

Small Group Childcare Recommendations

Throughout the history of Sovereign Grace Churches, small group ministry has remained an important value and approach to our fellowship, friendship, and spiritual growth outside the priority of Sunday gatherings. Unlike Sunday gatherings, however, our small groups are limited in their ability to match the level of security built into Sunday children's ministry. And yet, our responsibility to protect our children remains. How we best care for and protect children during small group gatherings will not look the same for each church, so it is incumbent upon each eldership to develop a policy that best fits their situation.

MinistrySafe, from their broad experience, has encouraged church leaderships "to not implement a program or ministry in their church that includes child-care which they are unable to properly supervise." This does not mean our churches should abandon small groups, but instead, create a clear small group childcare policy that protects those who are most vulnerable. There is no "one size fits all" policy or approach, but there are some best practices to consider that can help in establishing appropriate policy guidelines.

1. Consider not offering childcare but leave this responsibility to the parents.
2. Consider scheduling small groups on different nights so parents in one small group can partner with parents in another to watch their children.

In instances where a small group does offer childcare, we recommend the following safety measures:

1. Only allow those who have been approved as children's ministry workers (having undergone background checks, appropriate interviews, and training) to watch children.
2. Always have two unrelated adults watch the children.
3. Do not allow older minor children to provide child-care or be alone with younger children.
4. Have childcare take place in observable, well-lit spaces.
5. When children need bathroom assistance or a diaper change, call parents out of the meeting to assist their own child.
6. If providing childcare in homes is not possible, consider meeting at the church building with a central childcare organized with full children's ministry policies in place.

Please feel free to call any of the men on the Response Committee for Sexual Misconduct if you have any questions or if we can help in any way.