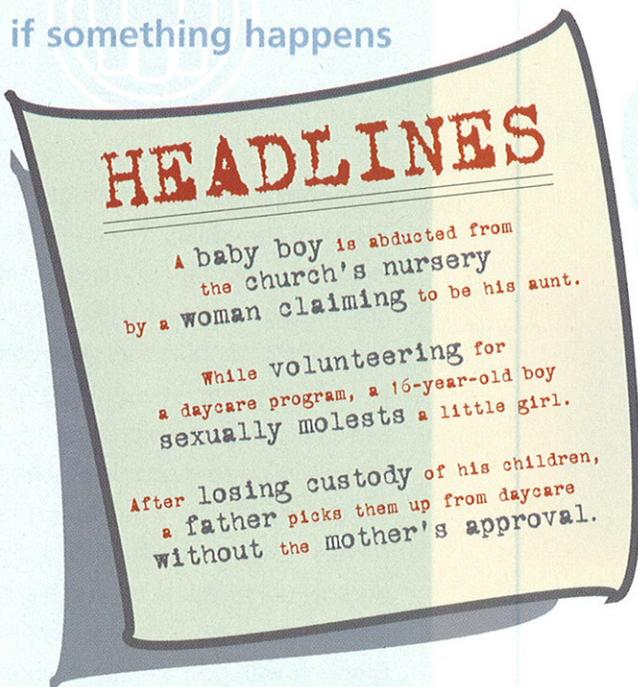


Wrap your little ones in a security blankie

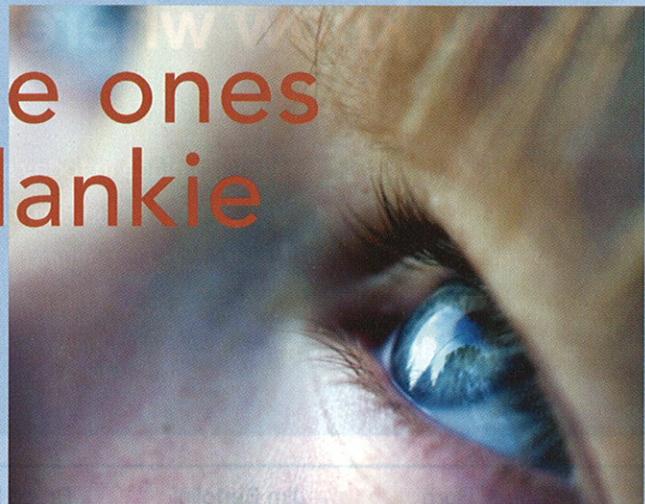
Protection of our children at church may be burdensome and expensive, but the risks of poor security are not worth the liability and heartache if something happens



If your church operates a nursery or daycare, the situations above are just a few of the nightmares that can occur if proper security measures are not put in place.

Naturally, church nurseries and daycare centers can provide outstanding environments for kids and great services for parents. However, churches that have these facilities on site must be fully aware of the risks associated with caring for children. It is essential to take all necessary steps to minimize the risks with proper safety and security measures. Ultimately, the church must assume full responsibility for the well being of every child entrusted to the organization.

There are numerous safety, security and health issues to consider if your church operates a nursery, daycare or both.



Ways to ensure safety of children

Due to the trusting nature of churches, there is a tendency to underestimate the need for security precautions. But no matter where your church is located, proper security measures are absolutely essential, especially when children's lives are at stake. As responsible church stewards, we have to take every precaution that we can to protect our little people. What's more, considering the litigious society we live in today, if a problem occurs at your nursery or daycare, a lawsuit can easily result in a multimillion dollar judgment against the church.

It's often helpful to think of security procedures as "layers of protection." The following are suggestions for ensuring the safety and security of children in your church.

Organize a safety and security committee. Form a safety and security committee with qualified members from the congregation. The goal of this committee is to develop risk management policies and procedures for the church. The committee should put the nursery and daycare at the top of its priority list and establish guidelines for security procedures.

Screen and select workers. Whether they are employees or volunteers, all caregivers should be prescreened and chosen carefully to make sure they are the right people for their jobs. This is one of the best ways to minimize the risk of child sexual abuse and other problems. Here is a summary of recommended procedures:

- All workers, including employees and volunteers should be required to complete a job application. The application should include standard personal/professional information and a request for references. It should also contain an authorization form requesting the applicant's approval to have a background check performed.
- Conduct background checks. (Note: Many states and church insurers now require a background check for any adult >>

By Charles Bone



who plans to work with children.)

- Volunteers under age 18 should be supervised at all times. (Be aware that criminal background checks are not available for minors.)
- Check all references thoroughly. At a minimum, call the references and document the conversations in writing. Anyone who has a reference or a criminal history indicating sexual misconduct or violent crimes should not be allowed to work with children.
- Conduct a complete interview of all job applicants.
- Require that all volunteers are regular members of the church for at least six months before they work with children.
- Two adults who are not related should be present and visible to each other at all times when working with children.
- Be sure to comply with all state laws regarding daycares, nurseries and their workers. For instance, the proper worker-to-child ratio must be maintained.

