



## Overnight Activities Policy/Procedures

Overnight youth events like lock-ins, conferences, and mission trips allow your ministry to make a positive impact on young people over an extended period of time.

However, this tremendous opportunity comes with great responsibility: keeping kids safe from themselves and others. By taking the proper measures, you can better protect young people and your ministry—and help make sure everyone has an experience that’s safe, fun, and worthwhile.

### Document Appropriately

Communicating with parents and guardians is a crucial part of the planning process. Parents should know exactly what the youth event entails. You might even hold an informational meeting to discuss the event and answer parents’ questions.

Also, before the event begins, minors and their parents should sign an [activity participation agreement](#). For overnight events that include more than one high-risk activity (like ziplining and swimming), it’s a good idea to clearly spell out each activity in the agreement. That way, all parties understand the risks involved with the event. A well-worded agreement:

- Describes each activity that comprises the event—including sleeping arrangements.
- Obtains emergency contact information.
- Establishes a covenant allowing the child to participate in the event in exchange for agreeing to comply with any rules associated with the event, and indemnifying the ministry from any liability that may result from participating.

The agreement can outline the rules and behavior expectations for the participants, as well as the disciplinary procedures that chaperones will follow if someone violates the rules.

Consult with a local attorney to help you develop an activity participation agreement that complies with the laws in your area.

### Insure the Event

While good risk management increases the likelihood that your overnight event will go off without a hitch, insurance coverage provides an extra layer of security. Talk to ministry leaders and your insurance agent to make sure the activity is covered under the church’s insurance policy. Your agent should be able to identify any coverage gaps and suggest ways to fill them.

Outside vendors like bus companies or amusement operators should be insured, as well. Ask the vendor about insurance before signing a contract to provide services or equipment for your event.

Make sure vendors indemnify your ministry from any liability, add your group as an “additional insured” on their insurance policy, and provide you with a Certificate of Insurance well before the event date to verify that your ministry is sufficiently protected if a mishap occurs because of their services or equipment.

## Chaperone Properly

Staffing the event with chaperones is another vital part of preparing for an overnight activity. Bring enough chaperones to supervise the young people effectively, but only use chaperones who have passed through your ministry’s screening process. A good screening process consists of:

- A written application.
- A criminal background check.
- A personal reference check.
- An in-person interview.

Even parents of the activity participants should be screened before they are allowed to chaperone. It’s a good idea to enlist the help of at least one chaperone who has undergone first-aid and CPR training.

Chaperones also should understand and adhere to your ministry’s youth policies and procedures. These may include:

- **Abiding by the two-adult rule.** An adult should never be alone with children in an enclosed space—that includes room checks. If someone needs an individual counseling session, it should take place only if conducted in view of another adult. This rule helps to keep your ministry above reproach when it comes to youth safety.
- **Documenting all injuries.** Keep Notice of Injury forms handy and use them when needed, even if the injury seems minor.
- **Seeking immediate medical attention** for serious injuries and illnesses.
- **Handling disciplinary issues.** Chaperones should explain the rules before the trip begins, and handle problems professionally and respectfully. If the problem is recurring or serious, contact parents.
- **Providing participants chaperones' contact info.** This includes overnight hours designated for sleeping. If there’s an emergency during the event, young people should be able to quickly summon help, regardless of the time of day.

Remind chaperones to stick to the list of events outlined in the signed activity participation agreements. Young people may want to try additional high-risk activities, but it’s a chaperone’s job to protect the youth and the ministry by holding to the agreed-upon activity program.

## Manage Overnight Risks

Sleeping arrangements can make overnight activities especially challenging, but there are several ways to manage the risks. Here are some ideas to consider:

- **Keep roommates to the same gender and age.** Males should room with other males; females with other females. It’s a good idea for chaperones to sleep in separate rooms from young people, but youth should have a way to contact chaperones quickly in case of emergency.
- **Place a strip of tape across the door.** This is an accountability measure that can be taken when checking youth’s rooms at bedtime. If the tape is broken or appears to have

been tampered with, it's a sign that the door may have been opened. This gives chaperones a way to tell if anyone entered or left the room overnight.

- **Perform unannounced checks.** These can be as simple as taking turns walking the halls during the night to check the tape on doors. Chaperones should perform these checks as a team. Or, the ministry could hire a reputable security company to watch the area overnight.

Overnight youth activities can help young people grow in faith. It's up to adults to provide a safe, supportive environment in which this growth can occur. The right mix of thoughtful planning, proper documentation, smart risk management, and careful supervision can help your ministry do just that.

[Resource link](#)