

COVID-19:

Guidelines for Setting Up a Temporary Learning Site - Ministry Information

As schools across the country delay opening or transition to remote learning due to an outbreak of COVID-19, churches are offering their facilities as remote-learning sites for children. Many churches are serving the working parents of their communities by offering safe places for children to participate in virtual learning while being supervised. Some churches are providing use of computer equipment as needed by children, while other churches are even working with local schools or non-profits to offer additional assistance. However your church chooses to serve the families in your community, the goal should be to ensure the safety and security of the children in your care. Talk to your agent and consider the following points to maximize this ministry opportunity and to protect your people and the children you serve.

Staffing

- Ideally, your church will be able to rely on volunteers and staff who have already gone through recommended screening procedures (i.e., application form, reference checks, background check, and interview). At a minimum, ministries should consider screening volunteers with a background check if feasible, and an application form that asks about criminal history and any prior incidents of abuse or misconduct.
- Screened adults should serve at a ratio not exceeding 7:1 with at least two screened adults present at all times with children and youth.
- Volunteers who have had any illness/sickness within the past 14 days or live with someone who is ill during the same time period should not be permitted to volunteer.
- Volunteers should be trained to observe student activity, making sure they are fully participating in the virtual learning.
- The service should be provided free of charge or charge a nominal fee to offset actual costs.

Indemnification

- If schools are requesting this service from the insured ministry, it is recommended that any contract executed between those parties include an indemnification and hold harmless clause in favor of the insured ministry, and that a certificate of insurance be obtained.

Sanitation

- Sanitization procedures, serving of food, bloodborne pathogen handling, and dispensing of medication should follow guidelines as developed by a local department of health for childcare operations.

Virtual Learning

- Parents or guardians should complete a brief written application for virtual school services, with acknowledgment of their child meeting the appropriate health and illness criteria as mentioned herein. Also, any agreement should include an understanding that the ministry is not responsible for the satisfactory completion of the student's work, as that is the responsibility of the school and parent(s). It would also be a good idea to require parents or guardians to agree in writing to hold the ministry harmless in relation to possible exposure to infectious/communicable disease and any other injuries that might be sustained by their

child. Visit brotherhoodmutual.com to download a sample [participation agreement](#) and sample [facilities use agreement](#).

- Follow your check-in/out procedure for children or establish one to ensure children leave with the appropriate individuals.
- Virtual learning operations should follow established social distancing and face covering recommendations for students as provided by the CDC as well as state and local health officials.
- Churches should implement a protocol of isolating a child when any symptoms of illness appear and develop a process to notify all workers and parents that their child was potentially exposed while protecting the identity of the symptomatic child.
- Churches should implement safety and supervision policies that follow their own established procedures for their other childcare operations, as well as state and local requirements.
- Provide information regarding policies and procedures, including those specifically developed to address COVID-19 concerns, to the parents or guardians of those children under care.
- The number of children should be limited and follow state and local government restrictions.
- No children should be permitted who have any illness/sickness within the past 14 days, or those children who live with someone who is ill during the same time period. Additionally, follow CDC and local health department guidelines regarding illness and reporting requirements.

Facilities Logistics

- Make sure your WiFi is reliable, secure, and has the appropriate content filters turned on.
- Consider the additional cleaning and disinfecting needs. Order materials as appropriate.
- Lock doors or block off any areas that should remain off limits.
- Follow your church's established safety and security procedures, including keeping exterior doors locked and/or monitored.
- Follow local guidelines for establishing this type of temporary service. Some locations may require approval from the city, county, or local health officials.
- Notify local fire and law enforcement so they are aware of the temporary arrangement.

Insurance Coverage

Speak with your insurance agent to make sure your church is covered for this exposure. Your agent can assess whether there are any insurance concerns regarding this temporary ministry opportunity.

The information provided in this article is intended to be helpful, but it does not constitute legal advice and is not a substitute for the advice from a licensed attorney in your area. We strongly encourage you to regularly consult with a local attorney as part of your risk management program.