

## 12 Things a Church Can Do To Protect Minors

1. **Institute the Two-Adult Rule:** There must always be at least two adults in the room, in the car, in the van, or anywhere that minors are gathered. These two can NOT be husband and wife.
2. **Institute the Six-Month Rule:** An individual must be a member of the church for at least six months before being considered for work with minors in any way. Pedophiles and others looking to prey on minors will not likely stay at the church that long.
3. **Carefully select all volunteers and staff who work with minors:**
  - a. Use an application process. Collect prior church membership, prior volunteer service, and references.
  - b. Call prior churches, volunteer service entities, and references. Ask all for an additional reference not suggested by the applicant.
  - c. Always ask prior churches and service entities, “Would you allow this person to work with minors at your church/service entity again?” A “no” answer requires more investigation.
  - d. Conduct criminal background screening that includes sex offender registries. TBMB can connect you to screening service.
  - e. Conduct an interview with applicant and ask tough questions.
4. **Provide training to all volunteers and staff who work with minors:**
  - a. Teach age-appropriate interaction standards on how to physically and verbally engage with a minor.
  - b. Teach how to spot abuse that may be happening elsewhere.
  - c. Teach church policy on protecting safety of minors.
5. **Provide supervision of volunteers and staff:** This is in addition to the two adults, for all events including classes, outings, trips, recreation, and other activities. Their assignment is to ensure conformation to policy and procedures.
6. **Institute communication policy:** This would include parents approving of any electronic communication between volunteers and staff with minors.
7. **Develop a comprehensive security plan for church:**
  - a. Make sure that the person who picks up the minor is the same that dropped off the minor or has some form of specific permission to pick up the minor (e.g., tag given to person dropping off).
  - b. Secure hallways and classrooms so that unauthorized adults can NOT come in contact with minors.
  - c. Require that leaders wear photo ID badges.
8. **Engage Parents as Partners in Ministry:**
  - a. Conduct an all-parents meeting at least annually where you talk about the ministry and what parents can expect to happen during the year.
  - b. Review the procedures, protocols, and documents used by the church to keep children safe.
  - c. Engage parents to serve as volunteers where appropriate.
9. **Put windows in all classroom doors:** Do NOT allow anyone to cover those windows up. Supervisor needs to be able to walk by classrooms and observe.
10. **Avoid transportation in private vehicles:** Rent or own vans or buses, so that two-adult rule can be easily instituted. Set standards for approved drivers and conduct Motor Vehicle Registration (MVR) checks on all drivers.
11. **Communicate policies to Church:** Regular communication of policies and procedures within the church will not only reassure members and visitors of the safe environment, but it will create a culture of child safety so that everyone will notice when something is not right. It will also steer predators away from the church.
12. **Prepare an allegation response plan:** It would start with calling the authorities to investigate, communicating with parents, communicating with church when appropriate, and dealing with news media.