



Toileting of Children – Some Helpful Information

Why do we get so concerned about toilet protocols? There are two main reasons:

- when children need the toilet during ministry time they have to leave the main group and so be away from the safety of this
- in terms of a space in which child predators may have opportunity to act, toilets provide a location that is often empty, can be secured by closing a door and also provide a cover story for the predator should they be found there with a child.

This is why we need to have wise protocols for toileting children and make sure these are communicated clearly to leaders and volunteers who work with children, to parents and to children themselves.

Indeed, one of the most frequently asked Safe Church-related questions relates to toileting of children during church ministries. It is a difficult question to give a blanket answer for as each church has different physical environs and in some churches the toilets may be in the church hall while in others the toilets may be in a separate building or tucked away down the side of the church property and far from where others are congregating.

Each church needs to consider the physical location of their toilets first and then form the protocols from there. For example, in some churches ministry to children takes place in a church hall with toilets and all the children are there together. If a child needs the toilet in that circumstance they do not have to leave the building and this means that with older children a leader would not have to be sent with them, so long as the children go in pairs.

Here are some ideas that are used in churches relating to toileting, ordered by age:

For babies, infants and toddlers in crèche:

Ask parents to ensure that their children have been toileted or had nappies changed before being signed in.

Let parents know that nappies will not be changed by leaders or volunteers. Instead, the child's parent will be called to attend to their child in the event that their nappy needs changing. An easy way of doing this is to text the parent asking them to come to crèche to attend to their child.

Use of a Sign-in-Sign-out sheet in crèche and early childhood ministries allows parents to leave their mobile phone number so they can be texted if needed. This can also be helpful with other issues such as a child being sick or being very unsettled.

For Pre-school and younger primary school aged children:

With pre-schoolers and younger primary aged children they need to be taken by an adult leader or volunteer in the ministry and again always take them in pairs.

The adult must check the inside of the cubicle first to ensure it is safe for the child.

The child should be encouraged to manage him/herself to the fullest possible extent, according to ability.

The adult is to wait outside the door of the cubicle and only assist the child if required.

When a leader or volunteer is needed to assist in the toileting of a child, they then inform another leader or volunteer upon their returning to the main group.

For older primary aged children and teens:

Always send the children in pairs.

Be mindful of when the children left for the toilet and if they seem to have been gone longer than seems reasonable ask another leader to either investigate for you or supervise your group while you go and check to see if the children are ok.

Finally:

A good idea is to communicate clearly via a notice to parents about how you manage toileting in your ministry at the beginning of each year and include a consent form for parents to sign saying they consent to this. If parents don't consent then it is their responsibility to toilet their own child and this needs to be made clear to them.