



Safe Environments

Ensuring a safe environment for children includes targeting the five major areas of safety: visibility, access, supervision and communication, transportation, and safe technology use.

STEP 1: Establish Physical and Procedural Standards

- Adopt physical safety standards, including clear sightlines, well-lit spaces, posting safety rules, and marking or securing off-limit areas.
- Establish procedural standards, including visitor entry and expectations, and protocols to confirm children are released to trusted adults.
- Adhere to adequate staff-to-youth ratios and verify all staff and volunteers understand who is responsible for each child.
- Verify visitors are aware of and follow entry policies and expectations.
- Ensure procedures for the use of bathroom, changing, or shower facilities (if applicable) are understood by all staff and volunteers.
- Analyze the physical spaces, the services you provide, and the children you serve and determine additional policies and procedures needed.

STEP 2: Determine Additional Risks

- Review and incorporate any state and national regulations and accreditation requirements that apply to your YSO.
- Confirm drivers meet screening and hiring requirements if transportation to and from the site is provided by your YSO.
- Define the policies and procedures, including needed changes in staff-to-child ratios when overnight trips, outings and field trips are conducted.
- Establish how staff and volunteers communicate when they are not in the same physical location.
- Determine what additional policy or oversight modifications may be needed for children with intellectual, developmental, or physical disabilities.
- Decide if electronic communication between staff and youth is necessary, allowed, or prohibited, and is outlined in your policies.

STEP 3: Implement Additional Considerations

- Install cameras and mirrors to adequately monitor the physical space or designate a single-entry point to minimize unauthorized entry or exit.
- Implement additional signage to guide children away from off-limits areas and conduct periodic security checks at locations with public access.
- Monitor all social media and electronic communication between staff and children.
- Ensure staff and volunteers participating in off-site activities adhere to policies on transportation and overnight activities.
- Verify outside vendors are identified, follow entry procedures, and are monitored at all times.
- Review your safe environment protocols and update regularly to remain effective.