

Thinking Through Trips, Travel, and Emergencies

Provide each staff member a *written* manual, including emergency procedures.

- Verbally explain procedures at an orientation.
- At each event assign an emergency or crisis manager (you or another staff person) who knows procedures.
- Staff and leadership need to specifically know who is the crisis manager on duty. In an emergency speed is important, clarity is critical, and teamwork is essential.
- Make sure that several members of your staff have taken basic CPR and first-aid training courses. Clear thinking in a medical crisis comes with proper medical training.
- Keep a well-stocked medical kit easily accessible.
- Have additional staff who have received advanced first-aid training, if possible.
- Get to know doctors, nurses, Certified First Responders, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) in your congregation. Consider inviting them on trips. Build their cost into the trip if possible.
- Be sure that a certified lifeguard is on duty whenever swimming is part of an activity.

Sample guidelines for travel:

When you are away from home with your group—do you know—

- How to provide safe food and water for your group?
- The location, phone number, and directions to the closest emergency medical facility?
- Dangers that you may face in a given location (such as, flash flooding, animals, insects)?
- How to contact family members?
- How to facilitate an emergency medical evacuation?
- Do you have accurate bus or van lists and know which vehicle people are in?

Travel considerations—

- Are the vehicles you're driving safe? How do you know?
- Do you have a back up plan for dealing with worse case scenarios?
- Have you enlisted a staff person to handle issues like kids who come late, get sick, have discipline needs?
- Do you have a vehicle to transport your group in case of a sudden need? Who has the keys?
- Do you have access to a cell phone or radio for communication?

- Have you trained your staff how to respond in the event of an emergency? What if you were injured?
- No standing while the vehicle is in motion.
- No smoking when children are present.
- Keep arms, feet, and hands inside the vehicle.
- No throwing things while in the vehicle
- Don't require the driver to have any responsibilities other than to drive.
- Keep doors closed when moving
- Never transport more than the posted number of passengers
- Pick up or drop students in such a way that they are not required to cross streets.

Sample guidelines for a camping event:

- Bring staff experienced in outdoor camping.
- Require a member of your camp staff to become trained in first aid and CPR.
- Designate a contact person at home who knows where you're camping and when you'll return.
- Find out how to get help when you're at your destination campsite.
- Obtain current road and trail maps.
- Bring supplies necessary for the kind of camping.
- On your **Permission and Medical Release** form, specifically ask about special medical needs of students relevant to the kind of camping—poison oak allergies, hay fever, bee stings—especially those needs that affect their level of participation in selected activities.
- Ask a professional outfitter to review your route, supplies, and meal plans.
- Bring a weather radio to warn you of significant weather threats, such as thunderstorms and tornadoes.
- Well ahead of the camping event, provide training program for adult leaders for preventing sexual abuse.
- No swimming without a qualified lifeguard.
- No use of the ropes course without trained staff supervising.
- Male and female students and staff will not share the same sleeping facilities.
- Youth will not share tents with an adult other than their own parent.
- Coed overnight activities require both male and female leadership from qualified members of your staff who are over 21 years of age.
- No alcohol, tobacco, or controlled substances permitted (applies to students and adults).
- Set a curfew—all campers in their sleeping areas by 11 p.m.
- Preview the camping facility to be sure you planned for adequate supervision. Note places and situations where supervision is difficult, and prep your staff.
- Provide the camp director with a list of students participating in an event, accompanied by a **Medical Release and Permission Form**. Be certain that the form tells

you whom to contact in case of an emergency. It must contain all important medical information about the student.

- Only those adult leaders who have completed the driver screening process may provide transportation to the event.

Sample guidelines for water events:

Swimming—

- Is there a certified lifeguard watching your group?
- Is the diving area deep enough?
- Have you assigned a buddy to each swimmer?

Boating—

- Are there enough Coast Guard approved life preservers?
- Is the boat driver qualified to drive the boat? To haul skiers?
- Have you limited the number of boat riders to what the boat safely holds?
- Have you confirmed that the weather is safe for boating?
- Have you confirmed that the boat is equipped with other safety measures?
 - whistle
 - drinking water
 - paddles
 - fire extinguisher
 - two-way radio
- Have you informed your contact person on shore where you're going and when you'll return?

Sample guidelines for retreats:

When using a retreat facility or hotel, do you know—

- Where everyone is (room assignments)?
- How to evacuate everyone safely in the event of a fire?
- How to make sure everyone is accounted for in the event of an emergency?
- How to call for medical or police assistance and how long it will take for them to arrive?

High-risk events:

Does your church allow and your insurance company cover the activities listed below? (Your insurance policy generally spells out exclusions. Read the policy carefully.) If you are free to choose the following types of activities, carefully evaluate the fun in context with the accompanying risks. Also provide qualified adults to supervise you group's event. Consult with your supervisor and insurance agent first. Safety is the number-one policy.

Bungee jumping

Trampolines

Spelunking

Scuba diving

Boating events

Rock climbing

Parasailing

Skiing and snowboarding

Hayrides

Snowmobiling

Whitewater rafting

Drag racing in the church parking lot