

## **Guidelines for Vacation Bible School (VBS)**

*These guidelines are to help keep children safe during VBS. Please also carefully consider any guidelines established by your insurance companies, or contact Barbara Keller, Consultant to ELCA for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct, ELCA Vocation and Education unit, Barbara.Keller@elca.org or 610-308-3428.*

### **Questions to consider:**

1. Are your VBS participants congregation members, or known by the leadership?
2. Are the VBS volunteers and staff known by the congregation?

These answers will help you know how much you need to ask about your participants and staff.

### **Insurance Company:**

1. Review your insurance policy to make sure VBS activities, volunteers, and staff are covered in your policy.
2. Always talk to your insurance company about changes or additions to your policy.

### **Staffing Guidelines:**

1. Use the same guidelines for background checks and training that you use for any Sunday school or youth events - especially if they are volunteers who are not well known to the VBS staff.
2. Consider reducing the ratio of children to staff because you may be taking children outside or to different locations in the building, and you will be spending longer blocks of time together than on Sunday morning.
3. These rules are good practice:
  - a. At least two adults should be together at all times while children are present and,
  - b. Each volunteer or staff person needs to be a member or known by youth director for at least 6 months.
4. Teenage volunteers need to be carefully considered. No minors should have unsupervised contact with children - especially regarding the lavatory. Teenagers should be used as adjunct helpers: craft activities, snack time, presentations, puppet shows and other drama or music activities.
5. Staff should avoid driving children unless it is a special field trip with permission slips and with two adults whose driving records have been checked.

### **Space:**

1. Remember to keep doors open as much as possible.
2. Watch for areas where children can hide and be unsupervised.
3. Monitor lavatory times very carefully

### **The participants:**

1. Keep the ages separated as much as possible.
2. Watch for any inappropriate touching, child to child, or any excessive aggression. Sexually reactive children are those who have experienced some inappropriate/early sexualization. Frequently, they react to their experiences by acting out with other children in a similar way. Please contact the consultant, Barbara Keller (610-308-3428), for more information on sexually reactive children.
3. Have parents or guardians fill out a form regarding their children. Consider: certain fears, allergies, other medical concerns, court orders or protection orders. Ask parents for phone numbers and who is allowed to pick up their children.

### **Additional resources**

1. Safe Sanctuaries - [www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org)
2. <http://synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/volunteers/>
3. [www.christianlaw.org/newsletter/articles/protecting\\_vbs.html](http://www.christianlaw.org/newsletter/articles/protecting_vbs.html)
4. <http://www.elca.org/safeplace>
5. <http://elca.org/init/safehaven>