



The Essentials of Child Care During an Emergency

In these unprecedented times all across the country, youth serving organizations are facing new challenges. Churches are looking for ways to fill the void as organizations and schools are closed by local mandate. Please know that if your church is not already functioning as a child care facility, due to state certifications and requirements, it is in the child’s best interest that you not try to establish one at this time. Connect with other churches, school systems, health/emergency agencies and resources in your community. If you have been designated official status as a pandemic child care facility, Presidium recommends the following:

- Limit care to your screened, trained and supervised staff. It may be tempting to fill suddenly available positions with the first available person, but please do not.
- As circumstances surrounding COVID-19 are rapidly changing, hold pre and post day meetings each day. Pre-meeting should include a review of your policies and COVID-19 protocols. Remind them to report violations to church leaders. Post-meeting should include a review of the days’ incidents, any potential youth-to-youth or bullying issues, and procedure adjustments that may need to be made for the following days.
- Create and strictly adhere to an organized daily schedule with youth split into small groups based on age (for supervision and social distancing).
- Offenders utilize: Access, Privacy, and Control to gain access to children.
 - Access: A chaotic crisis scenario such as COVID-19 presents the perfect opportunity for an offender to bypass established screening protocols. For this reason, it is critical that we adhere to established processes and supervision to the extent practical.
 - Privacy: Offenders look for places like rooms without windows, empty stairwells, bathrooms, locker rooms, etc. Ensure you are vigilant and actively supervising those spaces. Ensure there is no one-on-one contact during your program.
 - Control: Offenders are very patient and systematic in their attempts to gain control over the children they want to target for abuse. Offenders often exhibit red flag behaviors such as spending time alone with a specific child, pushing physical boundaries, giving gifts, and violating electronic communications boundaries and/or policies. Ensure that your response is swift and meaningful at the first sign of such behavior.
- Know the essentials for preventing youth-to-youth sexual activity:
 - Adult supervision is key: Require line-of-sight supervision for all children and youth.
 - Provide structured activities at all times to ensure proper supervision. Rather than free time, offer free choice with designated activities.
 - Maintain approved ratios.
 - Create plans for transition times.

- Remember there is no standard definition for “normal sexual curiosity.” Just as you respond to adult boundary violations, respond to youth-to-youth the same.
- Remind staff their behavior sets the tone for how youth interact with one another.
- Interrupt, respond, report and document all incidents of youth-to-youth sexual activity.
- Utilize best practices for bathroom supervision:
 - When supervising restroom use, adult staff members should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youth to enter.
 - For “Group Bathroom Breaks”: Require staff to take groups of two or more youths to the bathroom – following the “rule of three” or more. If the bathroom only has one stall, only one youth should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff. If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many youths as there are stalls. Minimize youths of different ages using the bathroom at the same time. Require staff to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.
 - For single use restrooms: Require youths to ask permission to use the bathroom. Require all staff to frequently check bathrooms.
 - Prohibit staff from using the bathroom at the same time as youths.
- In all areas of the facility and in all activities, always require staff and youth utilize the “Rule of 3” :
 - No one-on-one interactions between staff and youth or between two youth.
 - One staff always maintains two or more youth in their care (including during drop-off and pick-up); if necessary, two staff may be with one youth.
- Require parents to sign all youth participants in and out of the program with proper identification so your organization maintains a record of all youth in programming.
- Despite potential changes in licensing requirements, continue to follow state licensing guidelines governing screening, supervision, and mandated reporting.

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