
On Protecting Children, Families and Church in the Ministry of Small Groups

Written for Sovereign Grace Churches by the Response Committee for Sexual Misconduct (RCSM)

Small groups are a common and vital ministry in Sovereign Grace Churches. This means that our elders must provide leadership that spiritually serves each group while also bringing leadership to the area of childcare in small group ministries so that our church families and guests of all ages would be cared for and well-protected.¹

After receiving counsel from our ministry partners, [MinistrySafe](#), specifically HERE IS OUR GUIDING THOUGHT:

“Church leadership should not implement a program or ministry in the church, that includes childcare, that we are unable to supervise.”

The RCSM brings the following list as different best practice options to consider as related to childcare in our small group ministries:

1. Families find their own childcare in their own home.
2. If childcare is to be provided at any small group function, appropriate Children’s Ministry policies needs to apply, including for instance:
 - a. Utilize the two approved ADULT worker rule for those caring for children in small group ministry.²
 - b. Absolutely NO minors (including older siblings) looking after smaller children (except as helpers to the two approved adult workers).³
 - c. Observable, well-lit spaces should always be used.

Two other options that have been put forward to us:

- Where possible, Small Groups all meet at the church, providing childcare with full Children’s Ministry policies in place.
- Where possible, Small Groups meet off-site but provide “drop-off” childcare at the church with full Children’s Ministry policies in place.

¹ Informal group babysitting is not an appropriate solution. Since small groups are church functions, a “small group schedule” in which some families babysit all the kids in the care group during the discussion should not be created. Though convenient, this strategy blurs the line between formal, church childcare and personal babysitting and opens the door to functional dangers to both children and the church. While families might be “okay” with lesser options, it is prudent, protective, and caring to provide the safest environment possible.

² See the [5-Part Safety System](#) for more information.

³ The Department of Justice reports that over 1/3 of the cases of sexual misconduct occur peer-to-peer and stories of families that “didn’t believe it could happen in their situation” are plentiful. (<https://ministriesafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ChurchExecutiveChapter9SexualAbuseSeriesEBook11January2021.pdf>)