

BASIC PROCEDURES TO INCLUDE IN A LOCAL CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

The following safe sanctuaries procedures are designed to reduce the risk of harm to children, youth, vulnerable adults and the volunteers and staff workers in your ministries. **Consider including them in your congregation's Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures if they meet the needs of your current context.**

1. **Six Month Hospitality Rule:** No person should volunteer with children, youth, or vulnerable adults who has not been a participant in the church for at least 6 months. This is designed to allow the appropriate time for new people to grow relationships with a variety of people in the church, learn about the church and its ministry life, and show consistency in attendance and commitment. At the discretion of the senior pastor or ministry leader, this may be adjusted to allow a volunteer to work alongside a long-time volunteer who has completed Safe Sanctuaries training and a background.
2. **Cyber Safety for children, youth, parents, and ministers/directors:** There is no privacy on the internet. Consider anything posted or shared as public information. If you wouldn't want your grandmother to see your post or tweet, DON'T put on Facebook, Snap Chat, Instagram, Twitter, or any other social media platform. Check the resources page on this site for additional resources to help you develop the appropriate procedures for your church.
3. **Two Adult Rule:** Every group of children, youth, and vulnerable adults should be supervised by two non-related adults, whenever possible. If this is not possible what additional safe guards will you put on place to ensure the safety and welfare of the participants and leaders?
4. **Five Year Older Rule:** Persons working in ministries whether staff or volunteer, adult or youth should be at least 5 years older than the group with whom he/she is working.
5. **No Paid Workers Under the Age of 18:** Background checks cannot be run on persons under age 18. Churches should not make it a practice to hire staff under age 18.
6. **Windows in all Classroom Doors:** Children, youth, and vulnerable adults should not meet in any room that does not have a window in the door. If that is impossible in your setting, then have the doors remain open during use, have a floater in the hallway or on the floor. Or consider how you will create an inviting, safe and secure environment.
7. **Open Door Counseling:** Children, youth, and vulnerable adults should not be counseled one-on-one out of sight of other adults, or away from the larger group.
8. **Appropriate Equipment and Supervision:** An adequate number of chaperones are necessary for any gathering of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Care should be taken to have both male and female chaperones for mixed groups. No adult should be alone with participants at drop off or pick up times. When renting or using equipment, experts should be in charge of its use.
9. **Sleeping Arrangements:** Consider appropriate sleeping arrangements for retreats, lock-ins, and overnight trips. Adults should not sleep in the same rooms as participants.
10. **Special Settings:** If your congregation offers community based events during the year, how will you ensure the safety of those visiting your campus? Consider unaccompanied children, bathroom usage, perimeter security, use of photos of the event for starters.
11. **Parent and Family Education:** Families who participate in your ministries should be aware of and knowledgeable about your Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures. Protecting the safety and well-being of ministry participants takes the whole congregation not just a few volunteers.

You can avoid unfortunate situations if parents and guardians know what to expect and what the rules are.

- 12. Annual Orientation for Workers:** There should be an annual training for all new volunteers in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in any capacity. **No worker, paid or volunteer, should be allowed to supervise children, youth, and vulnerable adults who has not successfully completed training and a background check.** A refresher class on the congregation's policy and procedures for staff and returning volunteers should also be held each year