

Preparing your children's ministry for post-COVID-19

By Cheryl Markland

For more information contact:

Cheryl Markland
Senior Consultant for Childhood Evangelism
and Discipleship
cmarkland@ncbaptist.org



**childhood
ministry**

If we look really hard, there is a glimmer of light at the end of this long coronavirus-created tunnel. Leaders are beginning to ask the question, “What do I do to get ready for gathering together again?” We all recognize that preschoolers and children will not easily grasp or follow the concept of social distancing, so what are we to do?

Parents will reenter children’s ministry with understandable reservations. Are the teaching areas safe and free from contagion? What will happen when my child joins a class with other children? What precautions are in place to protect my family? Can I trust that my church is doing enough?

We must also take into account that our senior adult volunteers may have many of the same questions.

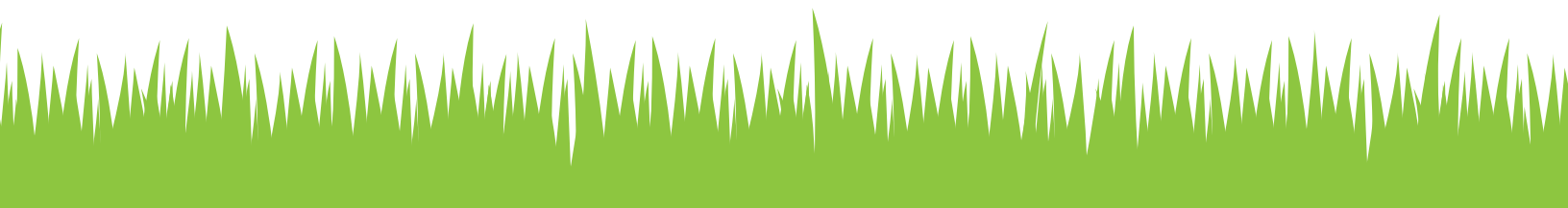
Listed below are a series of steps we can take now to prepare for our “new normal” in the weeks ahead:

- Clean and sanitize all carpets and rugs in your preschool and children’s areas. Be sure to budget for this at least once a year for the foreseeable future.
- Clean every solid surface in your children’s areas. Wipe cribs, mattresses, chairs, tables, centers, counters and door frames with a sanitizing formula. Wash all crib sheets, blankets and teachers’ smocks.
- Eliminate toy boxes and minimize the number of available classroom toys to assist with disinfection during and after teaching sessions. Discard all cloth or stuffed animals that cannot be easily sanitized each week. Store toys away from children and only bring out a limited number each week for play. Only use the number of toys that volunteers can reasonably be expected to clean after each session.
- Consider creating individual bags of supplies for each child: scissors, markers, glue sticks, etc. to minimize sharing.
- Stock diaper changing stations with sanitizer to clean diaper changing surfaces after each diaper change, gloves, wipes, etc. Be sure all nursery leaders know how to change a diaper with universal sanitation guidelines. Permanently discard any cloth covering currently on diaper changing mattress so that plastic covering can be sanitized between each diaper change.
- Post reminders for handwashing and diaper changing procedures.
- Post a schedule for marking the times that toys and tables are cleaned with a block for signing off.
- Create training videos or written lists for how to hygienically change a diaper, clean toys, etc. Require leaders to sign off that they have watched the training before being allowed to serve.
- Provide ways to clean or wash both children and leaders’ hands when running water is not available in the room by using either an alcohol-based gel or a spray bottle of soapy water and a spray bottle of rinse water.
- Purchase spray bottles and preferred cleaning solutions. Make plans to provide freshly made cleaner each week.
- Purchase several no-touch thermometers.
- Plan for learning centers in the preschool area to spread out children in the classroom.
- Review or create safety and security policies to be used in both preschool and children’s areas.
- Begin to think about what policies you will have in place as families will return to church.

We're all navigating these new times together. Below is a list of questions that your church should ask to ensure that the correct protocols are put in place:

- Should there be restrictions on numbers and ages of those who can be part of preschool or children's ministry? What about a staggered weekly attendance?
- Should we offer only worship or Sunday school with children remaining with parents?
- What about a "soft" reopening with a limited number of children present?
- Should there not be any preschool or children's classes offered?
- Should check-ins be run by staff only to limit contact with the check-in station?
- Should there be a limitation on the number of adults and older siblings allowed in a classroom or preschool or children's areas? Should there be only one parent doing drop-off and pick-up?
- Should only approved leaders enter the classroom?
- Should we manage the number of people in our gatherings by restricting the number of available entrances and exits?
- Should group movement between classroom areas be limited?
- Should playground usage be allowed or scheduled so that only one group can use the playground each week or only one group at a time?
- Should there be a requirement to label all outside items such as pacifiers, blankets, bottles?
- Should diaper bags be left in the classroom? Maybe only the items needed for the day should be left in individual containers/baskets in the room (diapers, wipes, bottles, etc.).
- Should there be temperature checks before being allowed in preschool or children's classrooms?
- Should there be training for teachers regarding new sanitation protocols?
- How will you let your families know of your new policies and protocols before they arrive at church?

Parents and families may be reluctant at first to allow their children to be part of a large group gathering. Your efforts to provide and enforce a clear protocol and written policy for protecting their children will go a long way in retaining trust.



Helpful links to training videos:

- [Overview of sanitation practices at church](#) (2:53)
- [Handwashing](#) (13:28)
- [Diaper changing at church](#) (4:13)
- [How to clean toys using a bucket and sanitizer](#) (1:25)
- [Cleaning toys](#) (5:51)
- [CDC handwashing](#) (3:00)
- [Handwashing video for kids](#) (0:30)

Free printable charts:

- [Cleaning, sanitizing & disinfecting](#)
- [Handwashing](#)
- [Multiple posters](#)
- [Cleaning solutions](#)
- [Directions for changing diapers](#)

Other helpful resources:

- [Protecting our church and children: what church leaders must know](#)
- [Creating safety and security policies in your church](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfection for community facilities](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfecting your facility](#)

