



Considerations for Childcare Nurseries during Mass

1. Child to caregiver ratio- While a nursery room for parents/caregivers to attend Mass falls under the Virginia Department of Social Service religious exemption, using the Department of Social Service's ratio parameters would be a good rule of thumb. You certainly can have a lower ratio than the state ratio requirements, but you are encouraged to not have a greater ratio. The state ratio is 1:4 of one adult volunteer to every four children, when there are **any** children less than 2 years of age and 1:10 for ages 2 – 4. In order to maintain the religious exemption, parents must not leave church property without their children at anytime.
2. Virtus training- Every adult volunteer needs to go through Virtus training. Also consider the ages of non-adult volunteers. The Virtus requirement is for anyone over the age of 18 years old. If volunteers under the age of 18 are used they should not be in a supervisory position in the nursery, but should assist the adult volunteers. There should be no less than 3 volunteers at one time in the nursery, in case one volunteer needs to leave for any reason.
3. Child health considerations- These are some guidelines for when a child should not be brought into the nursery, you should consider making these part of the nursery operation plan and let parents know in advance:
 - A fever within the past 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication
 - A runny nose
 - Vomiting/diarrhea within past 24 hours
 - Any symptoms of childhood diseases: measles, mumps, etc.
 - Sore throat and/or persistent cough
 - Unexplained rash or skin infections
 - Pink eye or other eye infection

4. Diapering and restroom use while in nursery- Consider whether the nursery will be equipped to handle diapering and bathroom breaks for the children. If not, let the parents know that they will be contacted during Mass to come and assist their child.
5. Sign In/Sign Out procedures- These should be communicated to all parents using the nursery and be used consistently:
 - Have a sign in and sign out sheet where the parent lists his/her name, the child's name, date and time signed in and time signed out and any allergy conditions of the child
 - Consider having name tags for the children that the parent completes upon arrival
 - Consider having a matching system of some sort, where the parent receives a numbered card that matches the number on the child's name tag. This will make sure the correct parent and child is matched at pick up.
6. Consider procedures on how to contact parents during the Mass if he/she needs to return to the nursery if their child becomes ill or very upset
7. Will snack be offered and if so, what will it be? Since this is a short time period, snack may not be necessary, but if the nursery does offer snack, be aware of possible allergy concerns
8. Consider posting nursery rules for the children to follow. (soft voices, no hitting, no running, etc)
9. Consider having a nursery schedule. For example one parish is offering an abbreviated service where the children have prayer, one to two songs, and a bible story.
10. Have an emergency plan including an emergency evacuation plan. Let parents know where the designated meeting place would be in case of evacuation
11. Consider whether the room needs childproofing and how that will be accomplished.
12. Consider when the room will be cleaned up and disinfected and how that will be accomplished, including the cleaning of any nursery toys.
13. Can children bring anything from home (stuffed animal, sippy cup, etc) Communicate the policy to parents and let them know how they should label items.