



# **PLANNING FOR SAFE CHILDREN'S SPACES**

**≡ SAFETY & SECURITY N.C. ≡**

# PLANNING FOR SAFE CHILDREN'S SPACES

## FACILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY IN YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

HAVE YOU EVER PASSED BY A SPIDER WEB IN THE CORNER OF YOUR HOME AND THOUGHT YOU WOULD GET RID OF IT LATER? YOU MAY HAVE HAD THIS CONVERSATION WITH YOURSELF SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE YOU EVENTUALLY QUIT NOTICING THE WEB.

Our church facilities, particularly in preschool and children's ministries, can have "webs" we have failed to notice. These may be hazardous to the children we minister. Listed below are areas to consider for providing a safe teaching environment:

### **Access.**

Who has access to the children's areas? Often in older churches, it can be impossible to limit traffic through the preschool and children's areas. This is when awareness and vigilance are of utmost importance. When possible, limit access to these areas except for families with children in these classrooms. This may cause an inconvenience to some as they learn to navigate a new way through your church, but it will be worth the effort. Always remember to share the "why" for the change before employing the "what."

### **Entry doors.**

Are entry doors locked after service has begun? If your preschool and children's areas have multiple entrances, consider limiting entrance to one or two doors. Check-in stations. Do you have several strategically placed check-in stations throughout your church so parents can access them easily? If your children leave during the worship service for children's church, is there a check-in station in the foyer of the church? The check-in station can be an electronic system or a simple matching sticker system. The method is not the most important point. Rather, focus on the consistent employment of the system by trained volunteers.

### **Clear sightlines.**

Does your church have clear sightlines into every teaching space in the church? Can anyone make a random classroom check and observe what is happening in the room? Is artwork, paper or decorations covering

the windows installed in the classroom doors? Are parents advised to maintain visual oversight of their children when service concludes and children begin to wander?

### **Hiding places.**

Has your church taken a hard look at possible areas where someone could hide and hurt the children of your church? Are there unlocked closets or recessed areas where vision is obscured? What about climbing sets or preschool playhouses with areas that limit visual supervision?

### **Cameras.**

If your church has installed security cameras in your children's areas or classrooms, is there someone monitoring these cameras in real time? Have they been trained in recognizing grooming behaviors? Is there a stated procedure for reporting suspected inappropriate behaviors?

### **Diapering.**

Are all volunteer diapering areas in the open so that diapering activities are easily observed by another adult? Are the necessary products available to hygienically change diapers and sanitize the area after each use? Is there a sign posted with the steps for changing a diaper? According to the church's written policy, are men allowed to change diapers or help with toileting?

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## Evacuation protocol.

Is there a posted sign stating the route classes should take to evacuate the building? Have parents been informed and trained about where to pick up their child? Are there evacuation cribs in the younger preschool rooms that are sturdy, fit through door frames and easy to push? How will your release system work in the event of an evacuation?

## Bathroom protocols.

Does every adult volunteer who may assist younger children with toileting know the bathroom procedures for your children's ministry? Is there designated restroom space for use by children only? Do volunteers know to never enter the restroom with a child without another adult nearby?

## Child/volunteer ratios.

Are there enough adult volunteers to meet the accepted standard for child to volunteer ratios?

## Lighting.

Is lighting throughout the church sufficient for anyone to be able to see all areas of the campus and inside the buildings?

Age	Adult: Child*	Maximum Group Size
Infants	1:2	12
1's - 2's	1:3	12
3's - pre-K	1:4	20
K5	1:5	24
6-8 years	1:6	26
9-14 years	1:8	26

*\*A minimum of 2 adults always present in classroom*