

# UPSIDE DOWN

## :MEET THE NEED FIRST

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### Developing Ongoing Ministry in Response to COVID-19

#### A Guide for Churches and Ministries

In light of COVID-19, many churches and ministries are thinking critically about principles and best practices. The information below provides guidance in developing strategy to not only meet the immediate need, but the needs that emerge over time.

#### Focus on the long term

Meeting any and all immediate needs is tempting. However, meeting an immediate need without a strategic focus may not be in someone's long term interest. We also risk being driven by our own emotions. Instead, decision-making should be based on what is best in the long term and what is sustainable for everyone involved. We want to be light, not lightning.

#### Focus the mission

For most churches/organizations, it is unrealistic to be all things to all people. Focusing the "what" means you can be more effective and sustainable. With a limited focus, you can better work alongside community partners and reduce duplication. It can be hard to say no. But the result is doing a few things well and effectively.

For example, one group/church may decide to focus on meals for families. If effective, they will directly and indirectly help families with more than just food (relief on budget, time to job search, contact, etc.). One group may focus on temporary work for people in-between jobs. Another on social/mental health needs. For needs outside your focus, know where to send people.

#### Develop a process

Structure is love. We should be driven by compassion (secondary to prayer). In the long term, the most compassionate way to meet tangible needs is to define a process and stick to it. It is also the most effective way to be fair. A process will discourage manipulation, and will ensure that "quieter" people are not overlooked. A uniform process creates an expectation which leads to healthy relationships. A process is also the best way to counteract bias and racism. With a process you can be intentional instead of merely reactive.



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For more information, visit [www.upsidedownlife.org](http://www.upsidedownlife.org)

### Keep data systematically

Mercy ministries are most effective when you are involved in people's lives. A system of gathering data will bring accountability to all people involved in a helping relationship and expand the helper's understanding of the situation. Data is also the best ways to involve financial givers who cannot be involved directly.

### No direct funds

For many people, receiving a check or cash is harmful. There is no fair or flawless way to identify those people. A "no direct funds" policy promotes healthy relationships through consistent and fair expectations. Most needs can be met through goods, services, or direct payment to a third party. This policy is held by the vast majority of long term ministers to tough or economically diverse neighborhoods.

### Focus on self-care

A long term focus necessitates the prioritization of self-care among those providing help. Proper boundaries and sufficient Biblical rest are the only ways to ensure perseverance. Short term interactions pale in comparison to the benefit of long-term relationships. Self-care may feel selfish, but is actually self-less under a long term focus.

### Relief and release

Providing relief (meeting tangible needs) is important and Biblical. There may be times of simply showing God's love in tangible ways through relief. However, it should never stand alone. There should always be an intentional interplay between relief and release with release as the ultimate goal. Release ultimately is defined as freedom from sin through Jesus Christ and spiritual growth.

