

Providing a Safe Environment for Preschoolers and Children



Rooms for preschoolers and children at church must be safe.

- Review the building, electrical, and fire codes in your area for up-to-date requirements.
- Post fire escape routes and disaster procedures in each room.
- Consult your insurance agent and local fire officials when implementing effective practices.

Provide a first aid kit and maintain a list of individuals in your church who are trained in first aid and CPR.

- Inform teachers of the locations of the first aid kit, telephones and emergency phone numbers, and list of emergency procedures.

Furnish preschool and children's rooms with age-appropriate equipment and supplies.

- Outdoor playground equipment should be age appropriate and firmly mounted.
- Care should be given to the space between equipment, use of recessed bolts, cushioning material under equipment, and fencing.

Check with your day care licensing agency or insurance agent for an evaluation of your playground.

- Make sure your policies indicate the number of adults needed outdoors to supervise children.

When appropriate policies are followed consistently by all preschool and children's programs, your church is in the best position to protect preschoolers and children, safeguard teachers, and reduce the legal liability of your church.

Moral, spiritual, and legal responsibility requires that churches continue to meet the needs of preschoolers and children with loving, informed diligence.

Security



Every time your child is at church, we want him to feel loved and secure. Every effort is made to help him be safe and well cared for by loving, dedicated teachers.

- As a child experiences security, he begins to develop a sense of trust that will help form a foundation for spiritual decisions later in life.

Leaving your child in a preschool department can sometimes be a frustrating experience, especially the first few times.

- When a child feels secure about his room environment and teachers, he is better able to participate in the class activities.

Teachers in Vacation Bible School may rotate.

- For the most part, the teachers you leave your child with will be the same ones to return him to you at the end of the session.
- During his time with us, several adults will lead him through many planned age-appropriate activities.

To help us make sure that your child goes home with you, we have a security system for all children birth through second grade.

- The basic procedure is that all parents of babies through second graders must show a security card to the teacher before the child can be released to the parent.
- Please remember that your child's protection is a priority for us.



Safety Devices at Church

Preschool and children's departments need a telephone nearby. The division should have an accessible telephone with appropriate numbers posted clearly and conveniently. All teachers (including Extended Teaching Care) should know the location of the phone and how to access an outside line.



If all preschool and children's departments are not located in the same general area, it may be necessary to consider an additional phone so that all department will have quick access to a phone.

Secure Doors



Sometimes little extra resistance when opening a department door may be enough to discourage an uninvited person from "wandering" into a preschool room. A simple hook and eye may offer such a resistance and still be opened, if needed, with extra pressure. Check local fire codes before considering this kind of door fixture.

Security Checks

Some churches already have someone (a church member) who walks about the church buildings during church services to check for strangers or others in the hallways. Request that this person(s) check the preschool and children's areas several times during Vacation Bible School.



Parents Please Help Us Protect Your Child by:

- **Showing a teacher your ID card when you come for your child.**
- **Coming for your child yourself. Church policies state that preschoolers are to be released to only parents or other authorized adults.**
- **Knocking on the door. Then remain outside the room until a teacher brings your child to you.**

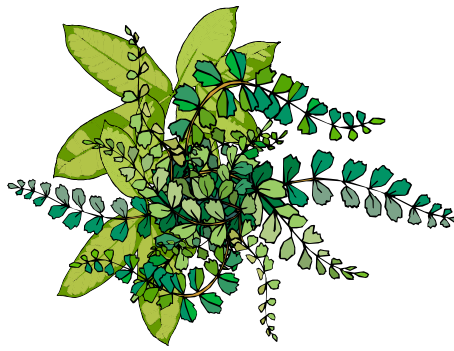


Safety Checklist



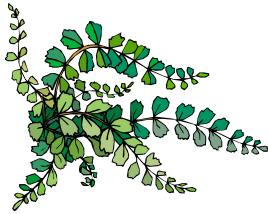
- _____ Enlist at least two teachers for every room.
- _____ Provide 25 to 35 square feet of space for every child and teacher in attendance.
- _____ Remove any unnecessary furnishings or supplies.
- _____ Check the floor for small objects that could choke a child.
- _____ Use a disinfecting solution made of 1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water to clean toys, wash teacher's hands, and wipe off preschool furnishings and equipment. If a baby puts a toy in her mouth, clean the toy, rinse it, and allow it to air-dry before giving it to another child. Discard stuffed animals or other toys that cannot be sanitized.
- _____ Cover all electrical outlets.
- _____ Place cleaning supplies and plastic bags out of the reach of children.
- _____ Make sure dangling cords are out of children's reach.
- _____ Check all toys and furnishings for rough, sharp edges, or splintering.

