

CHURCH AFTER COVID-19: HOW TO GET FAMILIES BACK

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More than two years of COVID-19 have rewritten the manual on how churches operate. One question many are asking is, “How do we get families to return in-person?” It’s often followed by remarks on how families are on the ballfield, at the gym, attending school and social events — so why aren’t they at church?

The answer: recognize that for many, it is a matter of personal habit and levels of commitment that are beyond our control. But are there steps your church can take that may make a difference toward in-person attendance?

Below are steps churches can take now to prepare for a new normal. Believe it or not, communicating to your church that these steps have been taken will influence a family’s decision to return.

Alleviate sanitation concerns

- 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. Post signs that let parents and volunteers know of your activity to keep the area clean.
- 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 gloves, wipes and sanitizer to clean surfaces after each diaper change. Be sure all nursery leaders know how to change a diaper using universal sanitation guidelines. Permanently discard any cloth covering currently on diaper changing mattress, so that plastic covering can be sanitized between each diaper change. Consider purchasing wax paper squares for the changing area that can be discarded after each use.
- Post reminders for handwashing and diaper changing procedures.
- Post a schedule with blocks for marking the times that toys and tables are cleaned.
- 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 cleaning solutions. Make plans to provide freshly made cleaner each week.
- 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 and procedures you will have in place as families return to church.
- Consider having check-ins staffed with one to two people to limit contact at the station.
- Consider limiting face-to-face contact by directing traffic through one-way entrances and exits.



- Ask parents to label all items such as pacifiers, blankets and bottles with the child's name.
- Offer individually wrapped snacks.
- Plan for ways to let families know of your new policies and protocols before they arrive at church.

Offer inviting, clean, uncluttered teaching environments

- Navigation to preschool and children's areas is easy with clear and adequate signage.
- Passes the "smell test"
- Visually appealing
- Colors/walls/windows
- Updated furnishings
- Lighting
- Condition of flooring
- Uncluttered and organized
- Safe: secured shelving, electrical outlets covered, choke test, no mold, etc.

Have proof of an enforced safety and security plan for ministry

- Written policy for sexual abuse prevention that includes these key points:
 - Two adults over the age of 18, unrelated by marriage
 - Six month wait time
 - Clear sight lines into rooms throughout the church
 - Bathroom/diapering policies
 - Check in and release procedures
- Process for approving volunteers
 - Six month wait time
 - Application
 - Background Check
 - Reference Checks
 - Interview
 - Training

Expectation of excellence in teaching

- Expectation of teaching for all ages
- Teachers are on time and prepared to teach before arrival to church
- Balance of discipleship and fun
- Goal of building relationships with children and their families



- Curriculum is used by teachers
- Ongoing training available to teachers

Evaluation of young adult/parent ministry

- Excellence in teaching for young adults
- Opportunities for building relationships
- Family ministry integration into church ministries

Helpful 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

[Handwashing](#)

[Multiple posters](#)

[Diapering procedures](#)

[Sanitizing bleach solution](#)

Other helpful resources

[Creating safety and security policies in your church](#)

[Safety and security resources](#)

[Safety & Security NC](#)

[Ministry Safe: NC Baptist](#)

[Cleaning and disinfecting your facility](#)

[First Impressions church walk-thru resource](#)

[Preschool space at church](#)

[Children's space at church](#)

[Sharing the plan of salvation with children](#)

[Video: Explaining the '3 Circles' to children](#)

[Disciple-Making at home](#)

[Disciple-Making at home training plan](#)

[Scorecard](#)