

8 Essentials When Forming a Church Safety and Security Team

Forming a Safety and Security Team is an essential exercise for churches today. With the increase in violence against houses of worship, a trained group of individuals whose number one priority is to keep the people who attend their gatherings and services safe is just as important as the worship team, greeters, and the hospitality team members. Dealing with pandemics and health concerns is also another reason why churches must prioritize the forming of this team. When churches can finally reopen their campus doors, the church Safety and Security Team will be on the front lines, and they must be ready.

Forming this team can be a daunting process but no matter the size of your church, you can establish a team that can be successful in this important role. Let's check out 8 essentials that are essential.

Personnel – What is your onboarding process for volunteers?

- ◆ Level 3 Leaders – Higher level of accountability and responsibility
- ◆ Experienced in law enforcement, military, corrections, etc.
- ◆ Extensive background checks conducted on candidates
- ◆ Must have a clear understanding that when things go bad, they are to run towards danger not away from it
- ◆ First aid/CPR certified (EMT's, nurses are essential members of the team)
- ◆ Honest with a high sense of integrity
- ◆ Teachers are GREAT assets for this team
- ◆ Trained in emergency procedures and evacuations
- ◆ Trained in how to handle children
- ◆ Background checked and CPR certified

Personality

- ◆ Do a simple DISC assessment of your team before you add them
 - ◇ D's – take charge
 - ◇ I's – are your friendly face and cheerleader
 - ◇ C's – meticulous with the details and procedures
 - ◇ S's – remain calm under pressure and get the job done
- ◆ Must be able to stay calm under pressure – ask if they have dealt with emergency situations in the past
- ◆ Must be able to have a “greeter” personality
- ◆ Welcoming and warm
- ◆ Must always be on watch. (A clear sense of situational awareness)
- ◆ Have a strong sense of mission

Purpose

- ◆ To protect the church, its attenders, and its assets
- ◆ To provide a safe, clean, environment to worship
- ◆ To be the liaison between the church and local law enforcement/emergency services (i.e. if a situation happens on campus)
- ◆ To maintain reports on incidents/accidents that may need to be reported to insurance companies and law enforcement agencies
- ◆ To provide security for the Pastors, visiting guests, and the leadership of the church

Plan

- ◆ Develop a comprehensive safety and security manual – This takes time and attention to detail and must fit your specific circumstances.
- ◆ Develop policies and procedures for how to handle certain situations
- ◆ Incidents/Accidents with children



Plan (con't)

- ◆ Sexual predators/People on sex offender lists
- ◆ Accidents/Incidents on the property
- ◆ Volunteers that work with minors and vulnerable populations
- ◆ Drills of all kinds (fire, evacuation, active shooter, etc.)
- ◆ Get buy in from church leadership – the Lead Pastor MUST be onboard
- ◆ Share your plan with a legal professional and with your insurance company – They will have great insight for you!
- ◆ Invite local law enforcement and the fire department in to review the manual with the team
- ◆ Stick to the plan, stick to the plan, STICK TO THE PLAN

Priorities

- ◆ Know your teams
- ◆ Know the plan
- ◆ Safety – Be ready to respond to a safety and medical emergency
- ◆ Security – Be ready to respond to a security threat
- ◆ Vulnerable populations (anyone under the age of 18, disabled individuals)
- ◆ Compliance – Make sure that you are in compliance with state and federal regulations and requirements

Preparation

- ◆ Know the plan - The Safety and Security team will need to have a good understanding of the manual. Have each individual sign off on an acknowledgement that they have read it, understand it, and agree to abide by it.
- ◆ Team must have a clear understanding of their expectations and roles – Provide a written job description for them
- ◆ Quarterly meetings for the safety and security team to review procedures and best practice

Practice

- ◆ Table-top exercises
- ◆ Quarterly firearms qualifying (If you allow security to carry weapons)
- ◆ Consult your insurance carrier before you allow anyone to carry on church property
- ◆ Quarterly fire and evacuation drills (ministry)
- ◆ Semi-Annual church-wide evacuation drills
- ◆ Annual Active Shooter Training
- ◆ First Aid/CPR Certification
- ◆ PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Perform

- ◆ The last step is execution. Make your Safety and Security Team an active and integral part of your worship gatherings.
- ◆ Schedule your safety and security team.
- ◆ Determine stations around campus for each member to monitor.
- ◆ Determine roles for each individual team member. (Examples)
- ◆ Children's area
- ◆ Entrances/Exits
- ◆ Worship area and stage
- ◆ Parking lots
- ◆ Incident Commander
- ◆ They must be ready to react quickly, without delay.
- ◆ This is not like any other ministry. The security and safety team is expected to run towards danger when others are running away from it.
- ◆ This team acts as a deterrent just as much as enforcement.