Preschoolers and Plants



When using plants with preschoolers, always use live plants. Artificial nature materials have little or no value to a preschooler.

Many plants are harmful if eaten. Here is a list of some of those plants:



Plant	Toxic Part	Plant	Toxic Part
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azalea • Bird of Paradise • Burning Bush • Caladium • Castor Bean • Chinaberry • Columbine • Cyclamen • Daffodil • Delphinium • Dieffenbachia • Elephant ear • English Ivy • Four O'clock • Foxglove • Hens & Chickens • Holly • Hyacinth • Hydrangea • Iris • Jerusalem Cherry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All parts Green seed pods Leaves All parts Seed Berries Berry Tuber Bulb All parts, especially seed All parts All parts Leaves Root, seed All parts All parts Berries Bulb, leaves, flower Leaves, buds root Root all parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lantana • Larkspur • Lily-of-the-valley • Mistletoe • Mock Orange • Morning Glory • Mountain laurel • Mushroom, <small>poisonous</small> • Narcissus • Oleander • Philodendron • Pinks • Poinsettia • Potato • Rhododendron • Rhubarb • Scotch Broom • Spider Lily • Sweet Pea • Yew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All part, especially berries All parts, especially seed All parts Berries Fruit Seed All parts All parts Bulb Leaves All parts Seed All parts Seed, sprouts All parts Leaves Seed bulb Stem Bark, needles, seeds

Snacks

“Thank You, God, for good food.”

Snacks can be a fun, delicious, nutritious learning experience for preschoolers, and children. What does my church do for snacks? Good health habits start early, and we (as preschool and children’s teachers) share an interesting a child’s total development.

Plan snacks with little or no sugar content. Be aware of any preschoolers and children who may have allergies to certain foods. Food such as popcorn, raw celery, raw carrots, and whole nuts are not recommended by many pediatricians as they may cause preschoolers or young children to choke.

What are some healthy snack foods?

- Unsweetened fruit juices
- Lettuce wedges
- Cucumber rings
- Green pepper strips
- Meat cubes
- Pear slices
- Orange wedges
- Melon cubes
- Water
- Fresh pineapple chunks
- Strawberries
- Tangerine wedges
- Cheese cubes
- Plum slices
- Apple wedges without the peeling
- Banana slices
- Peach cubes



Allergy Poster



If your child is allergic to any of the ingredients listed today, please print your child's name on an adhesive notepad along with the item he/she cannot taste. Stick the note at the bottom or edge of the poster. Be sure to check this poster each day and leave a new note, if necessary. We also ask that you inform a teacher each day of your child's allergies.

Today's Snack and Nature Items

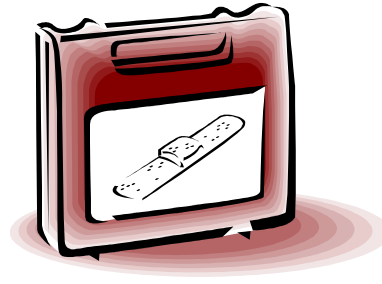
Allergy Notes

(place adhesive notepad here)

(Place allergy notes here)

Thank you

Accident/Injury Report Form



Name of Church: _____

Church Address: _____

Name of injured child/adult _____

Date of accident/injury _____ Time of accident/injury _____

Location of accident/injury _____

Conditions at accident/injury (weather, etc) _____

Description of how accident/injury occurred _____

Description of action taken on child's/adult's behalf _____

Was parent/guardian advised of accident/injury? _____

Was parent/guardian advised to seek medical attention for injured party? _____

Names(s) of person(s) supervising at time of accident/injury _____

Form completed by _____ Date _____

(Disclaimer: This form is solely for illustrative purposes. State and local laws may vary. It is recommended that each church solicit the advice of an independent, qualified attorney. LifeWay Christian Resources nor the Southern Baptist Convention assume any liability for reliance on this form.)

Playground Safety Check List



-
- _____ Fence is in good repair
 - _____ Playground sign is posted
 - _____ Gates are secure and lockable and have a safety latch
 - _____ Sight lines are unhampered
 - _____ Playground equipment is six feet away from fences and building
 - _____ Playground equipment is anchored in ground
 - _____ Sharp edges are covered
 - _____ Bolts and screws are secure
 - _____ Shock and water absorbent materials are under equipment and 8 to 12 inches
 - _____ Playground is free of poisonous plants, letter, insect nests, and hives
 - _____ Play toys are in good condition
 - _____ Area is free of electrical hazards
 - _____ Moving parts are free of defects
 - _____ All openings, other than crawl-through and slides, are less than 8 inches
 - _____ Electrical outlets have safety covers
 - _____ Harmful supplies are out of the reach of children
 - _____ No protruding parts are present

Transportation Procedure



Whenever transportation, including field trips, is provided by paid staff or volunteers, all requirements regarding transportation must be met.

