

The Church Nursery

The church nursery needs to be a clean, attractive, and welcoming place for children. It is important that your congregation establish guidelines for your church nursery.

Infant and toddler nurseries should be located near the sanctuary, restrooms, and fire exits. Nurseries should be attractive, safe, welcoming spaces.

Gather information and design guidelines that are consistent with your diocesan or judicatory policies regarding healthy church practices and “Safe Guarding God’s Children.” All who work and volunteer in the nursery should attend a Safe Church Training and have a background check before starting the position. Establish a “Nursery Policy” for your church. It should include the following:

Job Descriptions that Outline

- ✓ Responsibilities of nursery committee chairperson
- ✓ Qualifications and responsibilities of the lead nursery workers (over 18 years)
- ✓ Qualifications and responsibilities of nursery helpers

Training for ALL Nursery Workers

- ✓ Have a “Nursery Worker Orientation” that includes an explanation of expectations, discipline policies, information on child development, information on fire and emergency procedures, and training in infant CPR.
- ✓ Have regularly scheduled orientations and refresher courses.

Guidelines for a Clean Nursery

- ✓ Have non-toxic cleaning supplies readily available to nursery workers but well out of the reach of children.
- ✓ See that nursery carpets, floors, furniture are thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis.
- ✓ Check premises for adequate ventilation and test for the presence of lead, especially in buildings older than 1970.
- ✓ Have clean crib sheets readily available and have a plan for making sure used crib linens and changing table covers are washed and returned each week.
- ✓ See that toys are washed on a regular basis with a non-toxic detergent, and that toys handled by children with colds are washed immediately.
- ✓ If there is no sink in the room, have disinfectant hand cleaners available for caregivers.

Guidelines for a Safe Nursery

- ✓ Establish a committee to oversee nursery.
- ✓ Screen everyone who has access to the children and youth in your church.
- ✓ Follow the practice of two adults present at all times, having windows in entrance doors, and having diaper changing stations in central locations.
- ✓ Always have an adult in charge. It is best if the same person is there each week.
- ✓ Require all nursery workers to go through an orientation before working in the nursery
- ✓ Have a back-up plan for staffing the nursery.
- ✓ Minimum adult to child ratio recommendations:
 - 1 adult to 3 infants
 - 1 to 4 toddlers
 - 1 to 6 children 3 years and older.
- ✓ Have only age appropriate toys in the nursery. If a toy, or parts to a toy, is small enough to fit through a toilet paper tube, do not use.
- ✓ Regularly check floors for choking hazards such as: coins, marbles, safety pins, jewelry, buttons, crayons, pen caps, nails, screws, etc.
- ✓ Avoid stuffed animals, as they are great germ carriers.
- ✓ Establish a regular schedule for checking, cleaning, and replacing toys and other nursery equipment.
- ✓ Practice SIDS prevention: always put infants to bed on their back.
- ✓ Check that mattresses used are firm and flat; do not use blankets or pillows in the crib.
- ✓ Check that crib sheets cover the mattress snug. If a sheet comes off easily when you pull at the corners or sides, do not use.
- ✓ Make sure that crib slats are spaced properly. You should not be able to pass a can of soda between the slats of a crib.
- ✓ Cribs should not have cutouts in the end panels or corner posts.
- ✓ Keep cribs away from windows.
- ✓ Make sure all electrical cords are out of the way and all electrical outlets are covered.
- ✓ Tie up window-blind cords.
- ✓ Post emergency exits and phone numbers including poison control.
- ✓ Have fire drills on a regular basis.
- ✓ Always make sure children are seated while eating.
- ✓ Don't get too comfortable. Keep checking and revising your nursery policies.

Good Communication with Parents

- ✓ Have a check-in system for parents; that includes having them fill out information cards on their children.
- ✓ Keep up-to-date information on all children.
- ✓ Ask parents to label their child's diaper bag, bottle, spare clothing, toys, etc.
- ✓ Be sure to talk with parents each Sunday about any concerns and joys related to their child.

Checklist of Necessary Nursery Supplies

- ☐ Disposable diapers
- ☐ Paper lining for changing tables
- ☐ Pre-moistened wipes
- ☐ Tissues
- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ First-aid kit with syrup of Ipecac, thermometer, alcohol/antibiotic ointment, bandages, cold pack
- ☐ Name tags and markers
- ☐ Plastic bags and ties for soiled clothes
- ☐ Disinfectants and nontoxic cleaning solutions
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Electric outlet covers
- ☐ Emergency manual
- ☐ Posted fire exit plans/maps
- ☐ Graham or soda crackers (Be sure to check for allergies and preferences listed on parent information cards.)
- ☐ Children's books and toys
- ☐ Nursery Pager System (if a large congregation)
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fire extinguishers
- ☐ Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (check batteries often and replace twice a year)

Furniture

- ✓ Rocking chairs
- ✓ Child size table and chairs
- ✓ Cribs
- ✓ Changing table(s)
- ✓ Locked cabinet for supplies
- ✓ Hooks for hanging coats and diaper bags
- ✓ Bulletin board for announcements and pictures
- ✓ Baby swings and walkers are optional (Strict guidelines should be established for the use of these items.)

JOB DESCRIPTION: Nursery Care Giver

The nursery caregiver will provide proper care and nurturing to babies/toddlers during church services and special events.

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to service or event—earlier if expecting a larger crowd for special services or events.
2. Become familiar with nursery policies and facilities.
3. Greet parents and sign in/out babies/toddlers.
4. Take care of babies/toddlers in the nursery, following nursery policies for safety and proper care:
 - a. Change diapers/clothing as necessary; check diapers near end of service.
 - b. Rock, play with, sing to, play music for and show picture books to babies/toddlers.
 - c. Feed babies when needed or as requested by parents.
 - d. Give snacks to toddlers.
5. Change crib sheets after babies/toddlers have been picked up.
6. Place dirty toys in a container to be cleaned or disinfected.

JOB DESCRIPTION: Nursery Coordinator

1. Recruit and train volunteers to serve in the nursery.
2. Organize the nursery and ensure its cleanliness and safety.
3. Develop, post and enforce nursery policies.
4. Routinely inspect nursery equipment, toys and supplies:
5. Report repair and maintenance needs to appropriate personnel.
6. Restock supplies when needed.
7. Obtain and keep a library of picture books and music/songs on cassettes or CDs for use in the nursery.
8. Keep a current list of nursery caregivers with names/addresses/phone numbers.
9. Schedule nursery caregivers for every service and special churchwide event in which nursery care is needed.
10. Collect and launder used crib sheets weekly.
11. Clean/disinfect dirty toys as necessary.
12. Oversee budget and expenditures for the nursery ministry.