

## **Creating Comprehensive Safety and Security Guidelines**

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### **Written Safety and Security Guidelines**

Creating written guidelines is an extremely important part of developing a safe and secure environment for your whole congregation. Guidelines should be developed by a team at your church who can assist with training and enforcement. Church leaders to consider as part of the development team are the pastor or a ministry leader, parents, teachers, deacons or other church leadership team members.

This framework is designed to help you and your team ask questions and seek clarity about the necessary “whys” and “whats” of your guidelines. Carefully working through each step of this framework will make your guidelines relevant to your ministry setting and more likely to be followed and enforced.

Many steps in the framework include questions along with possible responses to help guide your thoughts and decision-making. Some of the guideline points should be non-negotiable and included in every guideline, while other guideline points are optional based on the perceived needs of your church.

A word of caution — never take a blank guideline or the guidelines developed by another church and merely add your church’s name to the document. Carefully consider and develop a unique document for your church. Guideline development takes time. The work that goes into developing a set of guidelines will reinforce the points of your guidelines and facilitate adherence to the guidelines in your church.

#### **Step 1: Purpose Statement**

*What is the overall purpose and the need for safety and security guidelines? Why do we feel the need for written guidelines?*

This purpose statement can take the form of either a letter from your pastor or ministry leader about the need for these written guidelines.

#### **Form a Safety and Security Team**

**Safety and Security Team** is responsible for preparing for any type of emergency that might happen in the church during any services or events. These individuals are responsible for designing and implementing a safety and security plan that all leaders and servant volunteers know and communicate to those in their care.

Members of a security team should have:

- ♦ Strong people skills
- ♦ Mental and emotional stability
- ♦ Keen ability to observe people and situations
- ♦ Good judgment and not impulsive

Duties of a security team:

- ♦ Identify questionable behavior and respond quickly.
- ♦ Patrol the grounds before, during, after services and at special events for anyone out of place.
- ♦ Report any behavior that could escalate out of control to the proper authorities.
- ♦ If an incident is threatening the safety of the congregation, dial 911 immediately.
- ♦ When responding to an incident, check the area for any potential dangers.
- ♦ Intentionally greet strangers with (“May I help you with something?” “Is there someone you are looking for?” “May I assist you with anything?”) Gauge the answers to those questions to determine the phase of action.
- ♦ Attend training so that team members know what to do in any type of emergency
- ♦ Commit to being on time and focused on the tasks at hand.
- ♦ If you are not able to serve at the assigned times, let your ministry coordinator know so that other arrangements can be made for coverage.
- ♦ Display an attitude of excellence in every aspect of church safety and security.

## **Be Ready to Respond to Emergency Situations**

### **Medical Emergency**

Call 911. Be prepared to give the following information:

- ♦ Name and extension.
- ♦ Location.
- ♦ Number of people involved.
- ♦ Nature of injury or illness.

Note: Treat minor injuries from supplies in the first aid kits. The kits are located (provide location here).

While waiting for professional help do not move the ill or injured person. When professional help arrives:

- ♦ Allow responding units to take control of situation.
- ♦ Emergency response team members will stand by to assist as needed

Regular CPR/First Aid training is recommended for all church leaders, especially pre-school and Sunday School teachers.

## **Fire Emergency**

If you detect smoke:

- ♦ Call 911.
- ♦ Give your name, telephone number, and location within the building.
- ♦ Describe the situation.
- ♦ Advise the building coordinator, incident coordinator, or other emergency response team members of the situation.

If you detect fire:

- ♦ Call 911 (move to a safe area before making this call).
- ♦ Give your name, telephone number, and location.
- ♦ Describe the situation.
- ♦ If you know how to use a fire extinguisher and feel the best course of action is to attempt to extinguish the fire, locate an extinguisher and, without risking injury, attempt to extinguish the fire.
- ♦ If the fire is beyond the point of a safe attempt to extinguish it, isolate the fire by closing doors in the area before evacuating.

When evacuating your congregation:

Have a common spot outside the building where everyone meets.

Parents and caregivers should know that during any emergency, the leaders and volunteers will evacuate their children and meet at the common spot.

## **Violent Emergency**

Sticking to set protocols is recommended in order to prevent deaths and injuries.

The following steps are recommended should a violent intruder enter a church:

- ♦ Alert the entire safety and security team and the police.
- ♦ Evacuate worshipers when possible and lock doors in areas that can be secured.
- ♦ Have trained security personnel approach and incapacitate the intruder.

It is imperative that the congregation be aware that a plan is in place to address violent intruders. The congregation also needs to know what is expected of them during a violent confrontation. Security should not be the primary focus of any house of worship, but it is a critical element of tending a flock.

## **Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth**

### **Steps to becoming an “approved worker”**

- a. Completion of application to serve, including permission to conduct criminal background check.
- b. Interview with designated leader.
- c. Reference checks (Consider who should be included in providing references: family, individuals outside of the church setting, fellow church members, length of time someone has known applicant, etc.)
- d. Completion of safety training.

### **Two adult rule**

There should always be at least two adults over the age of 18 serving in every classroom, regardless of the number of children. If only two adults are present, they should not be related by marriage. If a couple is serving, another adult over the age of 18 should also be present in the room.

Discuss what steps your church will take or require to ensure an adult is never alone with a child. Do you need to include any of these steps in your guidelines?

- Rationale: In the event an allegation of abuse leads to a criminal trial, husbands and wives cannot be coerced to testify against each other in court.
- Discuss what steps your church will take or require to ensure an adult is never alone with a child. Should you include any of these steps in your written guidelines?
- In the event an emergency leaves only one adult in the room, what steps are required to ensure a safe and secure teaching environment? (Possible responses: require door to remain open; notify director of situation; ask floater to occasionally check room.)

