

Crossroad's Childcare for Small Groups Best Practices

There are many ways to care for children when you have a small group. The best decision is the best decision for your group. That decision becomes the best decision only when your group discusses the issue and agrees upon the decision that is made.

When you approach the group, make sure that you have some options in front of them. This isn't an issue that you want to begin with a "blank slate" but rather 3 to 5 options. (e.g. pay for a sitter, parents rotate watching the kids, paid sitter watches the children at another house {has to be within an 8 minute drive}, etc.)

When conducting small group meetings, it's important to ask the following questions:

Home/Facility Safety

- Are there defects or dangers in the home or facility where the group meets that participants should be made aware of (i.e. frayed carpet or loose handrails on stairs)?
- Will the small group host communicate rules associated with special risks like swimming pools or trampolines?
- Are appropriate safety measures taken in rooms where small children will play (i.e., outlet covers, gates to block stairs, etc.)?

Childcare (see checklist below)

- Parents are ultimately responsible for the safety of their children.
 - Are the parents participating in the small group comfortable with childcare arrangements, including the individual(s) who will be supervising?
- Is the childcare provided in a designated room that is easily accessible to all parents?
 - **Bedrooms and other intimate spaces should be off limits to children**, and there should never be more than one person in a bathroom.
 - **If a child requires assistance in the bathroom, one of the child's parents should be asked to help.**
 - **Doors should NEVER be locked**
- Does the small group leader have a copy of the church's child supervision policy?
- Are the individuals providing childcare properly screened according to the church's child supervision policy?
 - All volunteers who will have direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be screened (e.g., application, interview, ministry safe approval)

Food

- If food is served, whether it was prepared by a group participant or a restaurant, were reasonable precautions taken to prepare and consume the food in accordance with sound health practices?
- Do any small group participants (including children) have food allergies?
 - If so, what are they?
 - Does the small group host know what measures must be taken in the event of an allergic reaction?

Helpful Childcare Checklist:

1. What is the childcare policy for your group?

- No children are present except for nursing infants
- Intergenerational—we include all children
- Group members take turns caring for children
- We hire a babysitter for the whole group
- Other options _____

2. Where should childcare be provided?

- In the same house as the Bible study, but in a separate room
- At the babysitter's house
- At the church building
- Wherever individual parents can arrange it

3. Who pays for childcare each meeting?

- All of the members who have children
- The whole group passes around a hat
- No one—it's free
- The church treasury
- The group leader

4. What training will be supplied for childcare providers?

- Basic safety instructions
- How discipline a child (or group of children) effectively
- How to engage children in active learning and interactive play
- A basic understanding of age levels
- How to change a diaper
- All of the above
- None of the above—all they have to do is play a *Veggie Tales*

5. What resources will be provided for childcare providers?

- Christian videos such as *Veggie Tales*
- Reading books for different age groups
- Games, puzzles, and toys for different age groups
- Coloring and activity books
- Other options _____

6. What groups or individuals are available for childcare?

- Teenagers from the youth group
- "Grandparents"—older members of the church who are willing to help
- A rotation of members from our own group
- A rotation of members from other groups that meet on a different night of the week, and then we return the favor

7. Who is responsible for finding, training, and resourcing childcare workers?

- The small-group leader

- A designated person in each group (possibly the apprentice)
- The church's small-groups director or coach
- The children's director
- The youth minister
- Other options _____

8. What are the children taught?

- It depends—children play and childcare workers interact with them, looking for teachable moments
- Applications based on recent Sunday school lessons
- Lessons that correspond with their parents' Bible study
- A program developed specifically for this situation
- Nothing in particular