- Family #2 – 2 rooms/4 beds (is at least a queen or bigger if possible)
- Family #3 – 2 rooms/3 beds (One bed is at least a queen or bigger if possible)
- The facility must be willing to take children.
- The facility provides catering or can accept an outside caterer.
- The facility has at least two separate meeting rooms or two rooms that can be used as meeting space (one for next gen and one for the board).

- The facility has Wi-Fi and can provide or accommodate whatever audiovisual equipment needed during the retreat.
- The facility has enough parking space for everyone.
- Stay away from college towns because Memorial Day will run into graduations and can cause an issue for booking locations. Find a place that has plenty of extracurricular activities that are fun for kids (e.g. outdoor activities, children's museum, zoo...)
- Look for vacation communities that may have larger homes available through VRBO or AirBnB. Vacation resorts that have a variety of housing options are another good option.
- The facility is within budget (be sure to confirm the budget with the Executive Director).
- If reasonable separate accommodations are not available for staff on site, check that there is a hotel, within reasonable driving distance from the retreat location, where the staff and outside consultants can stay. Depending on location, accommodations may need to be provided for childcare helpers as well.

In the past hotels have not worked because of the lack of communal space for group to hang out together outside of meetings and make it difficult for parents to monitor sleeping children while still participating in the retreat. A large AirBnB/VRBO rental seems to be the best choice. Other options could include renting an entire Bed and Breakfast or small Inn, and Camp/Conference/retreat centers with the meeting space and lodging all in one building. Many camp/conference/retreat centers and some B&Bs can also provide catering.

If possible, have a staff person (or board member if they will be in the vicinity) visit the accommodation options.

Once the Logistics Committee has chosen an option book the accommodation and pay a deposit. Set up a future payment if needed and be sure to get and record receipts. Book a nearby hotel room for the staff and babysitters if reasonable private accommodations are not available at the retreat site.

### **Catering (4-6 months in advance)**

Typically catering will need to cover all meals from Friday dinner to Monday lunch except for any that the Logistics Committee chooses to provide. Confirm with the Logistics Committee what meals they are planning. Large groups don't work well for eating out especially when children are involved. If deciding to eat out look for buffet option or check with restaurant first about ability to accommodate a group of our size.

If possible, book the catering through the accommodation facility which means you can get it done 6-8 months in advance). Otherwise, get 2-3 catering options with sample menus. Ask the facility for catering suggestions and look at the following websites:

- <https://www.thumbtack.com/>
- <https://www.ezcater.com/>
- In smaller towns check with the local chamber of commerce or see if there is a local wedding planner who may have catering references that do not have a web presence

Things to keep in mind when booking the caterer:

- The caterer knows where the facility is and can get there in a reasonable amount of time.
- Food options include kid friendly choices (non-spicy is important).

- The caterer can meet your requests (such as sack lunches, different delivery times etc....)
- Be sure to check caterer references and reviews

Choose a caterer based on the criteria above, pay deposit and set up future payments as needed. Be sure to get and record receipts. Ask for a sample menu.

2 months out from the retreat plan the menu with the caterer. Present the menu to the Logistics Committee and have them make adjustments as needed based on their and their family's needs (e.g. gluten and dairy free options). Finalize the menu with caterer.

### **Communicate Details with the Board (6 months in advance)**

Once you have the location and accommodations set be sure to communicate to the board this information in order for them to plan their travel (make sure to send a reminder communication 3 months out as well). Be sure to include:

- The name of the facility and a link to its website.
- The address and general directions to the facility.
- Check-in and check-out times.
- The nearest airport and its distance to the facility.
- A general description of the accommodations including the sleeping and meeting arrangements.
- The start and end times of the retreat.
- An offer to assist in travel planning as necessary.
- If available, a general outline and plan for the retreat activities

### **Book Travel as Necessary (4-6 months in advance)**

Book travel, hotels and rental car for yourself/staff. Remember if booking a hotel to book it within easy driving distance to the facility. Remember to leave enough time on each end of travel so you can be the first to arrive in order to purchase supplies and snacks as needed and set up the retreat and the last to leave to clean up from the retreat.

Assist in booking any travel as requested by any board members or for babysitters as needed. This may include booking transportation from the airport to the facility. Be sure that there will be enough vehicle space to transport everyone to service projects and family outings. If necessary, work with the Executive Director to plan renting vehicles as needed.

Keep track of all receipts and document in the receipt spreadsheet. Keep track of all board travel you have booked and communicate it to the board members.

