



# Maintaining Nursery Care Safety

PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE

## Keeping the Nursery Safe

Is your nursery safe? Churches providing nursery care have taken on increased responsibility for protecting the safety of children while their parents worship and participate in other activities.

Physical injuries to children left in a nursery could range from minor cuts and bruises to more serious injuries such as broken bones and concussions. Falls, electric shock, food poisoning or the spread of communicable diseases could be seen as the consequence of a poorly supervised nursery or an unsatisfactory physical environment.

Building and room inspections should be undertaken at regular intervals with a focus on the physical conditions of ceilings, walls, floors and floor covering, lighting and general housekeeping.

A “kid’s eye view” inspection of the church nursery, adjacent areas and washrooms used by nursery students is recommended. When you inspect your nursery, get down on your hands and knees and observe the room from the height and perspective of the children who use the nursery.

There are several potential hazards which should be checked. Any stairs used by nursery students should have anti-slip treads and child-high handrails. Walkways and stairs should be free from recognized “trip and fall” hazards. Climbing toys that are not age-appropriate for nursery students should be removed. Do not leave furniture or toys stacked so a child would find them inviting to climb, which may result in physical injury to them or others in the nursery. All cribs and playpens used in the nursery should meet current safety standards. Serious injury may occur if a child’s head becomes wedged between the slats or other opening. The distance between components in the cribs (such as slats, spindles, crib rods, corner

posts) should be no wider than 2⅜" (6 cm). The dimensions of openings in your cribs and playpens should be checked to verify that the safety standard is met. If any equipment does not meet this standard, discard it.

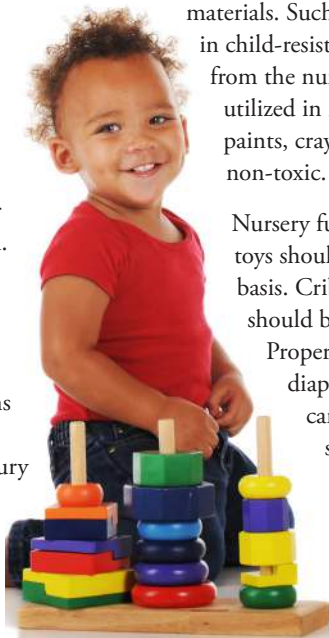
Electrical wiring, switches and outlets should be checked and brought up to local electrical codes. Electrical outlets should be covered when not in use, preferably with safety caps. Do not allow cords from clocks or other electrical appliances to dangle, creating potential strangulation hazards. Extension cords should never be used as permanent wiring, and must not be exposed to access by children even when used temporarily for electrical devices such as DVD players, VCRs, CD players, tape recorders or record players.

Gates should be installed on stairwells and windows which are accessible to young children. Doors need to be closed to prevent children from wandering off, while maintaining access for parents and other adults into the nursery. A safety glass viewing port in the door or the use of a split door can provide a solution.

Great care needs to be taken in the proper and safe storing of cleaning supplies, insecticides, matches, power tools and any other hazardous materials. Such materials should be stored in child-resistant, locked enclosures away from the nursery area. Any supplies utilized in nursery activities, such as paints, crayons and the like, must be non-toxic.

Nursery furnishings, equipment and toys should be sanitized on a regular basis. Crib and playpen mattress covers should be made of washable vinyl. Proper disposal facilities for soiled diapers are a requisite. All trash cans in the nursery should be securely covered.

If snacks or beverages are provided by either the church or parents, provisions to keep



★ **Ministry Protection Memo** ★  
“MPM” is a series on various topics relative to Church and safety. Send your comments and interests to AME Zion’s Director of Ministry Protection.

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“A safety check of your church nursery facilities should be a high priority. It should become a routine activity for those responsible for the nursery operation and completed at least twice a year.”

or recharged and tagged at least annually. All possible sources of fire should be eliminated or properly controlled. Boilers and furnaces should be enclosed within a minimum one-hour fire resistive rooms and located well away from the nursery.

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## **Liability Exposures**

One of the first risk management steps for every church with a nursery program is to review the current insurance policy to confirm that there is adequate protection in place. The

the food at the proper temperature until it is consumed are essential. Clean up thoroughly after the children eat refreshments to avoid food poisoning from the consumption of spoiled leftovers or spillage and attracting insects or vermin.

Churches with nurseries in a location at some distance from the church sanctuary, fellowship hall, church office, or another location where adults are present when the nursery is in use, will want to consider the installation of a remote audio monitor. Adults away from the nursery listening in on the activities can speed the response should an emergency require additional assistance. A buzzer system, accessible only to adults, incorporated into the monitoring system allows for a “help” signal to be sent when necessary.

