



**KidCheck**<sup>TM</sup>  
SECURE CHECK-IN FOR CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS

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## Safety and Security Audit

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At KidCheck, we want to help you create a safe environment for the children entrusted to your care. We've compiled a list of safety and security best practices for you. These best practices come from consulting with leading experts, as well as the knowledge we've gained from working with many different churches and organizations that provide childcare.

### Auditing the Safety and Security of Your Children's Ministry

Safety and security is one of the biggest topics in children's ministry today, and there are numerous aspects that should be considered. Keeping children safe should be a priority, regardless of the size of your church. In this white paper, we'll discuss the leading concerns about Sunday School security and offer ideas for improving safety at your church.

## Security and Safety Concerns

Listed below are some common safety and security issues to consider, as well as policy and practice suggestions that can help you minimize safety and security issues. Use the checklist to see how your ministry measures up.

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### Are Your Facilities Safe and Secure?

Children can be pretty creative when it comes to finding a way to get hurt. Accidents, bumps, and bruises are the most common safety danger for children in Sunday School. Though most accidents are minor, it's important that every ministry setting is a safe place to learn and play.

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Classrooms should be in high traffic areas and have windows. One church recently installed windows in every classroom door. Since they had a volunteer handyman, the project cost was very reasonable.



If your Sunday School classrooms do not have windows, keep the doors open and use a door gate for rooms with younger children.



Children's ministry areas should be up to building and fire code. Do not block hallways, doors, and exits with tables or other furniture. Inspect and test life safety equipment regularly, including emergency exits, smoke alarms, and fire extinguishers.



Furniture must be safe and appropriate for children. Make sure that bookcases are secured to the wall, desks do not have splinters, and chairs are in good repair. Do not stack chairs so high that they become unstable.



Use safety plugs or safety cover plates on all electrical outlets. If you use safety plugs, check them every Sunday as they are often not put back when removed.



If there is overhead storage, either a shelf or a cabinet, make sure it is secure and items will not fall on children if they bump up against the cabinet.



Control the access to your building. Limit the number of entry points to your children's ministry area. Create a single point of entry if you can by locking alternate exit doors from the outside.

## Do You Insist on Safety for Activities, Snacks, and Crafts?

Food Allergies: This is an increasing concern, and rightly so. Many food allergies are life-threatening if not treated properly. Childcare providers should always be aware of what ingredients are in snacks and how to identify an allergic reaction. In addition, they should know how to treat a child with allergies if he/she comes in contact with an allergen.

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Scissors, glues, and craft materials should be safe for children.



Avoid object lessons that could be unsafe. Make sure that toasters, popcorn makers, microwaves, and all electrical cords are out of reach. (Be aware that toasters and popcorn makers can set off smoke alarms, which can ruin a Sunday morning.)



Some games are not safe for small rooms. If you don't have enough floor space for a suggested Sunday School game, go outside or substitute another activity.



Never serve a snack with nuts unless you have personally cleared it with every parent. Check the ingredient list. Even if it doesn't have nuts, it may have been processed in a facility that handles nuts; which can be fatal to a child with severe allergies.



Have a system to keep track of and quickly identify which children have allergies and what it is they are allergic to.



Familiarize yourself with common allergies and learn how to identify and treat an allergic reaction.



Do not serve hot liquids. Cool hot chocolate down with cold water or milk before serving. Thoroughly shake and test baby bottles with an instant-read thermometer.



Supervise children closely during snack time. Even older children can choke on their food, especially if they are laughing or running around.

## Are Your Volunteers and Staff Members Safe?

**Kidnapping:** This is every parent's worst nightmare. While it may seem rare, churches are one of the most likely places for this to occur. Sunday School programs should establish systems and policies to make it very difficult for an unauthorized individual to pick up a child.

**Sexual Abuse:** Few things are more devastating to a child, especially when the predator uses religious authority to accomplish their crime. Have policies and practices in place to prevent children from being alone with a volunteer or staff member. This not only protects the child, but it can also protect the volunteer or staff member in the event of an accusation.

**Other Children:** It doesn't make the news, but the most common threat for sexual abuse is one child abusing another child. This is devastating for everyone involved. Never allow unattended children in the church facility when there is children's programming taking place. Even the children of pastors should not be set free after the church program. Have a designated game room or similar location where the children of volunteers can play until their parents are free to go.



Some sexual predators abuse multiple children before they are caught. Criminal background checks are critical, but other safeguards must also be in place. Conduct background checks on all paid staff and volunteers, especially those that work with children and the elderly. Every volunteer and staff member should be screened and interviewed by the leaders of the church. It is highly recommended that re-screening is done at least every 1-2 years. It is suggested that churches implement a waiting period before a person can serve. Don't forget to use common sense and judgment.



Develop a Sexual Abuse Prevention policy and make it well known. This should start with never allowing a person to be alone with a child. Always have two adults in a classroom. Make this a rule with no exceptions.



Even in counseling situations or when taking children to the bathroom, have another adult present.



The best safeguard against abuse is preventing opportunity for abuse. For more information on developing policies, visit Stop it Now at [www.stopitnow.com/faith\\_community\\_prevention](http://www.stopitnow.com/faith_community_prevention).

## Do Your Policies and Guidelines Promote Security and Safety?

Here are some additional items to think about:

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All the best policies won't help unless you train your staff and volunteers. Make Safety and Security training for Sunday School volunteers and staff members a priority in your church. Remind your staff members about the importance of safety by including it in all communications.



No child (or group of children) should ever be alone with an adult.



Recommend that your volunteers be trained in CPR and first aid. It is likely that your church will have several active or retired nurses who are great resources for minor accidents. Organize and offer training courses.



Establish a check-in and check-out procedure that ensures every child is returned to only authorized parents or guardians after your program. This will help to prevent children from being unsupervised in the facility. Computer-based check-in systems (such as KidCheck) are now very affordable and can provide a secure, fast, and positive experience for children, parents, and volunteers.



Do not allow children to be unattended before or after Sunday School programs. Communicate to your parents that children are not allowed to run around unattended.



Have clearly defined drop-off and pick-up times and locations. These should be clearly communicated and enforced. The children of volunteers should remain with their parents or be supervised in one location. Do not allow early drop-offs when volunteers are not present.



Ask for hall monitors or greeters to patrol the facility during and after your ministry programs. Have them make sure children are not unattended and that only authorized individuals are in the children's ministry area. Ensure that authorized persons can easily be identified.