

Best Practices & Sample Forms

It is recommended that local church policy contain practices, procedures & forms specific to a local context



Recommended Best Practices for Living Into A Local Policy

1. Only write policies you are going to follow. Your policy should match your actions, including practices and procedures.
2. All supervising adults who are working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults should pass a background check prior to working or volunteering.
3. Any time staff or volunteers work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults there should be open-sighted and sound lines for all participants.
4. All release forms, including medical, transportation, photo/video, and communications releases should be kept up to date for all participants (staff, volunteers, children, youth, and vulnerable adults).
5. Staff and volunteers should have training on:
 - a. Local Safe Sanctuary Policies
 - i. Including updates when applicable
 - b. Mandated Reporting
 - i. Reporting is not investigating suspected abuse
 - ii. Having an objective witness present if a report is made to verify when & who made the report
 - c. Signs of abuse in various age-ranges
 - d. Age-appropriate healthy touch
 - e. Age-appropriate harm from within (self-inflicted harm and bullying).
 - f. Contextually appropriate accessibility awareness and etiquette around:
 - i. Physical disabilities
 - ii. Mental health
 - iii. Dietary restrictions
 - iv. Medical events and first aid
 - v. Transfers and mobility assistance
6. Children and Youth specific
 - a. Clear check-in and check-out procedures should be in place and always followed.
 - b. Age-appropriate behavior expectations should be clear
 - c. When working with minors, the supervising adult should be five years older than the oldest participant.
 - d. Appropriate and safe ratios of staff/volunteers should be maintained with children and youth:
 - i. 0-12 months-2 adults, 8 kids max (1:4)
 - ii. 1-3 years-2 adults, 12 kids max (1:6)
 - iii. 3-4 years-2 adults, 20 kids max (1:10)
 - iv. School-age-2 adults, 24 kids max (1:12)
 - e. No adult should ever be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. This includes while traveling off-site.

- f. No child or youth should be left without a supervising adult
 - g. Supervising adults should not be related.
 - h. The rule of three should always be used. Staff, volunteers, and youth should never be alone or in a group of two. There should always be at least one other non-related person always present.
 - i. Separate shower and bathroom facilities should be maintained for each gender.
 - j. Separate sleeping quarters should be provided for each gender.
 - k. Each person should have their own space for rest.
 - l. If communication with youth is required, the rule of three should be applied.
 - i. When communicating the platform used should be accessible after communication has ended.
- 7. Environmental Safety
 - a. Complete an accessibility audit ([UMC Annual Accessibility Audit](#))
 - b. Make a safety assessment (unsafe items include: toxins, sharp objects, uncovered electrical outlets).
 - c. Implement a fragrance-free policy (sensitivity to fragrances are increasing).
 - d. Conduct a sensory assessment (things that can impact those with sensory issues include flickering lights, annoying noises, too many colors or items on walls).
 - e. Infection control and universal precautions (be aware that vulnerable populations).
 - f. Clear lighting throughout facilities.
 - g. Clear signage throughout facilities.
 - h. All doors should have windows.