



SAFE CHURCH INITIATIVE

Church Child Protection Basics

The following are initial steps that churches should take in establishing a safe environment for children:

Develop a Church Policy on Child Safety

Churches should develop, approve in a church business meeting, and distribute a policy that defines its expectations for how children are to be cared for while under supervision of church staff members or volunteers. A sample policy is available online through the Kentucky Baptist Convention at www.kybaptist.org/safechurch.

Train All Children's Workers

Paid and volunteer workers who spend time with children or youth should be given a written copy of the church policy related to the care of children and the reporting of child abuse. Churches should also provide a training session where workers go over church policies, review Kentucky law for reporting abuse, learn how to watch for signs of abuse, etc.

Go Two by Two

A minimum of two adult workers should be with children at all times, even when only one or two children are present. This helps ensure the child is protected from abuse and helps protect the worker from the possibility of a false accusation.

Keep Worker Applications

Every paid and volunteer worker should have a childcare application on file that includes:

- Current address information
- References
- Listing of former churches and child/youth work experience
- Legal release granting the church permission to conduct a background check

These files should be stored in a locked file cabinet with access limited to those identified in the church's written policy.

Check Worker References and Run Background Checks

A national criminal background check should be conducted on every paid worker and volunteer who will be working with children before the worker is allowed to serve. Numerous background-checking firms are available. Kentucky Baptist Convention churches can receive a discounted price for background checks through Protect My Ministry. Access the discounted rate by visiting www.protectmyministry.com/kybaptist.

Know Your Volunteer and Paid Workers

Childcare workers and volunteers should be interviewed in person before they begin serving. Consider requiring that an individual be a member of the church for at least six months before allowing him or her to take on a leadership position that involves working with children or youth.

Never Leave a Child Alone

Never allow young children to leave the classroom by themselves. Use an identification system that requires the same person (or a previously designated person) to drop off and pick up every child.

Report Any Suspected Abuse Immediately

By Kentucky law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, neglected or is dependent, is required to report this information. Reporting can be made through the local Department for Community Based Services (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services), the Child Abuse Hotline (800-752-6200) or any local law enforcement agency. Church leadership should also be informed immediately of any suspected child abuse.

Carefully Supervise Off-campus Events

All off-campus events should be carefully supervised, especially when involving overnight stays. Make sure that enough adult supervision is provided so that no adult worker is ever left alone with a child.

*Adapted from materials developed by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Used with permission.
7/7/08*