

Developing Safe Playground Policies (v2)

Virginia Conference M&M Workgroup

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Background

Many churches in the Virginia Conference have playgrounds, and these churches are seeking to make these playgrounds accessible in the safest way possible in this time of global pandemic. To develop plans for safe utilization of playgrounds and playground equipment, the Mission and Ministry Workgroup has developed the following document to help enable local church Health Church Teams (HCTs). These playground plans are to be submitted to approval to the District Superintendent for approval. These plans should be categorized under the five layers of mitigation used by both the Back to Worship workgroup and the M&M workgroup. They are **sanitation, distancing, face coverings, health screenings, and ventilation**. Before developing a playground plan, churches should check with their insurance carrier to make sure they have adequate coverage for these outdoor spaces.

It is important to remember that once HCT plans are approved by the District Superintendent, they are **requirements** and not guidelines.

1. Sanitation

Playground plans should include procedures for daily cleaning of playground equipment [following CDC guidelines](#).

Questions to consider:

- Who will be responsible for regular cleaning of the equipment?
- Will a hand sanitizer station be available, or will families bring their own?

2. Distancing

Because COVID is commonly spread through close contact, it is important that children using playground equipment are kept a minimum of three feet apart [per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidelines](#). As this will require adult supervision, playgrounds should not be open during times when there cannot be adults from the church to supervise distancing among the children.

Questions to consider:

- What adult-child ratio will be necessary to ensure adequate supervision of children given the number of children and the size of the playground?
- Are there areas of the playground that should not be used because of the difficulty of keeping children distanced in it?
- How will this requirement be communicated to groups who use the playground?

3. Face Coverings

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), face coverings are one of the most effective ways to decrease the spread of COVID. As such, it is important to for churches to make sure that appropriately-worn face coverings are being worn by children over two on the playground as well as the adults who supervise them.

Questions to consider:

- What if someone comes without a mask? Will there be extras available?
- Who will supervise to be sure that the requirements are followed?

4. Health Screening

In the event that a child or adult present at a playground event later tests positive for COVID, it will be the responsibility of the church to inform adults present and the families of the children of a possible exposure. Therefore, it is important for there to be a registration system for those present at an event at the playground.

Questions to consider:

- Who will develop the list and assure that contact information on all in attendance is available?
- Who will be responsible for screening those gathered for COVID symptoms or exposure before the time on the playground begins?

5. Ventilation

As this event would be held outside, ventilation would be better than it would be for inside events.

Questions to consider:

- What will you do for an event planned for the playground in the event of inclement weather?

Summary

The issues enumerated in this document are certainly not all the matters that will need to be considered to have a safe time on a church playground. A question to ask is what is an acceptable level of risk, and are HCT's willing to take the steps to provide an opportunity that is as safe as possible for all participants? It is also critically important that HCT playground activities abide by the church's Safe Sanctuary plans and that churches check with their insurance carrier prior to reopening their playgrounds.

