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# CONGRESS CLARION

## NEWSLETTER

November 2014

1<sup>st</sup> Edition

### **Protect Your Flock**

While they are the smallest members of your church, the safety of the children of your church are equally important. Protect the children of your church and create a safe environment.

### **Creating a Safe Environment for Children**

One important aspect of a church ministry is providing a safe setting for the children. Between nurseries, daycares and playgrounds, going to the restrooms, there is a great need to offer this type of safe space. Create a safer environment for the children in your church by learning more about inspection and safety criteria, preventing sexual misconduct and the proper use of background checks.

### **Inspection and Safety Criteria**

One of the most important steps to take toward maintaining child safety is to remove any dangers from their physical surroundings. Conducting inspections and using safe equipment and toys are critical in sustaining a secure environment.

**Nursery Inspection** - Nurseries are a convenient resource for parents. Inspections should be completed each week to identify potential hazards. Review how the room is set up and consider where equipment should be located to prevent injuries. Keep important items accessible but protected, such as first aid.

Be sure to use outlet covers that cannot be easily removed by children. Additionally, keep wires and cords out of the children's reach.

### **Preventing Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual misconduct is a devastating situation that affects the victims as well as your church. Hopefully, your organization will never have to face the financial and emotional struggles of sexual misconduct. However, the church can be proactive and consider these prevention tips:

- **Screen employees and volunteers;**
- **Establish organizational policies and procedures;**
- **Educate staff, children and parents; and**
- **Develop the best program for your organization.**

### **Background Checks**

In addition to providing safe physical surroundings, ensuring the individuals providing care for children have good intentions is important as well. Conducting background checks for potential employees and volunteers can be helpful in the hiring process. These screenings can allow for your organization to be aware of any probation, pending charges or adjudicated cases that an applicant has been involved in. Utilizing background checks can ensure the individuals working in your nurseries and daycares can be entrusted with children.