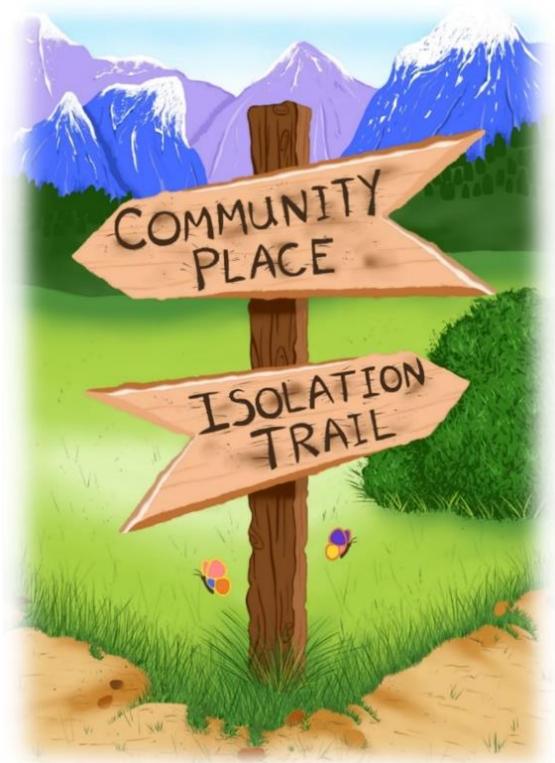


## **TOPIC 9, EPISODE 1—ADMINISTRATION AND SAFETY**

### **CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

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- In a previous episode we talked about how the Church is a safe environment for many ministries like children and youth ministries. This can also be true for ministries with adults with intellectual disabilities, but proper safety procedures need to be in place and practiced.
- These procedures should include training for church staff and volunteer teams, collection of necessary participant information through registration, and criminal screening for the staff and volunteer teams.
- There needs to be frequent communication within the team and the adult friends with disabilities, their families and support staff.
- A detailed procedure is also needed for communicating and resolving any issues or challenges, as well as reporting any allegation of abuse.
- Friendship groups need a detailed safety procedure that is adopted by the congregation. This procedure should offer a Biblical foundation along with procedures for reducing the risk of abuse, open ministry spaces, registration, screening, maintaining records, reporting abuse, pastoral care, and more.



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## CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT CONTINUED

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- Connection Ministries provides a sample procedure, **Friendship Safety Guidelines**, on our website in the Resource section of our website <https://connection-ministries.org/friendship-safety-guidelines/> that can be used for developing your own procedures.
- It is important to review your church's safety procedures with staff and volunteer teams as part of training. We will cover more about safety procedures in another episode.
- A well-trained staff and volunteer team is vital. In central Indiana, Connection Ministries provides the initial training for all the volunteers in a new Friendship group that is part of our network. This training consists of three evening sessions.
- We also offer the "Indispensable" video training series that churches outside our service area can use. This resource can be used by any group training new volunteers who join their group after the initial training.
- Registration for everyone involved in your Friendship group is essential. This includes adult friends with intellectual disabilities, as well as their family members and support staff if they will be participating in Friendship meetings. Registration is also necessary for the staff and volunteer teams.
- Connection Ministries provides an electronic online registration form as well as a downloadable form that can be completed, signed, and mailed. You can find the application at <https://connection-ministries.org/application/>
- Registration captures the needed contact information for everyone involved in the group. This information is used for communication with volunteers, families, and support staff.

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## CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT CONTINUED

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- Registration provides phone numbers and email addresses for contacting everyone when a meeting is cancelled for bad weather. Addresses allow for sending notes and cards. It is also important to include emergency contact information for everyone in the group.
- The Connection Ministries' registration captures information about our friends with disabilities that include, descriptions about their disability, communication abilities, and behaviors. We also ask that special dietary needs are included, as well as tips on how to best meet the needs in the Friendship group.
- Included is an authorization to complete a criminal background screen, as part of the registration for volunteers and church staff over the age of 18.
- These screens are not only for the protection of our friends with disabilities, but it also protects the church because it demonstrates steps were taken to create a safe environment.