### **Plan Retreat Agenda (4 months in advance)**

Work with the Executive Director and the Retreat Planning Committee to determine the theme and general direction for the retreat. Based on their input determine the number and type of activities and sessions and divide up planning them with the Executive Director (typically the E.D. will plan the board

sessions and other activities with Planning Committee members input and the Next Gen Committee will plan the Next Gen sessions).

Be sure to include:

- Prayer activities that are kid friendly
- Board faith reflections
- Review of the Norms and Values
- A family game/ice breaker
- A service project
- Presentations from older next gen members and possibly from Board members
- Next Gen sessions
- Board sessions
- Evaluation
- Meals
- Breaks
- Family free time
- Babysitter arrival and departure times

Be sure to invite board members and older next gen members to help lead some of the activities. In the past the review of the norms, some of the prayer activities, and some of the board discussions have been led by different board members and older next gen members have completed presentations and assisted in leading next gen activities for the younger next gen members. As well, board members have assisted in leading some of the next gen activities. If board/next gen members agree to assist be sure to write specific instructions and include any forms and documents needed for their roles and both email them in advance and have them printed and ready at the retreat.

When planning activities keep in mind:

- To include multiple options during a kid's activity (e.g. reading, crafts, something active) so younger ones with shorter attention spans have more choices.
- Do not have too many craft heavy activities.
- Find out in advance what audio-visual equipment is needed and make sure to have it available.
- That there is a clear explanation of what is happening and why it is happening for each session and activity (e.g. introducing a next gen presentation in the context of the foundation and their learning)
- That you have the space to accommodate the activity (e.g. outdoor space for running around activities) and that you have a backup plan if the weather makes any outdoor activities undoable.
- Know your space so you use the best room for each activity and that people can easily get from one activity to the next.

Once all retreat activities and sessions are planned develop a supplies checklist. Ask board members who are driving to the retreat facility to bring supplies that they have at home (e.g. sports equipment, arts and craft supplies, paper, pens etc....) Document who is bring what and remind them a few days out. Plan what can be brought and determine what if anything needs to be purchased on location. Again, document all receipts.

### **Set up a Service Project (3 months in advance)**

Some camp/conference/retreat centers offer service project options. Be sure to check-in about this when booking accommodations. If it is the right kind of project, then set it up at the time of booking the accommodations. Otherwise ask the facility for suggestions, check local churches, look at local non-profits, and check out the [VolunteerMatch](#) website for ideas.

When setting up a service project keep in mind:

- The site must be able to accommodate children.
- The site should have work that can be done by multiple age ranges and abilities.
- The work is mostly physical for the kids (such as picking up trash, weeding, sorting, harvesting...).
- That the site can take a group our size.
- That the work session doesn't last more than 1.5-2 hours.
- That the site supplies all the necessary equipment as most people won't be local.
- That the site leaders preferably include some short educational piece about the service being done.

Work with the Logistics Committee to decide if the foundation will provide a donation to the service project site and how much. If so, be sure to let the Executive Director know to bring a check and for what amount.

Set up the project and document any information that needs to be communicated in advance. Be sure to get directions to the site. Communicate clearly any information and directions to the board and have them printed for the day of. On the day of also be sure to talk about some historical data about the project site (including the foundation's connection if appropriate) and the problem they are working to solve in order to give context to the service project.

If the retreat is on Memorial Day weekend it may be a challenge to find locations that will be open and willing to accommodate a service project. Projects that have worked in the past are creating cards for elderly homebound and having a board member deliver them later, collecting food in advance for a food bank and delivering it later.

Other places to look for virtual service project ideas:

- [Project Giving Kids](#)
- [Learning to Give](#)
- [Youth Service America \(YSA\) – Youth Changing the World](#)

### **Plan Family Free Time (2 months in advance)**

Work with the Logistics Committee to plan family free time. This time is designated for building relationships with the extended family, so activities should be designed to include everyone. This is the Logistics Committee's main task, so the staff person's job is to encourage it and provide ideas but to let the committee take responsibility. Family Free Time in the past has included planning meals and outings such as a children's museum. Some camp/conference/retreat centers have activities for hire (such as pools, ropes courses, lake/river activities) that you can offer as options to the Logistics committee. Be sure to have the committee choose one of those options in advance so you have plenty of time to book it with the facility. Once the Logistics Committee has planned the free time be sure to add the activities

to the agenda. (Be aware that some activities require the weather to cooperate so either back up activities should be planned or moving agenda items should be anticipated.)

