

Safe Church Guidelines for Vacation Bible School

These guidelines are brief ideas for helping keep churches safe during VBS. Please carefully consider guidelines established by your insurance companies. For more information about child to child sexual activity, contact me for a question and answer bulletin.

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Safe Church Suggestions for VBS

Questions to consider:

1. Are your participants from your congregation and are they children basically known to the leadership?
Or
2. Are your participants children from the neighborhood that will be mixed in with the children from your congregation?
3. Will the VBS staff be all people who are basically known by the congregation?

These answers will help you know how much you need to ask about your participants and staff.

Insurance Company

1. Review your insurance policy to make sure VBS is covered in your policy and that volunteers specific to VBS are covered.
2. Always talk to your insurance company about changes or additions to you policy.

Staffing Guidelines:

1. Use the same guidelines for background checks and training that you use for any Sunday school or youth events - especially if they are volunteers who are not well known to the VBS staff.
2. Consider reducing the numbers of children per staff person because you may be taking children outside, different locations in the building, and you will be spending longer blocks of time than on Sunday morning.
3. These rules are good practice:
 - * The 2 adult rule: adults should be together at all times while children are present and,
 - * The 6 month rule: Each individual staff person needs to be a member or known by the youth director for at least 6 months.
4. Teenage help needs to be carefully considered. No minors should have unsupervised contact with children - especially regarding the lavatory.
 - * Teenagers should be used as adjunct helpers: craft activities, snack time, presentations, puppet shows and other drama or music activities.
5. Staff should avoid driving children unless it is a special field trip with permission slips and with two adults whose driving records have been checked.

Space:

1. Remember to keep doors open as much as possible.
2. Watch for areas where children can hide and be unsupervised.
3. Monitor lavatory times very carefully

The participants:

1. Keep the ages separated as much as possible.
2. Watch for any inappropriate touching, child to child, or any excessive aggression. Sexually reactive children are those who have experienced some inappropriate/early sexualization. Frequently, they react to their experiences by acting out with other children in a similar way. Please contact the consultant, Barbara Keller (610-308-3428) for more information on sexually reactive children.
3. Have parents or guardians fill out a form regarding their children.
Consider: certain fears, allergies, other medical concerns, court orders or protection orders. Ask parents for phone numbers and who are people allowed to pick up their children.