The fire and emergency evacuation plan should be posted and known by every nursery worker. At a minimum, two remote fire exits with illuminated exit signs, and preferably with panic hardware, should be provided. Never lock exit doors with padlocks or deadbolts. Emergency lighting should be installed in order to provide necessary illumination in the event of a power failure. An approved automatic sprinkler system is the best defense against the peril of fire, and may be required due to your building construction or local ordinances. Check your local building code to verify that you are meeting all ordinance requirements.

Approved fire extinguishers should be properly placed, available within 75 feet of the nursery, and accessible to adults but not young children. Extinguishers should be inspected

## Screening Nursery Workers

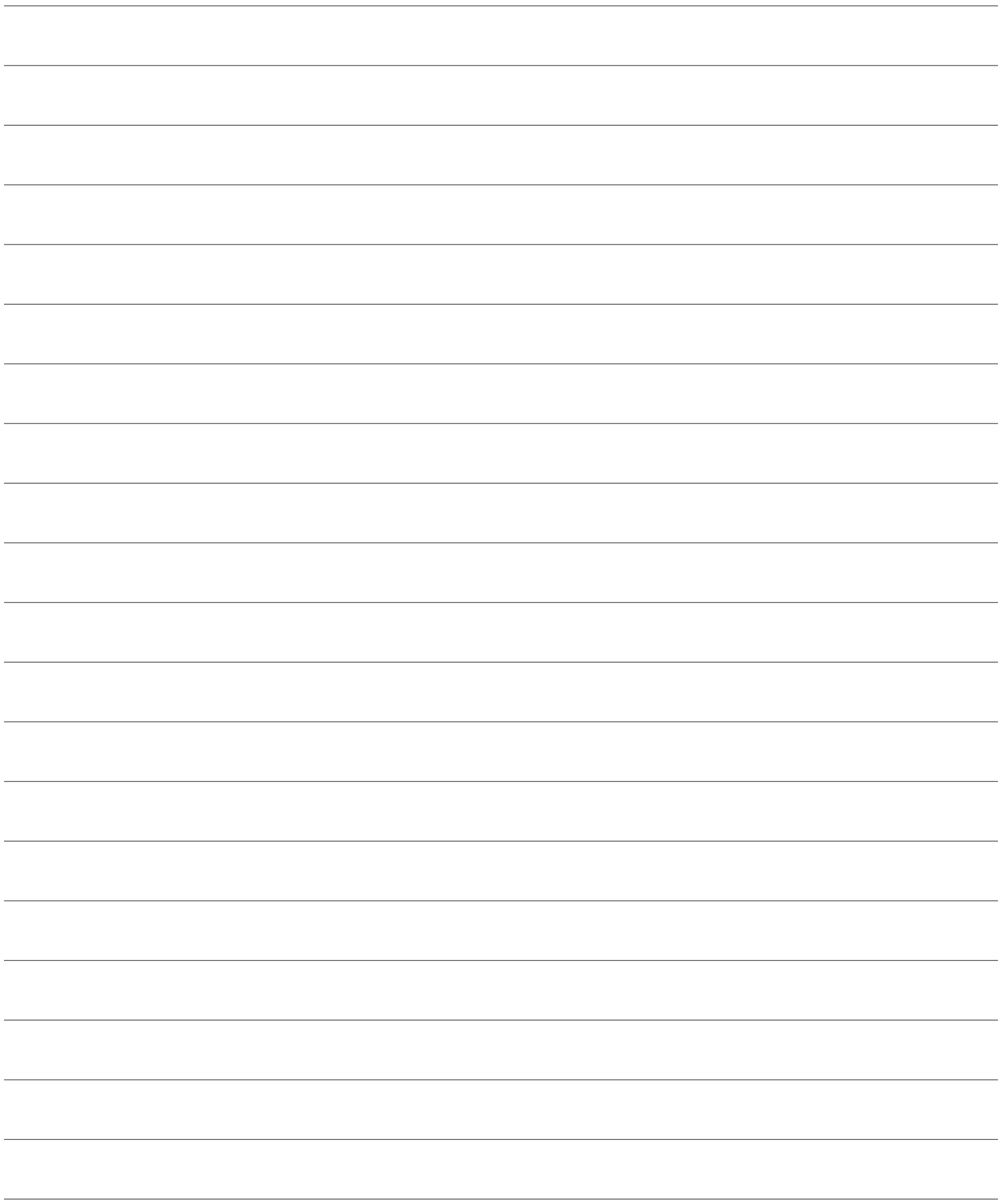
Parents and guardians who leave infants and toddlers in the care of church nursery workers expect that their children will have a safe and nurturing experience. Lasting impressions about the caregiving by church members are formed with the children and adults. The church's love in action is the desired impression, so every possible step should be taken to ensure that nursery time is positive. Churches particularly want to avoid the occurrence of any accident, as well as avoid the victimization of children by physical or sexual abuse in the church's nursery.

