

A Safe Creche

Some of the visitors to your church will be parents with small children. If you can show the parents that your crèche is a secure place, you will increase the chances of the family returning.

Safe Products Some tips for evaluating the safety of furniture and accessories:

- ◆ **Baby gates.** Babies can get their heads caught in gates with large V-shaped or diamond-shaped openings. Look for gates with openings less than 5cm or that are made of rigid mesh screens.
- ◆ **Highchairs.** Most children fall from highchairs because they're not strapped into them. Be sure highchairs have sturdy straps and belts, and wide bases for stability.
- ◆ **Playpens.** Look for tiny mesh netting and slat spaces that are no more than 10cm wide. If a secondhand playpen has vinyl-covered top rails, be careful because children can bite off and choke on the vinyl.
- ◆ **Cots.** Any cot should have no missing, loose, or broken screws and brackets. There should be no more than 10cm between slats. Bumper pads should fit the entire cot, and tie or snap into place. Look out for cracked or peeling paint or splinters.
- ◆ **Toys.** Toy chests should have spring-loaded lid supports that won't trap children inside. They should also have ventilation holes in case children do get trapped. All toys in a nursery should be washable, because many children will be using them.

Extra Precautions

Here are a few more suggestions to show that your facility is safe for children:

- ◆ Keep the cords of window blinds out of reach by hanging them at the top of the window covering.
- ◆ Use changing tables that have safety straps and have drawers or shelves that are easily accessible.
- ◆ If you use hook-on chairs that attach to table edges, don't place them where children's feet can push against the table and dislodge the chairs.
- ◆ Make sure babies are strapped safely in chairs or pillow supports, especially if someone has to watch a number of children at once.
- ◆ Clean areas where babies have been changed or spit up or left other messes. Make sure all chemicals have child-resistant closures.

—ROBIN DIMATTIA