

APPENDIX G: Ministry Standards

These ministry standards are intended to provide a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults in a variety of circumstances. From time to time it may not be possible to fulfill the standard to the letter. Permission is granted to Ministers in leadership to waive a standard with justification. If it is found that consistent fulfillment of a standard is not practicable, the matter shall be elevated to the Safe Conduct Administrator for resolution or amendment of these standards.

Adult-Child Ratios –

For all activities an adult-child ration of 6:1 shall be maintained, except that a ratio of 10:1 may apply to a classroom environment with children above the age of 5. Employees or volunteers under the age of 18 are not included in the ratio.

In all cases, an employee or volunteer under the age of 18 working with minor children shall be under the supervision of an adult over the age of 21.

Employees or volunteer leaders under the age of 21 shall not supervise or lead a youth group in which the oldest participating minor is less than three years younger than the supervisor/leader.

Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations –

The following practices apply to supervision of bathrooms and changing areas:

1. Minimize presence of diverse child age groups at the same time.
2. No employee/volunteer shall enter with a single unrelated child unless the entry door is ajar (propped open) in a way that (s)he can be observed by others.
3. Children should ask permission before using bathrooms.
4. Children should not enter alone in pairs.
5. Children should not enter unsupervised.

Employees and volunteers in leadership are to frequently and randomly check bathrooms to assure their security.

The following areas are to be locked at all times: Furnace room, elevator maintenance room, and nursery storage room.

The following areas are to be off limits: Unsupervised areas (such as kitchen, balcony, sanctuary, etc)

Transition and “Free” Time --

Especially during day long, off-site or overnight activities, children may periodically not be engaged in a supervised activity. Supervision shall be maintained during transition times through the use of chaperones, hall monitors and escorts to minimize the opportunity for security breach or child-on-child incidents.

Program Directors shall assess at what times and places additional duties are to be assigned to employees and volunteers to assure supervision of transition and free time.

Transportation of Children –

Transportation of children, whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles, is a serious responsibility. Especially when utilizing church owned vehicles or private vehicles of employees and volunteers, utmost care shall be taken in view of the risks associated with managing transportation.

The following standards shall apply:

1. No employee or volunteer shall transport a single child that is not his/her own, except as may be required in an emergency with the approval of a supervisor. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child.
2. Any driver operating a vehicle which holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL).
3. Any person who drives on behalf of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT sponsored programs shall be 21 or older and previously qualified under our transportation and driver qualification procedure. (Appendix B – Applications & Forms)
4. Adult-child ratios shall be maintained and within the safe loading limits of the vehicles being used.
5. As practicable, mixed age groups are not to sit together.
6. Employees and volunteers are not to make unauthorized or unplanned stops.
7. On each overnight trip, a vehicle log shall be maintained which documents the departing time, arrival time, destination, mileage, names of passengers and supervising staff and volunteers and any unusual occurrences. Log will be filed with Program Director.
8. All passengers are to be seated and to use safety belts as available.
9. Employees and volunteers are to be seated on larger vehicles in a way that permits them to supervise young passengers.
10. When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a headcount on arrival and departure. All passengers shall be required to complete a trip in the same vehicle to assure accountability.

Off-site Activities (Day Trips) --

Off-site activities require special additional planning, taking into account the nature of the destination and exposure to the public at large. For example, attendance at a public venue, such as an amusement park, will require greater supervision than a visit to a sister church. Due to the increased risk of a child becoming lost or injured during an off-site activity, extra care shall be taken to assure adequate supervision.

The following are minimum requirements:

1. All off-site activities shall be approved in advance by the Program Director
2. The trip leader shall provide a plan outlining transportation and supervision for the activity.
3. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Each child should provide emergency medical contact. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (.e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
4. Parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.

5. Each employee or volunteer shall be assigned to a specific group of children to supervise. Head counts and roll checks will be conducted routinely.
6. Standards for bathroom activities, transition time and transportation shall be maintained.
7. Parents/guardians shall be provided a means to make emergency contact with the trip leader.

Over-night Activities --

Camps generally have the experience and staffing to adopt different standards than these below. The assumption for the purpose of this standard is lodging at a public hotel in an unfamiliar city.

As with off-site activities, over-night activities present an even higher level or risk to children than day trips due to isolation from parents and the 24-hour supervision that is required throughout the activity.

The following standards will apply in addition to standards for off-site activities:

1. All overnight activities, whether on the church site or not, shall have prior approval of Program Director.
2. All overnight activities, either on or off church property, shall include a minimum of two adult chaperones over 21 years of age. A minimum of 2 chaperons shall be present at a ratio of 1 adult for 6 youths (that they are not related to) of the same gender. (e.g. If there are nine boys and three girls, there must be two male adults and two female adults). In other words, the boys and the girls will be considered two separate groups requiring supervision by a two adult rule
3. All volunteers and employees under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times.
4. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
5. The parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
6. Trip leaders should provide supervision at all times and check on the group with routine walk- throughs.
7. In the event of a building evacuation, an outdoor rally point will be designated in advance.
8. A roster will be maintained of the room assignments for each child and adult.
9. A bed check will be conducted at a specific time known to all.
10. Adult-child ratios are to be maintained for outings away from the lodging site.
11. A daily schedule of events shall be maintained with supervisory duty assignments included.
12. Double-queen lodging is preferred at hotels, four to a room. Children in each room will be of similar age. No adult will share a bed with a child.
13. Adult rooms will be scattered among rooms occupied by children. There shall be at least one adult lodged on any floor on which children are sleeping.
14. Standards for bathroom, out-of-the-way, off limits locations and transition time shall be maintained as the site circumstances and facilities may require
