



Safe Church and Vacation Bible School

I. Four High-Risk Situations at Vacation Bible School

Large Group Activities

- These require extra supervision because kids can easily go unnoticed or separate from their peers and leaders/teachers.
- Don't allow yourself to get distracted talking to other teachers.
- Do not allow a VBSer to go back to the classroom or the bathroom unaccompanied by an adult. Have a restroom protocol in place.

High-Risk Kids

- Kids who bully or threaten other kids
- Sexualized talking or gestures
- Verbally or physically aggressive kids
Targets: Kids who are lonely, shy, clingy, emotionally needy. Kids who have a disability. These children should always be in an observable location.
- Everyone should know that they are not allowed to threaten, scare or harm another student and if they are the victim of such behavior or observe it in other kids, they should tell their teacher or another adult immediately.

Isolated Areas

- Inappropriate sexual behavior between children or between an adult and a child occurs in isolated or private areas.
- Eliminate privacy.
- Know your facility or campus, e.g. offices, closets, empty rooms, bathrooms.
- If a child is headed for an isolated area, head him or her off, or if you see an adult taking a child to an isolated area, remind the adult of the rules.
- Institute a bathroom protocol such as the rule of three: 2 children and 1 adult or 2 adults and 1 child. Keep bathroom door partially open.

Mixed Age Group

- Keep your eye on interactions between younger and older children to make sure no one is getting teased or is being picked on.
- If you have preteens or youth helping out with VBS, remember that they should never be left in charge of other children. They do not have the maturity to be relied upon to use good judgment. And it is not fair or appropriate to give them that much responsibility when they are not equipped to handle it.
- They are there to assist you and learn about leadership.

II. The Role of the VBS Adult Teacher/Leader

- **Be a positive role model.** Use appropriate language, dress appropriately, and interact appropriately with other teachers and children.
- **Set Clear Standards.** The children and teen helpers will look to you to see what's acceptable behavior and language. If you are roughhousing, being inappropriately demonstrative or using inappropriate sexualized language they will see that as the standard.
- **Keep the Boundaries Clear.** Young children will want your affection, elementary age children will want to know all about you, and the teens may want to impress you, be your friend or be more interested in other teen helpers than with being your assistant. Remember that you are the adult in charge. And, avoid being alone with a child. Use the evening news test: Would I be OK with seeing myself behaving in this way on the evening news?
- **Listen to What Kids Say.** Sometimes they may say it in oblique, non-straight forward ways. You may have to read between the lines. Who is teasing whom; Who is in and who is out; Who is threatening others.
This goes for kids as well as teen helpers and adults.
- **Report: Inform Other Teachers or the VBS Director of your Concerns or Observations.** It is your responsibility to report problem kids (the bully), situations (those who sneak off) and adults (those who see themselves as exceptions to the rules and exhibit inappropriate language or behavior). Remember that it is not your job to investigate or determine if there is actual abuse going on. It is your job to report to the VBS director or in a case where you suspect actual abuse, report to the authorities. You can make your report anonymously if you prefer and it can be done verbally or in writing. Good faith reporting.

III. Behaviors that have led to false allegations

- Meeting alone in isolated places
- Showing favoritism
- Engaging in physical contact that is misinterpreted
- Wearing provocative or revealing clothing
- Giving special gifts or secret gifts
- Discussing sexual activities or encouraging others to do so
- Commenting on children's bodies
- Shaming or belittling a child or any individual
- Failing to adhere to accepted standards for appropriate demonstrations of affection (below)

Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

A copy of *The Diocese of Atlanta Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse* should be accessible during VBS. The policies can be downloaded from the Diocese of Atlanta website: www.episcopatlanta.org > “Resources” > “Safe Church” > Safeguarding God’s Children. Look for the policies on the left side bar. The three appendices mentioned below should be reviewed, as well as the section on Reporting Suspected Abuse, beginning on page 17. **The Compliance Agreement Form (page 26) should be duplicated and signed by each adult VBS worker and kept on file** by the VBS director or the person in charge of Children’s Education and Formation.

- Appendix A (page 19): Guidelines for Appropriate Demonstrations of Affection, Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Demonstrations
- Appendix B (page 21): Confidential Notice of Concern
- Appendix D (page 26): Compliance Agreement Form (to give to the VBS Director, your rector or the person in charge of the children’s education program)
- Report Suspected Abuse, begins on page 17.
- State of Georgia Child Abuse Reporting Statute Website
<http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/child-abuse-neglect>
- Sex Offender Registry Website
<https://gbi.georgia.gov/georgia-sex-offender-registry>

The Covenant for Vacation Bible School Youth Helpers/Workers is on the next page.



Covenant for VBS Youth Helpers/Workers

I understand that I am under the supervision of adult Vacation Bible School leaders and will follow the rules at all times, and:

(Please place a check mark next to each item)

- I will respect the adult VBS leaders and do what they ask me to do.
- I will not remove myself from the group or go off with a child or with another youth assistant unless instructed to do so by an Adult VBS leader.
- I will follow the bathroom protocol established by the adult VBS leaders when or if I accompany children to the restroom.
- I will refrain from giving piggyback rides or letting children over 5 years of age sit on my lap.
- I will not use foul or sexually suggestive language. I will also refrain from teasing or engaging in behavior that might be perceived as judging or making fun of any child.
- I will not roughhouse, tickle or fight with other youth

assistants or with any of the children attending VBS.

- I will not play favorites with any of the children at VBS and I will not neglect my duties as a helper to hang out and talk exclusively with other helpers.
- I will follow the two-leader rule at all times and never be alone with a child unless I have been asked by an adult to take a child from one activity to another.
- I will recognize that some of the children will likely look up to me and view me as a role model and so I will use appropriate language and behavior at all times.

I agree to abide by these rules while I am helping at VBS.

Signed _____

Date _____