

House Church Child Protection Guidelines

While all house churches are independent entities, and Connect the Nations does not supervise or accept responsibility for independent house churches, it is our heart to protect all children in house church communities. For this reason, we offer these suggested guidelines to parents and groups as a courtesy. The guidelines you adopt should be provided in writing and clearly discussed with each member of your church.

Please note that the recommended reporting contacts are based in the United States. Please contact your nation, state, city, and local authorities for reporting incidents of concern. You should also include protections and guidelines recommended by these authorities and consult legal counsel for additional information.

During house church and other house events:

1. Please understand that house churches are small with limited resources. Therefore, parents are fully responsible for their children. When attending a house church, parents should assume this responsibility at all times.
2. At least two adults of at least 16 years of age or older should supervise children at all times, unless a parent is supervising their own child/children.
3. If two adults are not available, then children should stay in the same room with adults during house church and other events or in an attached room with the door open and children are clearly visible where at least one adult is present to supervise.
4. Diapers should be changed only by parents of the child(ren) needing changing. Likewise, children should be accompanied by their own parents when using the bathroom.
5. Anyone who has had a criminal background or has struggled with wrong behavior toward children should not be assigned to watch children.
6. For the safety of all, house churches should maintain a no concealed weapons policy.
7. Children should not be permitted to play rough or hurt other children, use loud voices, speak hurtfully to others, or cause damage to the home.
8. In apartments, all adults and children should respect noise levels inside the apartment, hallways, and public areas.
9. Light corrections and direction to children are appropriate for volunteers; however, discipline should be the responsibility of the parent. If a child needs discipline, we recommend consulting the parent regarding the matter. We encourage parents to aim for unity in this area, working together with the house church members to maintain a peaceful environment.
10. Should a child continue to behave in a way that is disruptive to the house church, we recommend that the parent(s) find an outside source for watching their child during house church / events or one parent stay at home and either Zoom in or alternate attendance with the other parent, if this is acceptable to the group leader.
11. For guests who have trouble with maintaining their children's behavior, we recommend meeting with them individually in Bible studies where parenting can be included in the discipling process. Outside activities, such as playing in the park, may be a better atmosphere until child discipline can be addressed.

12. Discuss as a group how to protect children from the following:
 - a. Electrical sockets
 - b. Weapons in the home
 - c. Sharp objects in the home
 - d. Medications
 - e. Alcohol or other potentially harmful substances
 - f. Cords, construction, unstable flooring, or areas where children can trip or fall
 - g. Any other safety concerns in meeting places
13. House church hosts should discuss with their home insurance carrier for the most appropriate level of insurance needed for hosting house church and request recommendations for risk minimization.
14. Each house church host should be respected for any other needs they have for maintaining a peaceful and safe environment for the church while meeting in their home.

Other instances:

1. Aside from parents, no adult in the house church should privately contact a child under the age of 18.
2. No pictures or videos of children should be taken without expressed permission by the parent(s). Such pictures and videos should be shared only at the discretion of the parents.
3. House churches may opt for conducting thorough background checks of any adults monitoring children (See [Ministry Safe](#) or [Protect My Ministry](#)). Assessing the cost of such checks should be discussed as the group.
4. We do not recommend overnight events unless at least one parent is present with their child(ren). Parents should remain with their child(ren) at all times.
5. We do not recommend any potentially unsafe activities, including swimming, bounce houses, trampolines, hunting, rock climbing, and the like. If the group chooses one of these activities, we highly recommend that parents sign a waiver releasing liability of the house church and its members.
6. We recommend using waivers of house church responsibility for all outside events or for events where risk may be heightened, including events hosted by non-members.

Reporting:

1. Any suspicious incidence involving a minor should be reported immediately to the house church leader. Any persons involved in suspicious activity should be removed from direct contact with minors until the matter is resolved.
2. Suspicion of physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect should (and in some states must) be reported to state's Department of Family and Protective Services. The national number may be used: 1-800-252-5400. The police should also be contacted for further instructions or requirements by your local government. CPS should be contacted for suspected cases inside the child's home. These reports are confidential. For definitions and examples of abuse or neglect, please see https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/report_abuse.asp.
3. Child abuse and accusations of child abuse of any adult toward a child should be reported immediately to CPS and/or police to be investigated properly.
4. If you suspect adult abuse, please report these cases to National Domestic Violence Hotline at: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
5. Police should be contacted immediately if the suspicious activity has been confirmed.
6. Any person who has intentionally violated these guidelines should be removed from the house church.

Suggested inappropriate actions for adults toward children who are not their own:

1. Isolated one-on-one interactions
2. Gift giving to individual children, aside from birthdays or celebrations
3. Frontal hugging
4. Photographing or video recording without expressed parental permission
5. Contact outside of house church events
6. Exchanging personal email or phone numbers
7. Private interactions through social media, computer, or handheld devices
8. Corporal punishment of any kind
9. Touching of personal areas, including patting rear end
10. Any other behavior deemed inappropriate by the parents of the children, including cultural preferences and norms

Suggested inappropriate actions for all adults toward children:

1. Risqué jokes
2. Profanity
3. Favoritism
4. Actions or speech, including tone, that humiliates, threatens, ridicules, degrades, or frightens
5. Touching of personal areas outside of normal practices, such as bathing, cleaning, applying medicine, etc.
6. Intimate, romantic or sexual conduct, including actions and speech
7. Exposing or engaging children to adult or inappropriate content, including violence, profanity, or immoral content