The church nursery needs to be a clean, attractive, and welcoming place for children. It is important that your congregation establish guidelines for your church nursery.

* Infant and toddler nurseries should be located near the sanctuary, restrooms, and fire exits.
* Nurseries should be attractive, safe, welcoming spaces.
* Information and guidelines should be consistent with the church safety policy.
* All who work and volunteer in the nursery should attend “Safe Church” training.
* Establish a nursery policy for your church.

**A nursery policy should include the following:**

# GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE NURSERY

Do a background check on everyone who has access to the children and youth in your church.

* Follow the practice of having two adults present at all times, windows in entrance doors, and diaper changing stations in central locations. It is also helpful to have the changing table near the sink so that adults can wash their hands after each diaper change.
* Always have an adult in charge. It is best if the same person is there each week.
* Require all nursery workers to go through an orientation before working in the nursery.
* Have a backup plan for staffing the nursery.
* Minimum adult to child ratio recommendations:
* one adult to three infants
* one adult to four toddlers
* one adult to six children three years and older
* Have only age-appropriate toys in the nursery. If a toy (or parts of a toy) is small enough to fit through a toilet paper tube, do not use.
* Regularly check floors for choking hazards such as coins, marbles, safety pins, jewelry, buttons, crayons, pen caps, nails, screws, etc.
* Avoid stuffed animals. They are great germ carriers.
* Establish a regular schedule for checking, cleaning, and replacing toys and other nursery equipment.
* Practice SIDS prevention: always put infants to bed on their back. (This policy is in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics.)
* Check that mattresses are firm and flat; do not use blankets or pillows in the crib.
* Check that crib sheets cover the mattress snugly.
* Make sure that crib slats are spaced properly. You should not be able to pass a can of soda between the slats of a crib.
* Cribs should not have cutouts in the end panels or corner posts.
* Keep cribs away from windows.
* Have disposable, one-time use gloves available for required use when changing a child’s diaper.
* Post emergency exits and phone numbers, including poison control.
* Make sure nothing is on a counter that could be pulled over by a child (e.g., TV, DVD player).

# NURSERY CAREGIVER: RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

The nursery caregiver will provide proper care and nurturing to babies/toddlers during church services and special events.

* Arrive at least fifteen minutes prior to service or event—earlier if expecting a larger crowd for special services or events.
* Become familiar with nursery policies and facilities.
* Greet parents and sign in and out babies/toddlers.
* Take care of babies/toddlers in the nursery, following nursery policies for safety and proper care:
* Change diapers/clothing as necessary; check diapers near end of service.
* Rock, play with, sing to, play music for, and show picture books to babies/toddlers.
* Feed babies when needed or as requested by parents.
* Give snacks to toddlers.
* Change crib sheets after babies/toddlers have been picked up.
* Place dirty toys in container to be cleaned and disinfected.
* Encourage potty training children to try at least once.

# NURSERY COORDINATOR: RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

* Recruit and train volunteers to serve in the nursery.
* Organize the nursery and ensure its cleanliness and safety.
* Develop, post, and enforce nursery policies.
* Routinely inspect nursery equipment, toys, and supplies.
* Report repair-and-maintenance needs to appropriate personnel.
* Restock supplies when needed.
* Obtain and keep a library of picture books and music/songs on CDs for use in the nursery.
* Keep a current list of nursery caregivers with names, addresses, and phone numbers.
* Schedule nursery caregivers for every service and special churchwide events in which nursery care is needed.
* Collect and launder used crib sheets weekly.
* Clean/disinfect dirty toys as necessary.
* Oversee budget and expenditures for the nursery ministry.

# TRAINING FOR ALL NURSERY WORKERS

* Have a nursery-worker orientation that includes an explanation of expectations, discipline policies, information on child development, information on fire and emergency procedures, and training in infant CPR.
* Have regularly scheduled orientations and refresher courses.

# GUIDELINES FOR A CLEAN NURSERY

* Have nontoxic cleaning supplies readily available to nursery workers but well out of the reach of children. Childproof cabinet latches are recommended.
* See that nursery carpets, floors, and furniture are thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis.
* Check premises for adequate ventilation and test for the presence of lead, especially in buildings built before 1970.
* Have clean crib sheets readily available and have a plan for making sure used crib linens and changing table covers are washed and returned each week.
* Have disposable, one-time use changing pads available for required use when changing a child’s diaper.
* See that toys are washed on a regular basis with a nontoxic detergent, and that toys handled by children with colds are washed immediately.

# GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

* Have a check-in system for parents that includes having them fill out information cards on their children.
* Have parents leave their cell phone numbers so they can be contacted if the need arises.
* Keep up-to-date information on all children.
* Only children free of fever, diarrhea, or contagious rashes should attend nursery. If a child is visibly ill, the parents should be contacted immediately.
* Ask parents to label their child’s diaper bag, bottle, spare clothing, toys, etc.
* Be sure to talk with parents each Sunday about any concerns and joys related to their child.

# NECESSARY NURSERY SUPPLIES

* disposable diapers
* paper lining for changing tables
* premoistened wipes
* tissues
* cotton balls
* first-aid kit with syrup of ipecac, thermometer, alcohol/antibiotic ointment, bandages, cold packs
* name tags and markers
* plastic bags and ties for soiled clothes
* disinfectants and nontoxic cleaning solutions
* paper towels
* electric outlet covers
* emergency manual
* posted fire exit plans/maps
* graham or soda crackers (check for allergies and preferences listed on parent information cards)
* children’s books and toys
* telephone
* fire extinguishers
* smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (check batteries often and replace twice a year)

# FURNITURE

* rocking chairs
* child-size table and chairs
* cribs
* changing table(s)
* childproof locks on all cabinets for supplies
* hooks for hanging coats and diaper bags
* bulletin board for announcements and pictures
* baby swings and walkers are optional (strict guidelines should be established for the use of these items)