The following requirements pertaining to transportation procedure shall be met at all times:

1. A schedule showing accurate route and itinerary shall be planned and kept at the center to show approximately where the vehicle is at any given time.
2. The drive shall be provided with:
 - A. A copy of the scheduled route
 - B. The name, address, and telephone number of the child care center
 - C. Names of children being transported and
 - D. A method to contact the children's parents in case of an emergency
3. Safe conduct to and from all vehicles and safe off-street loading spaces shall be provided so that the children are protected from backing vehicles, from walking between vehicles, and from all traffic hazards.
4. Attendance shall be checked each time children board and exit the vehicle.
5. Children shall not ride more than 60 minutes one way, except for field trips.
6. Children shall remain seated while the vehicle is in motion, and no part of a child's body may extend from windows.
7. Vehicles containing children should never be left unattended.
8. The use of tobacco products on or around the vehicle is prohibited while children are being transported.

(Requirements vary from state to state. Please consult the Department of Human Services Minimum Standards for Day Cares for a list of requirements for your state.)

Vehicle Requirements



Whenever transportation is provided by paid staff or volunteers, all requirements regarding transportation must be met.

Any vehicle used to transport children shall comply with the following requirements:

1. A vehicle shall not be used to transport children in excess of the maximum seating capacity. (The maximum seating capacity of the vehicle is based on the manufacturer's suggested seating capacity or on a minimum of 13 inches of seating per child.)
2. All passengers shall be able to sit comfortable in a stationary padded seat with a back that is properly anchored to the vehicle.
3. Vehicles used to transport children shall be maintained in a clean, safe operating condition, free of hazardous objects or other nonessential items that could injure children if thrown about as a result of a collision.
4. Children shall not be transported in vehicles or parts of vehicles which were not designed for the purpose of transporting people, such as truck beds, campers, and trailers.
5. When transporting children, vehicles shall be visibly marked with the name of the facility or sponsoring organization, with the exception of public transportation.
6. Each vehicle operated by a center for transportation shall have door locks. The driver shall be responsible for keeping the doors locked when the vehicle is moving.
7. The transporting vehicle shall be covered by medical and liability insurance as required by state laws.
8. A vehicle used to transport children shall have an operable heater that is capable of maintaining a temperature of 50 degrees F inside the vehicle and an appropriate ventilation system
9. A first aid kit and fire extinguisher shall be taken on each field trip.

(Requirements vary from state to state. Please consult the Department of Human Services Minimum Standards for Day Cares for a list of requirements for your state.)

Field Trip Planning Form

Date of Trip _____ M T W Th F

Destination _____ Time departing school _____
Address _____ Time returning to school _____
_____ Route to be traveled _____

Contact Person _____
Phone Number _____

Transportation: Bus Van Walk

Objectives in making this trip:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Follow-up activities planned:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Prior experiences of children related to this trip:

How will children be prepared for this trip?

Have you visited this site? Yes No Why is this site appropriate for children?

Safety precautions needed for this visit:

Special requirements for this trip, i.e. money (specific amount), snack/meal:

Names of persons accompany group on the trip:

Attach a copy of notification to parents that will be distributed if the field trip is approved.

Teacher's Name

Date of Request

Field Trips

FIELD TRIP PERMISSION

(This form must remain on file for every child in the program. No child will be allowed to participate without written permission.)

I give my permission for my child to go on any field trip that is to be taken this year. Yes No

I would be able to help by accompanying my child's group as a helper when asked. Yes No

Parent's Signature _____

FIELD TRIP NOTICE

Location _____

Date _____

Departure Time _____

Time Returning to Program _____

Special Needs _____

Teacher/Class _____

Hygiene, Health and First Aid

Teachers:

1. Wash their hands with soap and water when they arrive in the room, before holding a child, after wiping a nose, or assisting with toileting, and before and after feeding a child.
2. Use 1 cup bleach to one gallon water to disinfect toys, cribs, tables, diapering area, and materials in the room.
3. Wear gloves when assisting with diapering and toileting needs, first aid needs, and cleaning up blood spills or body fluids.
4. Disinfect areas contaminated with bodily fluids with a solution of 2 part bleach to 10 parts water.
5. Stock a first aid kit as recommended by Red Cross or a physician.
6. Complete an Accident/Injury Report Form and Incident Report when a child has an accident or incident. Give parents a copy and file a copy in the church office.
7. Are trained in first aid and CPR.
8. Have available each Child's Information Sheet and check it for allergies, special needs, and any other health information.
9. Ask parents to keep children who are ill at home until they are free of fever for 24 hours before they return to church.

