

Friendship Companion Training

Administration

Being a “Safe Place”

Your congregation and Connection Ministries have a responsibility to take every reasonable measure to insure the safety of all participants.

- Maintain a copy of “Safe Haven” from the Christian Law Association. Connection Ministries will provide a copy.
- Implement a Risk Management and Safety policy and procedure that insure the safety of everyone involved in your ministry
- If your congregation does not have a policy, develop one.
- Follow the 3P approach; “Prepare, Prevent and Protect”

Being a “Safe Place”

- Any communications with families or caregivers should encourage their participation in the group.
 - Caregivers should remain in the group and assist with the personal care and behavior of the individuals they brought
 - Families can be a great resource for the best way to respond to the behaviors and care for their loved ones

Being a “Safe Place”

What information in an applications helps your ministry be a safe place?

- Emergency contact information for everyone in your ministry
- Special dietary needs for everyone
- Description of disabilities, behaviors with methods for support
- Seizure conditions
- Ability to communicate verbally, sign language or other method
- Knowledge of any participant with a criminal history

Record Keeping

- Maintain a file with your Friendship group that includes;
 - Copies of participant applications with emergency contact information, description of disabilities, and support suggestions
 - Friendship group rosters and nametags
 - List of participant dietary restrictions
 - Attendance record; consider handing out attendance certificates for good attendance

Being a “Safe Place”

- All participants; companions and friends with disabilities need to complete the joint application with Connection Ministries and your congregation
- Friendship Group applications are completed every two years or when attending a Summer Friendship Gathering

Being a “Safe Place”

- Partner congregations will provide copies of applications to Connection Ministries. Connection Ministries completes the Criminal background screens through Trusted Employees.
- Connection Ministries will review the Indiana Sexual Offender Registry for all friends with disabilities involved in your ministry
- If one of your friends with a disability is on the registry, you can decide if your ministry is able to place proper safety margins around the individual and include them

Being a “Safe Place”

- Companions should never be alone with an individual with a disability involved in your churches ministry
- Practice the “Rule of Three” when providing personal care, visiting the restroom, or providing transportation

Application

- The front of the application is the primary source for;
 - Contact information for the group's phone tree, mailings, emergency contacts, and birthdays
 - Description of disability, how to provide supports and respond to behaviors
 - Dietary restriction and special preparations

Application

- The back of the application includes;
 - Release of Liability for the congregation and Connection Ministries
 - Photo and video release allowing the use of images and stories to promote the ministry

Application

- The back of the application includes;
 - Applications that are not signed do not release your congregation or Connection Ministries from liability or provide permission to use photos
 - 100% participation in the application and screening process is critical. Less than full participation could make your congregation vulnerable to discrimination lawsuits.

Application

- Authorization for criminal background screen;
 - Companions, age 18 and older that interact with friends with disabilities need a screen performed by either the congregation or Connection Ministries
 - For screens performed by Connection Ministries, companions must complete an Authorization of Background Investigation by submitting the form to Connection Ministries.

Application

- Authorization for criminal background screen;
 - Companions that prefer not to provide a social security number to Connection Ministries can request an email invitation with a link and complete the form online directly with Trusted Employees
 - **Churches may not photo copy Authorization of Background Investigation forms because they contain the social security numbers.** Connection Ministries shreds these forms after completing the screen.

Application

- Certain types of reports may not preclude participation in your ministry. Your congregation's policies should define exclusions without discrimination.
- Screening process allows companions to review any negative background history and verify accuracy of records

Record Keeping

- Connection Ministries will provide Excel files and rosters with participant information.
- Friendship Groups should provide new applications and changes to Connection Ministries.