Workers are the nursery, as much as the setting, housekeeping, toys, activities and the children. Local churches typically conduct minimum application, screening, and supervision of their paid and/or volunteer nursery staff, a step so crucial to successful nursery operation. The enthusiastic acceptance the church historically offered to almost anyone willing to work with children is widely known both inside and outside the church membership. This has left many of our churches vulnerable to violation of the trust given to nursery workers by church leaders, parents and children. Would physical discipline of toddlers be promptly dealt with as unacceptable? Are your nursery workers capable of responding to immediate first-aid needs should a child be injured? Is your nursery staffed by a person authorized to change soiled diapers or who can locate a parent when a change becomes necessary? Families and other church members need reassurance that only persons qualified to handle these and the other demands placed on nursery workers are assigned. It is crucial that you develop a policy requiring persons to formally apply for these important positions and that the policy be implemented and applied consistently.

Responsible church leaders use the utmost care in screening volunteer and paid staff who will be working with children in the nursery. Child abuse prevention specialists suggest that, as other professional child-serving programs and agencies implement more effective screening techniques, church programs will be an attraction to chronic child abusers. It is crucial that local churches begin to exercise more care in screening all who work with children and teens. Experts suggest that you use an application form to check

## SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT

VICTIM INFORMATION		
VICTIM'S NAME:		AGE:
PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF VICTIM:		
LOCATION OF INCIDENT:	DATE:	TIME:
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:		
DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF INITIAL CONVERSATION WITH VICTIM:		
NOTES OF CONVERSATION:		
ACCUSED INFORMATION		
NAME OF PERSON ACCUSED OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT:		
DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF INITIAL CONVERSATION WITH ACCUSED (if staff member):		
NOTES OF CONVERSATION:		
PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)		
DATE/TIME/LOCATION OR PHONE CALL OF INITIAL CONTACT WITH PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S):		
PERSON SPOKEN TO:		
NOTES OF CONVERSATION:		
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES		



## INJURIES OCCURRING IN THE NURSERY

TODAY'S DATE:			
INJURED'S NAME:		AGE:	PRIMARY PHONE:
			SECONDARY PHONE:
ADDRESS:	CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
DATE/TIME/PARENT/GUARDIANS CONTACTED:			

<b>ACCIDENT</b>	
LOCATION OF ACCIDENT:	
DATE OF ACCIDENT:	TIME OF ACCIDENT:
STAFF PERSON IN CHARGE AT TIME OF ACCIDENT:	
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT:	
OTHER CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ACCIDENT:	
OTHER ADULT OR YOUTH WITNESSES TO ACCIDENT:	

<b>ACTION</b>
ACTION TAKEN:
MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED:
TREATING MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND/OR FACILITY:
FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED:

<b>INSURANCE</b>
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## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

*The information obtained on this form is for internal use by this local church only.*

NAME:		DATE OF BIRTH:	HOME PHONE:	
			BUSINESS PHONE:	
ADDRESS:		CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
POSITION APPLIED FOR:				

<b>CURRENT OCCUPATION</b>				
OCCUPATION:		CURRENT EMPLOYER:		
BUSINESS ADDRESS:		CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
TIME AT THIS EMPLOYMENT: ___ YEARS ___ MONTHS				

<b>CHURCHES</b>				
LIST (NAME AND ADDRESS) OTHER CHURCHES YOU HAVE ATTENDED REGULARLY THE PAST FIVE YEARS:				
ADDRESS:		CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:

<b>GROUPS YOU ARE CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN:</b>

<b>PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:</b>		
Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you ever been charged with or convicted of child neglect or abuse?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have any complaints or allegations of misconduct involving children ever been against you?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Have you been convicted or plead guilty to a traffic offense within the last 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Current Drivers License Number:		
Please explain fully any YES answers to the above questions. In addition to the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of young people? (Explain):		

The information that I have provided may be verified by contacting persons or organizations that my have information .3.3 0.(t) re5eD 533.05