At this time also work out with the Logistics Committee what snacks will be needed and who can provide what. In the past some snacks have been brought by family members and some have been purchased by the foundation.

### **Book Babysitters with Logistics Committee (2 months in advance)**

Staff is ultimately responsible for securing babysitting for the retreat but should work with the Logistics Committee to ensure that the best babysitting scenario is achieved.

Have the Logistics Committee determine the number of babysitters needed. Work with them on determining the schedule for the babysitters based on the agenda. Typically, there is one or two babysitters for infants/toddlers and another for the pre-school to middle school group. First have the Logistics Committee determine if they have connections in the retreat's location that can be utilized. If not, have the parents determine if they are able to bring a known childcare provider from their home location. If the Logistics Committee is unable to secure babysitters, then check with the facility if they have connections for babysitters. You can also check local licensed preschool/afterschool day care programs to see if they can recommend anyone. If those options don't work use websites such as care.com, sittercity.com, and babysitterregistry.com to book babysitters. Be sure to have the parents approve of any babysitter choices (kids in the past have preferred adult babysitters vs teens and college age).

Have the Logistics Committee determine and bring supplies for the babysitters to use with the kids (such as: books, coloring, crafts, sports equipment, games, videos...).

If necessary, communicate with the Executive Director how many checks and for what amount will be needed to pay the babysitters.

When the babysitters arrive be clear with them about their roles especially around managing the infants and toddlers. Make sure that there is at least one babysitter who is assigned solely to the infants and toddlers. Make sure the babysitters work to include all the kids.

### **Create Board Packet (2 weeks in advance)**

Put together documents for individual board packets (make extra copies just in case any are lost).

Include:

- The location information with directions and check-in times
- The menu for the weekend
- The agenda
- Any directions and documents they need for sessions and activities they are leading or assisting with.



Email these documents ahead of time and have copies in folders labeled with their respective board members names available at the retreat. Be sure to create packets for any older next gen members who have roles (such as presentations or assisting with next gen activities).

### **Final Check (1 week in advance)**

Before leaving be sure to:

- Check the weather at the location and make plans as necessary to adjust, move, replace activities.
- Make all the copies needed for the sessions at the retreat.
- Gather the supplies and remind those bringing supplies what they agreed to bring (including snacks).
- Make sure all checks needed to pay for babysitters or donate to the service project are ready.
- Prep all documents needed for travel (be sure that the board members whom you booked travel for have what they need), the accommodations, hotel, and any rental vehicles.
- Breathe and be ready to have fun and work hard.

## **During Retreat**

### **Upon Arrival**

- Purchase supplies and snacks as planned.
- Check-in to accommodations and pay any remainder as necessary.
- Confirm rooms and meeting spaces as necessary with the host.
- Get any instructions from the facility (e.g. alarms, locks, kitchen appliances...).
- Confirm catering and meal/delivery times. Pay any remainder as necessary.
- Set up meeting spaces and audio-visual equipment needed.
- Determine best sleeping arrangements and suggest to families as they arrive.
- Welcome everyone, hand out board packets, and inform them of the schedule of events.
- Communicate any special instructions received from the facility.

### **Throughout**

Remember, if you are staying at a separate location (likely a hotel nearby), be sure to leave enough time for travel each day so you arrive to eat with the family and have time to prep for that day's activities.

Responsibilities include:

- Liaising with:
  - The accommodation staff to report any issues and questions and to get them resolved.
  - The babysitters to make sure they arrive on time and know their roles.
  - The caterer to be sure they know where to go and that they are on time and have provided what was contracted.
- Running the retreat.

- You are in charge of making the retreat run smoothly. You will need to get everyone to sessions, so they start and end on time.
- Run sessions and support others running sessions.
- Work to adjust the agenda as necessary for weather and timing issues.
- Support the board as needed.
- Trouble shoot any issues.

### **Upon Departure**

- Complete a retreat evaluation for both session content and the accommodations (both in person and electronic evaluations have been done in the past).
- Make sure babysitters have been paid and that the service project donation (if appropriate) was delivered.
- Make sure supplies get returned to the appropriate people and places.
- For those whom you booked travel, confirm that they have their travel plans set and any documents they need.
- Make sure the facility is cleaned up (including tossing left-over food) and all check-out instructions have been followed.
- Be the last to leave.
- Check out as necessary.
- Be sure all rental vehicles are returned as appropriate.