



Starting Your Child Protection Plan

It is so important to have a proactive Child Protection Plan in place to prevent child abuse and to protect your young people from inappropriate conduct by adults or other children.

Creating such a plan doesn't need to be difficult. Here are items to include in yours:

1 | Premises Review

Access to Premises

Carefully monitor the arrival and departure of children at your facilities. Keep all ministry activities within a specified area and do not allow children unrestricted access throughout the building or property.

Interior and Exterior Lighting

Ensure your facilities are well lit—both indoors and outdoors—during all children's and youth programs to facilitate appropriate security and supervision.

Visual Panels

Be sure all areas have either windows or vision panels in the doors to allow easy monitoring of the activities taking place in these rooms. Vision panels should be free from paper, curtains or other materials.

Toilets

Limit the number of children allowed to use the toilets at the same time. Monitor these areas to minimise one-on-one situations, which can lead to foul play, inappropriate behaviour, or accusations and misunderstandings.

Supervision

Appropriate adult supervision is required at all times.

Always use the two-adult rule, which means more than one adult should be present with children at all times. If this is not possible, an adult should never be alone with one child. All staff should make this a high priority and know what is expected of them as they interact with children and teenagers.

Dismissal of Staff

Any adult who fails to abide by the outlined code of conduct could be subject to dismissal from participation in the ministry. This policy is to protect children and teenagers from harm and to protect staff from accusations and misunderstandings.

2 | Personnel

Staff Selection

Carefully interview and select all adult staff members (employees and volunteers) after a six-month waiting period during which they are known to you or are a member of your church. This time period allows you to become acquainted with the individual's talents, personality and temperament. Conduct background screenings in accordance with denominational policies, which include background and reference checks.

Staff Training

All staff members who work with children and



teenagers should be appropriately trained in child abuse awareness, prevention and the reporting laws of the local jurisdiction. Training should also include the expected code of conduct in keeping with the Christ-centred mission of the ministry.

3 | Protecting Children

Discipline and Touching

Carefully monitor staff members' interactions with children and teenagers to ensure appropriate behaviour in keeping with the ministry's code of conduct.

Out-of-program Contact

Carefully monitor any staff member who has frequent out-of-program contact with a child or teenager, especially contact on a one-to-one basis or without the knowledge of the child's parent or guardian.

Sign-in/Sign-out Controls

Maintain a record of all children who are participating in the activity and be sure they are picked up and released only to a parent or other authorised adult as designated in a parental permission slip.

Reporting Incidents

Be watchful for any signs of child abuse or incidents of inappropriate conduct by adults or other children. Promptly report all incidents of suspected child abuse to the police and to the local denominational administration.

Stranger Awareness

Always be alert and observant of any strangers or unknown individuals who may be watching or lurking around the premises during children's or youth ministry activities.

Bullying Awareness

Watch for signs of bullying or incidents of inappropriate initiation activity among children or teenagers. Adopt a zero-tolerance policy and teach them to respect each other by living the Golden Rule and developing strong Christian friendships.

4 | Program Review

Evaluate

Evaluate your Child Protection Plan twice a year. Ask your team:

- What concerns or issues arose, and how were they handled?
- Were incidents handled effectively? Are there further steps that need to be taken?
- Are there any concerns or issues that the program does not cover?
- How should the program be modified to address these new concerns?

Implement

Modify your program to accommodate improvements. Send out a notice to all staff members and parents introducing any changes to your Child Protection Plan. Incorporate modifications into your program regularly and continue to affirm and encourage all staff in their mission to keep all children safe.

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