Indoor and Room Safety

1. Church policy is adopted to require all employees and volunteers to be educated on safety issues and concerns; to exercise caution at all times; to be trained on what is safe and unsafe; and to report hazards.
2. Emergency lighting operates properly and is tested frequently. Electrical, building, fire codes, and emergency evacuation plans are up-to-date.
3. Telephone with emergency numbers is located near preschool and children's areas.
4. Aisles and hallways are unobstructed and walking areas are well lit.
5. Stairways are free of clutter, storage, and slip hazards, and stairwells are checked for loose railings.
6. Doorways and rooms are uncluttered, and doors remain closed at all times.
7. Doors are secured. Hall monitors closely observe entrances to preschool and children's rooms. Security checks are conducted several times throughout the day.
8. Room contents are age-appropriate.
9. Rooms are checked for unsafe equipment (splintering chairs, protruding nails, damaged carpet, dangling electrical cords, and exposed electrical outlets). Repairs are made immediately, and unsafe items are removed from the rooms.
10. Preschool materials and toys are safe, nontoxic, and free of sharp edges, small parts, and openings or hinges. Review the books Teaching Preschoolers: Steps Toward Faith and Preschool Sunday School for a New Century.
11. Make sure equipment is secured so that it cannot be pulled over, fall on, or harm a child in any way.
12. Check to see that materials are safe, used appropriately by the child and teacher, and guidelines for age usage as recommended on the boxes and labels are followed.
13. Require teachers to obtain approval from the VBS director (who is educated on evaluating what is safe and unsafe) before changing activities, crafts, or substituting materials, supplies, and equipment.

Outdoor and Playground Safety

1. Parking lots and street entrances have appropriate traffic signs that are visible and readable, and adult safety patrol is available while children are coming and leaving.
2. Entrance doors have controls to prevent fast closing.
3. Mats and carpets are in good condition to prevent tripping and slipping.
4. Entrance steps are checked for loose railings.
5. Playgrounds use guidelines described in the Handbook for Playground Safety from US Consumer Product Safety Commission, (www.cpsc.gov) for specifications on age-appropriate equipment, fall surfaces, impact material, and other safety precautions.
6. Equipment is checked frequently for loose parts, protruding bolts, sharp edges and corners, and splintering wood. Repairs are made immediately.
7. Pupil/teacher ratio is maintained on the playground, and teachers space themselves so they can observe, interact, and guide children. Children are not allowed on the playground unless teachers or trained leaders are present.
8. Rules for play on the playground are set and kept.
9. Surfaces are checked daily for broken glass, sharp objects, poisonous plants and non poisonous plants are kept free of fertilizers and weed killers.
10. Tipping hazards (stumps, roots, cracked cement slab) are removed.
11. High-risk activities (rock climbing, rappelling) are avoided.

Food Safety and Poison Control

1. List of poisonous plants (from local county agent or Poison Control Center) is posted in each room.
2. Art materials are checked for toxic and harmful ingredients. Powdered substances are not used. Glitter is avoided.
3. Teachers remove all medications from their purses. Medications are kept in locked area away from children.
4. Cleaning items are stored in a locked closet away from preschool and children's areas.
5. Parents are consulted before giving any child any food. Communicate with parents about the snacks that will be served each day.
6. Information sheet on each child is kept and checked for allergies to foods and other materials.
7. Preschoolers remain seated while eating foods and drinking drinks.
8. Foods to avoid are seeds, nuts, beans, raw carrots and celery, peanuts, raisins, whole grapes, popcorn, apples with peeling, and peanut butter.
9. Teachers are careful to give a baby's bottle only to him and that children do not exchange foods they have eaten from.
10. Teachers, preschoolers, and children wash their hands before and after eating.

