



# Healthy Church Solutions

## PROVIDING A VIBRANT CHILDHOOD MINISTRY

Does your church seem to be having a hard time attracting or holding on to families with children and preschoolers?

This is a common issue in churches today. Churches who fail to meet parent expectations for childhood ministry will have an extremely difficult time reaching the parents. The world and parent expectations have changed for parents and the community where your church is located. Churches are no longer viewed as protecting environment. This image has been tarnished by poor quality church facilities, poorly trained volunteers, a lack of security systems and a constant flow of child abuse stories in the news. Parents are looking for safe and secure places for their children. Parents want their children to have fun at church and are looking for child friendly learning environments.

Every church has a limit to facilities, volunteers and finances it can direct toward childhood ministries. In contrast, our consultations have revealed most churches could make huge improvements to their childhood ministries within the limits of their current resources.

The following steps are recommended to improve your effectiveness at attracting and holding on to families with children and preschoolers:

- Provide childhood ministry greeting and registration areas that include information brochure(s) about your ministries.
- Arm childhood ministry volunteers, church ushers, staff and key leaders with times, locations and registration process for activities. Strive to have the same information being communicated by every leader.
- Conduct annual safety and security check-up. A "Safety and Security Checklist" is available at [www.csbc.com/children](http://www.csbc.com/children).
- Provide an annual safety and security training for volunteers.
- Establish worker screening guidelines and procedures. "Steps to Making Your Church Child Abuse Safe" is available at [www.csbc.com/children](http://www.csbc.com/children).
- Equip childhood ministry volunteers with the skills needed to effectively teach. Click here for a New Worker Orientation
- Provide resource rooms for volunteer leaders. Today's volunteer is short on time. The easier you make it for a volunteer to prepare the better they will be prepared. Providing a place where a volunteer could pull everything together for this week's session and in just a few minutes, will leave the volunteer with the time they need to pray and study.
- Be strategic about your resources (facilities, volunteers and finances). If you are stretched by one or more of these resources, consider these alternatives
  - Facilities - schedule major childhood ministries off schedule (Sunday afternoon, a weekday evening, Saturday).
  - Volunteers - plan short term or off schedule childhood ministries. This will create a larger volunteer pool.
  - Finances - charge a fee. AWANA has done this for years. Parents are willing to pay for quality ministry today.
- Diversify your childhood ministries. Parents have complex lives today. To make the most of opportunities, provide a host of activities beyond the Sunday morning activities. This will give parents the opportunity to pick and choose what works for them and their children.
- Establish regular and accurate communication with parents. Our consultations have revealed that many churches have communication methods in place, but the information being communicated is often incorrect or outdated.
- Finally, provide for the parents. Parents need meaningful opportunities for worship, study, training and fellowship during the times children are involved in childhood ministries.