

PLAYGROUP CHECKLIST – IS YOUR SPACE SAFE?

As with any activity involving children, we have a duty of care to keep children safe while they are participating in a playgroup. The checklist below is a guide for playgroups held in church owned premises and is intended to assist in the identification of risks that might compromise child safety. Please check with your own denomination regarding your church's requirements.

Effective risk management will identify ways of minimising the impact of those risks to help keep the families safe. Where your playgroup is held in a 3rd party owned premises (eg a private home or a community hall) you will need to ensure that appropriate risk assessments and insurance arrangements are in place.

Insurance for this ministry of the church includes personal accident cover for volunteer leaders and public liability that will provide protection to the church if a family sues the church in the event of an injury sustained by their child while at playgroup. Have questions? Contact us at admin@cpn.org.au

PREMISES / VENUE

- ✓ Ensure that the activity is adequately insured including public liability and volunteer insurance, through your church's insurance or your state Playgroup Association? Note that if the activity is an officially sanctioned church activity, then these covers most likely already exist. If in doubt check with your church leadership.
- ✓ Make sure the venue is cleaned and checked for hazards (including choking hazards) prior to any session.
- ✓ Does the venue have adequate heating and cooling?
- ✓ Confirm that there is sufficient space for the number of people attending, taking into account size of the venue, ages of children and numbers of adults and children attending.
- ✓ Create separate spaces for baby changing and parking prams.
- ✓ Are there adequate toileting facilities for both adults and children?
- ✓ Secure chemicals in locked containers.
- ✓ Are toys and activities appropriate to the ages of children present?
- ✓ Confirm the venue has adequate waste disposal facilities (for nappies, kitchen waste, recycling etc.).
- ✓ Tag and test all electrical equipment at the correct test intervals.
- ✓ Insert protective plugs into power points to protect curious young fingers
- ✓ Prior to introduction of any animals to the group, ensure that all children are not going to be adversely impacted (e.g. allergic reaction)
- ✓ Does the kitchen area have access restricted by a 'low gate' or door?

OUTSIDE PLAY

- ✓ Check outside play areas daily for hazards including choking hazards. Ensure that that equipment cannot trap hands, limbs or fingers.
- ✓ Is play equipment checked to ensure that it is still in effective working order?
- ✓ Ensure pathways are clear of any slip or trip hazards.
- ✓ Are play areas swept, raked and tidied prior to use?
- ✓ Establish SunSmart guidelines such as hats and sunscreen during Term 1 & 4, and providing shade
- ✓ Outside play areas need to be fenced to prevent children from straying and/or unauthorised people from entering the venue. Recommendations are a fence minimum height of 1.5metres with a childproof self-closing gate.
- ✓ Have trees been examined by an arborist to ensure any hazards are identified and managed?
- ✓ Are there appropriate surfaces in the playground for play such as impact absorbing under play equipment, grass, etc
- ✓ Is there a sand pit and is it well drained, does it have safe surrounds and shade provided?

CAR PARKING

- ✓ Make sure that the car park is free from obvious hazards
- ✓ Does the car park have clearly separated car and pedestrian areas?

LEADERS /PARENTS/ CARERS

- ✓ Have leaders the appropriate experience / training to be leading the group?
- ✓ Does the church have a policy regarding the recruitment of leaders and have all potential leaders been recruited according to that policy?
- ✓ Is at least one of your leaders present at the playgroup session or staff member is in the church building while the playgroup session is running, adequately trained in first aid?
- ✓ Do all leaders and helpers comply with state based 'working with children' regulations eg WWCC
- ✓ Do your playgroup leaders ensure that parents are present and supervising their children at all times?

OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Prior to undertaking any off-site visits, undertake detailed Activity Risk Assessments to ensure all additional risks are identified and managed. For example, water hazards. Ask your church leadership for your denominations Activity Risk Assessments.
- ✓ Ensure parents have given explicit permission to participate in any off-site visits.

SECURITY

- ✓ Secure external doors to prevent straying of children.
- ✓ Establish protocols to ensure all persons entering the premises are identified and accompanied, where appropriate (e.g. contractors). When possible, have contractors come outside of the playgroup session.

FOOD

- ✓ Ensure there are adequate food storage facilities (cupboards, fridges).
- ✓ Clean kitchen facilities prior to use
- ✓ Instruct preparers of food in how to operate safely, including: hand washing, fridge temperature control, washing of dishes and utensils, avoidance of burns, how to use equipment, use of a colour system for cloths/sponges. This may include posters in the kitchen.
- ✓ Provide guidelines about the types of food appropriate for the group, including catering for allergies.
- ✓ Minimise the possibility of choking
- ✓ Separately secure cleaning materials away from food and food preparation areas

MANAGEMENT OF PLAYGROUP

- ✓ Is there a formal application process for the playgroup that includes provision of contact details and information about medical conditions that might need to be catered for?
- ✓ Do you have established communications protocols for contacting parents routinely or in the event of an emergency?
- ✓ Record details of all incidents or injuries, while still fresh in the minds of those involved (this may help determine the outcome of later insurance claims). This could include taking photos.
- ✓ Establish policies /procedures in relation to: photographing children, conflict resolution, complaints, privacy

EMERGENCIES

- ✓ Develop an emergency action plan (include emergency phone numbers).
- ✓ Does the playgroup use a sign in / out attendance record at each session so that in an emergency all children, adults and babies can be accounted for.
- ✓ Ensure that emergency procedures include a fire evacuation plan. The plan should be practiced.
- ✓ Are all exits labelled correctly?

MEDICAL

- ✓ Develop protocols on how to deal with infections, including guidelines on the periods of exclusion for persons with specific infections (for example, for a child with measles, when can they return to the playgroup?).
- ✓ Establish who is responsible for managing medical conditions of children attending the playgroup, e.g. asthma, food allergies. This will most likely be the responsibility of attending parent / carers but responsibility needs to be clearly established in writing. Allergies of adults and children present need to be identified and clearly communicated to leaders and families.
- ✓ Have you established protocols for dealing with bodily fluids? Eg toileting accidents
- ✓ Do you have guidelines on effective hand washing? This could be a poster on the wall of the bathroom
- ✓ Do you have a first aid kit and adults who are trained in the application of first aid, including responding to allergic reactions

For downloadable templates of some of the documents referred to in this checklist go to www.cpn.org.au Login in as a member to access the members only section under the tab for 'Playgroup Leaders' then go to the 'Forms Documents and Templates' section. You can also contact your church leadership for forms and documents from your denomination.