

## **Best Practices and Procedures** (updated on September 1, 2018)

---

Because our culture and society are constantly changing, best practices are also evolving all the time. If you have questions about these or other procedures, feel free to contact the Conference Office for further guidance.

- *Two-Adult Rule: No fewer than two adults present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry. At least one must be screened and trained. Risk reduced further if they are not related and live in separate households.*
- *Leader Maturity: To be a leader with responsibility, an adult must be at least 18-years-old AND five years older than the oldest youth. Adults should model behaviors and rules they wish youth to follow.*
- *Six-Month Rule: Prior to volunteering with vulnerable people, an adult should be an active part of the church community for at least six months.*
- *Safe Touching: Touching should never be painful or violent, nor should it be forced upon anyone. "Your body; your choice." Adults should not initiate hugs. Adults should always be the one to end the hug. Side hugs are best. Once children are in kindergarten, they should no longer be sitting on adults' laps.*
- *Visibility: Windows (or half-doors) remove the opportunity for secrecy and isolation. Should not be permanently covered. If there is no window, the door stays open. Others should be nearby, with a clear line of sight. Notify an adult that the meeting is happening.*
- *Photo/Video usage: Obtain permission before publishing photos or videos, either in print or online. Carefully observe for identifying information, about location or names. No tagging should be allowed on social media.*
- *Rule of Three: Youth may be allowed out of direct supervision with specific time/space boundaries, but should always be in groups of at least three.*
- *Communication: Maintain 'visibility' in all communication. Parents, other adult volunteers, and/or church staff should be copied on whatever is sent to youth. Obtain parental permission before contacting youth directly (text, phone, Facebook, Snapchat, email, etc.).*
- *Transportation: Vehicles should be checked for safety. Drivers should be approved. Create a plan specifically for safety while driving, especially for long distances. Still can't have an adult alone with a youth.*
- *Sleeping Arrangements: An adult should never share a bed with a child. Genders should be separated. Adults should have separate sleeping areas from youth.*
- *Notify Parents: Always give parents advance notice and full information about events. Require written, advance permission when appropriate. Obtain necessary medical permissions.*
- *Accident/Incident Forms: Should be filled out promptly and filed. All forms should be reviewed annually to determine if a pattern is emerging.*
- *Sign in/out procedures: Young children should be signed in/out by a parent or guardian. Exceptions to this should be outlined in your policy.*

Other policies/procedures/questions to consider:

- Ratios: *The number of children/youth an adult may safely supervise will increase with the age of the child/youth. (example: 1:4 for nursery, 1:10 for youth)*
- Social Media: *Who will be administrators on any church accounts? What filters, if any, will you apply? Are you open for comments? Who moderates comments? What is (in)appropriate content? Which types will/won't you use? Are staff/volunteers allowed to 'friend' youth?*