

Child Security

from ACS Technologies

Ensuring Child Security

According to the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART-II), more than 200,000 family abductions occur in the U.S. each year. Many churches are prime targets because they don't take a close look at their childcare security strategy. Unlocked doors, "trusting" volunteers, and lax security measures make children – and children's ministries – more at risk. The following article has been excerpted from the ACS Ministry Guide *How Secure Is Your Children's Ministry*.

As families enter your ministry, they expect to find not only a spiritual sanctuary, but also a safe haven from the rest of the world. The more you can assure these parents that your church is a safe place, the better off your children's ministry will be.

To maximize your ministry's chances of avoiding a security issue, implement an intentional, cohesive security process, addressing several aspects of your children's ministry: registration and check-in, volunteer screening, emergency preparedness, and educating the congregation about the security process.

Registration & Check-In

Imagine a children's ministry without checklists, clipboards, or stickers. As families enter the children's area, they stop at a computer kiosk that quickly and easily handles the responsibility of check-in and registration. By swiping a security card through a card reader located next to the kiosk, the child's information is confirmed. Two security badges, one for both the parent and child, are printed with random number barcodes. The badge, which can be in sticker, label, or card format, also features the child's photo and any important information like food allergies or special diets.

One church-wide advantage of the kiosk system is real-time access to attendance records. Ministry personnel immediately know how many children are being cared for and the location of each child who has checked in during the entire time he or she is on the property.

Volunteer Screening

So what about the volunteers who spend three hours with your ministry's kids on a Sunday morning? How can you be absolutely sure they are qualified to work with kids? Is your church doing everything possible to ensure those volunteers can be trusted?

In addition to running background checks, tools such as volunteer management software can help churches identify, qualify, and screen its volunteer force. Ministry leaders can use these tools to ensure volunteers with particular gifts are ministering in the most appropriate areas of the church.

Software can help you track volunteer certifications and special licenses, including educationally relevant careers and training. In any case, managing your volunteer force is the way to ensure the best possible scenario for care and ministry to children.

Emergency Preparedness

Though every ministry hopes to avoid an emergency, only the most naïve avoid preparing for one. Intentional preparation and planning is the key to success should an emergency occur, especially during a service, event or activity time. If such an event should happen, could you reassure parents by being able to locate and identify their children at any given moment?

You can't afford to leave any doubt in parents' minds as to the safety of their children during an emergency. Make sure all workers are aware of their responsibilities so they can spring into action if the need arises. Remember, information is power. Know how to get your hands on that vital information and distribute it to the right people in a timely manner.

Marketing Children's Security

The key to implementing a successful security process is in the training of your ministry leaders, teachers, coordinators, and volunteers. A coordinated and comprehensive effort is essential to the protection of your children.

Once your security process is in place, don't be afraid to let your congregation and your visitors know about it. Post it on your Web site, announce it from the pulpit, and encourage small group leaders to talk about it.

Share your security process with your insurance company--it may result in a discounted premium. A thorough, intentional security system will give your congregants peace of mind.

Standardized training should be a requirement for all volunteers. Only with this information will your workers be empowered to introduce families into your ministry in a way that builds confidence. Your procedures will rise only to the level of the weakest link.

Investing in the lives of children requires commitments to their safety and security. If you're ready to start ensuring the safety of your children's ministry, please visit www.acstechnologies.com/checkpoint or download the complete version of this ministry guide at www.ideastoimpact.com/checkin.

Struggling with Outreach?

How do you **REACH** the people in your community and **RETAIN** the visitors you already have?

Download the ACS ministry guide, **Going Outside the Church Walls**, for ideas and practical solutions!

ideastoimpact.com/outreach1

ACSTechnologies

CCMO0208