Transportation and Field Trips

1. Requirements for transporting minors vary from state to state. Check with your state Department of Public Safety and Department of Human Services for day care requirements. Have adequate insurance and abide by coverage rules.
2. Drivers must be 21 years of age, be screened and interviewed by church, have background checks, have valid driver licenses for vehicle on file in the church office, be medically and physically fit, no use of tobacco products or drugs, have not been arrested for DUI, have recently reviewed state laws, and have had their driving approved by the church transportation committee or staff.
3. Pupil/teacher ratio is maintained as required by state law. Sponsors are at least 18 years of age.
4. Vehicle(s) are inspected and adequately loaded with proper number of passengers. Checklist is used to account for persons when loading and unloading.
5. Safety rules are reviewed with passengers before vehicle is in operation and abided by during the trip.
6. Field trip is scheduled and approved by the VBS Director and church. Written transportation route is on file in the church office, and each driver is given a copy of route and person in his/her vehicle.
7. Parents complete and sign permission slip and health form. Each passenger's form is in the vehicle in which he/she travels. Coordinator of trip has a copy of the forms with him/her.
8. A Red Cross recommended first aid kit and an approved fire extinguisher are in each vehicle.

Leadership Enlistment and Child Abuse Policies

1. All VBS teachers are 18 years of age, complete a Confidential Worker Application Form along with permission for a background check (www.lifeway.com/staff_p0001.asp) member of church for at least six months and approved by the VBS Director and church. Check with the church insurance policy and your church attorney before using youth as teachers in VBS.
2. A minimum of two adult (not from the same family) teachers are with the children at all times (in room, during rotation, during restroom breaks, and while transporting children to and from VBS).
3. Pupil/leader ratio is maintained at all times (See Preschool Sunday School for a New Century and Children's Sunday School for a New Century)
4. Classroom doors have small windows for viewing the room
5. All VBS teachers and leaders received a written job description and training on policies and procedures for teaching, security, child protection, and how to respond to and report child abuse (even when the truth cannot be determined).
6. Church staff or designated church leader monitors all activities and ministry sites both on and off the church property.
7. Employed VBS leaders are provided detailed job descriptions to prevent employees from acting beyond the scope of their authorized authority.
8. Require that there be no unsupervised cross-gender contact. For instance, don't allow a male teacher alone with a female youth or child.
9. Children will be in a room only when a teacher is present. No children will be in rooms alone.
10. A designated staff member investigates and confronts any inappropriate behavior.
11. VBS leaders and teachers should not present themselves as a professional or licensed counselor unless they have received a psychological training and licensing data from an accredited institution.

Disaster and Emergencies

1. Emergency evacuation plans for fire, violence, chemical spills, natural disasters (tornados, earthquakes, mudslides, storms) and other emergencies are posted in rooms and hallways, and teachers are aware and trained in their responsibilities in the event of any emergency.
2. Emergency equipment and supplies (fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, smoke alarms, flashlights, first aid equipment) are available, and in working order, and teachers are trained in their use.
3. Check with your local fire department, insurance company, and building code agency to make sure your church meets fire and building codes.
4. Make a designated crib for evacuating babies. Make sure this crib goes through all doorways easily. Reinforce crib springs with wood or metal strips, so the crib will hold several babies at once. Check to see that the crib rolls well when weighted with several babies.
5. Keep fire extinguishers, alarms, and sprinklers in good working order. Educate teachers on their usage.
6. When storms approach, assign one person the responsibility of listening to the weather on an NOAA Weather radio with battery back up. If evacuation is necessary, an assigned person will give the plan for evacuating to a designated place.
7. Have flashlights available for power outages.
8. In case of an earthquake gather children in a doorway, under a desk or heavy table, or stand flat against an interior wall. Once shaking has stopped, staff will give directions for evacuation.
9. If an explosion occurs, follow the plan you follow for fires, In case of gunfire, secure the door and hide the children under a table, in a closet, or in a corner. Stay away from windows and visibility to outside. Do not leave the room for any reason until the police have searched the building and give you permission to leave.

Security and General Policies

1. Make sure that your church has adequate insurance coverage by having an attorney knowledgeable in insurance and liability matters review your coverage before VBS.
2. Have parents complete a "Child's Information Sheet" with accurate information. Issue each parent a security card for their child. Parent(s) when picking up their child presents their security card. No child will be released to anyone less than 18 years of age.
3. Parents will sign their child in and out when arriving and upon departure.
4. Persons other than the teachers and children remain outside the room.
5. Adequate number of children will be maintained in the room according to space. Adequate teacher/pupil ratio will be maintained.
6. Teachers are to be in the room 20 minutes before the session is to begin. They begin teaching when the first child arrives and continue until the last child leaves.
7. Attendance sheets are kept for each day.
8. In counseling situations take all threats and discussions of suicide seriously. Refer a potentially suicidal person to a qualified professional counselor for immediate help.
9. Inform parents and obtain their permission to photograph their child if photographs are taken during a session or VBS.