Design a safe sign-in and sign-out procedure. Every nursery and daycare should have some type of sign-in and sign-out procedures for children and parents. This safeguard helps ensure that only authorized individuals are allowed to pick up the children. While there are a variety of options for sign-in and sign-out procedures, here are two examples:

- When the child enrolls at the facility, the parent or guardian fills out a form and lists the names of people who are authorized to pick up the child. This form is kept on file. When an adult comes to pick up their child, they must show proof of identity, and their authorization is confirmed prior to releasing the child.
- Each day when the child arrives, they are assigned a number. The adult who brought the child is given the same number and is required to sign in. Upon returning to pick up the child, the adult must provide the child's

number and sign out. Before allowing the child to leave, a worker at the center must verify that the numbers and signatures match.

Limit access to the facility. To make sure only authorized people can enter the childcare facility, equip the

Due to the trusting nature of children, there is a tendency to overlook the need for security in

building with a security system. Options include combination door locks, key cards and electronic intercom/buzzer systems. Even if you operate a part-time nursery in a church classroom, a door lock should be used during nursery hours. If your daycare has an outdoor playground, it should be secured by a fence. All playground activities should be closely monitored by a sufficient number of staff members.

Ensure proper supervision of workers. On a regular basis, but at unannounced times, a supervisor should tour the facility to check how things are going. It is always best if workers know that a supervisor may stop by at any time of the day.

Provide a safe and secure facility. Any area in the church that is used for a daycare or nursery should be inspected and modified if necessary to provide children with the safest and most secure environment possible. Windows should be installed on doors and walls to provide parents and guardians clear views of all childcare rooms. Any exterior or closet doors should be kept locked. Windows should be kept locked securely. Protective covers should be installed on electrical outlets, and any other potential hazards should be removed.

It is important that safety rules are followed when taking children to the restroom. In general, no more than one child should use a restroom at a time.

**Multi-Play[®] Advantage #237...
Ease of Installation**

Multi-Play[™] Sports Flooring

Call us today to find out about the other 236 advantages!

877-MP-FLOOR
(877-67-35667 Toll Free)

Multi-Play[®] has all the features you'd expect from a more expensive sports floor - ball response, traction, durability - without the high price. It's versatile, easy to maintain, and portable - inside or out. Most importantly, Multi-Play is so easy to install, that it's literally child's play.

www.multiplayfloor.com

eXpress Request No. 49



A responsible adult (preferably of the same gender) should accompany children who are in fourth grade or under. When doing so, the restroom should be checked to make sure there are no others already in it and the door should be propped open for those requiring assistance. In no event should an adult be left alone with a child behind closed doors.

Install security cameras. Due to many recent advances in technology, the use of security cameras in childcare facilities is a fast-growing trend. The cost of these cameras has become surprisingly affordable and there are many types to choose from, including Web-cam services, which allow parents to view their children via the Internet. Security cameras can be an effective deterrent to many types of crimes, they may scare perpetrators away, and can be a constant "eye" on the actions of workers and children.

Watch for suspicious behavior. All members of the staff should be instructed to watch out for anyone who is behaving suspiciously at or near the facility. For example, keep an eye on unfamiliar people standing near the playground watching the children. If there is ever a question about the person's motive or reason for being at or near the facility, err on the side of caution. Workers should contact

the staff supervisor or the proper authorities if necessary.

Nobody likes to think about the bad things that can happen at a nursery or daycare. But in today's world the need for security has never been greater. By investing time, energy and resources to develop security procedures now, your church may save a child's life or prevent a very costly problem from happening. **CE**

of churches, erestimate utions.

Charles Bone is director of risk management at GuideOne Insurance. He oversees the GuideOne Center for Risk Management, which is dedicated to helping churches safeguard their ministries by providing training and resources on safety, security and risk management issues. Bone can be reached at (877) 448-4331 or cbone@guideone.com.

QUADROZONE

INDOOR PLAYCENTERS

Tot, Toddler & Pre-School

- ✓ For fitness and fun
- ✓ Child safety is #1
- ✓ Chose from over 50 models
- ✓ Best value for your money
- ✓ Very high quality components
- ✓ Compact designs
- ✓ Best Space/Use ratio
- ✓ Portable
- ✓ Many developmental benefits
- ✓ Easy DIY assembly

www.quadrozone.com
800-477-6434

Play Mart
Playgrounds
playmart.com
800-43-PLAYS

ADAAG Compliant
IPEMA MEMBER

100% Recycled Structural Plastics
No Wood!

Visit www.playmart.com to browse our full catalog of ADA Accessible playground equipment & play products!

Limited 100 Year Warranty

eXpress Request No. 50

eXpress Request No. 51