### **Six-month rule**

No one should be allowed to serve in children’s ministry until they have been a member for at least six months or an active attender for at least one year

### **Clear sightlines into each classroom in the church**

- ◆ Are there clear sightlines into every room of our church?
- ◆ Should there be a requirement that these sightlines are to be left unobstructed for outside viewing?
- ◆ Do we need to budget for adding windows in our classroom doors?

### **Check-in and release procedures**

- ♦ What is our required check-in and release procedure?
- ♦ What are the ages of the children who will be required to check-in and be released to a parent or guardian with approved tag, badge or sticker?
- ♦ Is there a procedure for parents who lose their release tag, badge or sticker?
- ♦ What is the procedure for someone coming to pick up a child without the required tag, badge or sticker?
- ♦ Will there be an age restriction on who may pick up a child?

### **Optional points to consider for inclusion in your guidelines.**

Following is a comprehensive list of points to consider for inclusion in your guidelines. Only include points that are applicable to your ministry setting and that you feel will be enforceable.

### **Bathroom and Diapering Procedures**

- ♦ Will there be a gender restriction on assisting children with toileting needs?
- ♦ Will there be a gender restriction on who may diaper a child?
- ♦ Will there be an age restriction for assisting children with toileting needs?
- ♦ Suggested guideline is no one under the age of 18 should ever assist with diapering/toileting or escorting children to the bathroom.
- ♦ What procedure will our volunteers follow when assisting children in the bathroom?
- ♦ Often this answer depends on whether or not a church has bathrooms in the classroom or if a volunteer must escort a child to a bathroom in a hallway or other part of the church. Points to consider including in your guidelines are that no adult may be alone with a child or children in a bathroom that has the outside door or stall door closed. If escorting a child to a hall bathroom, the adult should check the bathroom first before allowing a child to enter. Another adult should be in view of the adult attending the child. If a child needs assistance, notify another adult before entering the bathroom. Consider having designated bathrooms for “children only” in your children’s ministry area.

### **Bites and injury reporting**

- ♦ To whom should reports of bites or injuries be made?
- ♦ Is there a form to be completed that will document a bite or injury?

### **Appropriate discipline**

- ♦ What are appropriate and inappropriate forms of discipline?

- ♦ Appropriate forms of discipline: redirection; praise; natural consequences; age-appropriate time out in the classroom; contacting director; contacting parent.
- ♦ Inappropriate forms of discipline: shaming; yelling; blaming; “silent treatment;” hitting; biting.
- ♦ Are there other forms of discipline both acceptable and unacceptable that your guidelines will specify?

**Appropriate touch (optional, but recommended)**

- ♦ Appropriate: high-fives; fist bumps; shoulder touches; side hugs; handshakes.
- ♦ Inappropriate: frontal hugs; men holding children on laps; kissing on face or lips.
- ♦ Are there other forms of touch that your guidelines will specify?

**Wellness Guidelines (suggestions):**

- ♦ Green discharge from nose or eyes
- ♦ Fever in last 24 hours
- ♦ Vomiting or diarrhea in last 24 hours
- ♦ Severe coughing
- ♦ Pink eye
- ♦ Lice
- ♦ Strep throat
- ♦ Impetigo

**Teaching ratios**

Suggested:

<b>Age Grouping</b>	<b>Adult/Maximum Child Ratio</b>	<b>Group Size</b>
Babies – Kindergarten	1:3	12
Babies – Twos	1:3	12
Threes – Kindergarten	1:4	15
Babies	1:2	12
Ones – Twos	1:3	12
Threes – Pre-K	1:4	20
Kindergarten	1:5	24
School-age Children	1:6	26

**Administration of medicine**

Suggested guideline is that no volunteer or staff member administer medicine to a child, including diaper rash cream or other ointments.

### **Photo, video and social media guideline**

Suggested guideline is that no photography or video of children be taken or posted on the church's website or social media without parent's written approval.

### **Overnight trips**

- ♦ What will be your guidelines for assigning rooms?
- ♦ Suggested guideline is no adults sleep in the same bed as a minor or adults stay in an adjacent/nearby room where minors sleep.

### **Communication between leaders/volunteers and children**

Suggested guideline is no private electronic communication (email, social media, texting, etc.) should take place with a child at any time.

### **Steps for dealing with non-compliance to guidelines**

What steps will leaders take if a volunteer/paid staff fail to adhere to or enforce written guidelines on a consistent basis?

### **Age restrictions for youth volunteers**

Suggested guideline is no one under age 18 serve with children ages birth through age 2. There should be at least five years' age difference between youth volunteers and the age group with whom they volunteer.

### **Emergency evacuation plans**

A plan should be created and explained clearly to volunteers, parents and the security team so that parents know where to pick up children in the event of an emergency without causing additional congestion inside children's areas.

- ♦ Who will assist with evacuation in the event it is needed?
- ♦ What route should classes take?
- ♦ What are the procedures for ensuring that all children are evacuated and then released to the appropriate parent/guardian?

### **Drivers**

- ♦ Who is allowed to transport children to official church events?
- ♦ Is there a requirement to conduct a driver's license check before a driver is allowed to transport children/youth?
- ♦ Is there a guideline for using church vehicles?

**Food allergies**

What are the requirements for bringing in outside food or drink beyond the food provided by the church?

**Hot beverages**

Are teachers, volunteers, parents allowed to bring hot beverages or food into children's areas?