




Adventist Risk Management, Inc.



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Operation Safe Session: Child Safety

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This July, many families will attend the global Seventh-day Adventist Church business meeting, commonly known as General Conference (GC) Session.

With more than 50,000 people in attendance, there is an increased risk for missing children.

Following a 2006 parent survey, The Center to Prevent Lost Children reported that ninety percent of families will experience losing a child in a public place. Children are more likely to go missing in a densely populated area, such as shopping malls or stores, and nearly one in three families who visit an amusement park will lose track of their child during the excursion.

This year the GC Session will take place in two venues, the Alamodome and the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

“The Alamodome holds more than 70,000 people, and we anticipate being at full capacity,” says Jim Vines, security director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and security coordinator for GC Session. “In an area so concentrated with a lot of people, kids can get lost in the crowd very quickly.”

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE

If you become separated from your child, immediately contact someone on the security staff. Follow the same procedure if you locate a missing child or are approached for help. A phone number to report a missing person will be published under Emergency in the GC Session App.

Security will obtain a description of your child and notify all security personnel to assist in the search. Missing children can also be reported to one of the Session Management Offices in Room 206 of the convention center or Meeting Room C in the Alamodome.

“Session Management staff will be able to alert security and send out notifications via Session monitors and the GC Session app,” says Sheri Clemmer associate session manager for GC Session. This will alert many people to be on the lookout for the missing child.

Children who become separated from adults will be held in one of the Session Management Offices until the parties can be reunited.

Approximately 400 security personnel will be assigned to the Alamodome, with the same number located around the convention center. These will include city ambassadors wearing yellow shirts and straw hats, convention center ushers dressed in black pants and jackets with white shirts, and local law enforcement.

“Many of the police officers will be in uniform, but others will be in street clothes,” Vines says. “If a child and parent are looking for one another, I don’t think it will be difficult to reconnect them.”

Review these quick safety tips for preventing your child from going missing.

MISSING CHILD PREVENTION MEASURES

Have a Plan

Before attendance at any event, create a plan of what your child should do when lost. Discuss it with your children. For older children, designate an area where everyone should meet should they become separated. Also, choose a person the child should contact if he/she cannot reach you.

Teach preschoolers that if they get lost they should ask a “Mommy” for help. “If your child selects a woman, it’s highly unlikely that the woman will be a predator,” recommends Gavin de Becker, child safety expert in his book *Protecting the Gift*. “A woman is likely to stop whatever she is doing, commit to that child, and not rest until the child is safe.”

Every morning before your family leaves the hotel for another day of GC Session, remind your children of the plan. Have them tell you what they will do if lost. Take a moment to observe what each child is wearing. If you become separated, this will help you give an accurate description to security personnel.

Have Your Contact Information on Your Child

Create an identification badge for your child to wear. Include your name and phone number, where your family is staying during GC Session, your child’s name and any allergies your child has. The badge can be worn in a lanyard, attached to a belt loop via keychain or luggage tag, placed in a wallet for older children, or another method as long as the badge is on your child’s person.

“If your child is old enough, have him memorize his parent or guardian’s names, telephone numbers, and the church organization where they are from,” suggests Arthur Blinci, assistant to the president for Strategic Risk Management, Adventist Risk Management Inc. (ARM). “If a child can tell us this much, it proves very helpful in locating the lost parent.”

Have a Fresh Photo of Your Child on You

Every morning, use your cell phone to take a full-body photograph of each of your children. Or carry a recent photo of your child with you and make a note of what your child is wearing each day. If your child becomes lost, you can share the photo with the police or security when giving a description of your child.

A picture makes it easier for police to identify the lost child. When shared publicly, your child can be located as quickly as possible.

CHILD HAZARDS AND ACTIVITIES

Surrounding the convention center is a park area with many man-made waterfalls, streams, wading ponds and a river. These are marked with “No wading or swimming at any time” signage. These areas provide the risk of potential drowning or injury. Parents must be extra vigilant to prevent their children from entering the water areas.

Escalators are also tempting to small children and have been a concern at previous Sessions, Clemmer says. Small fingers can be caught or cut off by the moving parts. Allow children to use escalators only as a means of transportation under adult supervision.

During the two Sabbaths at the Session, a Children’s Sabbath School will be held in Ballroom A and a Junior/Youth Sabbath School and Worship service will meet in the Lila Cockrell Theater, both located in the Gonzalez Convention Center.

An adult must attend with children ages 0-5, says Linda Koh, director of Children’s Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Parents may register and drop their children off at the Primary Sabbath School and the Junior/Youth Worship Services. Both the parent and child will be given an armband with the same number. At the end of the service and before a child will be allowed to leave the area, staff members will match the parent's bracelet to their child's.

"The bracelet will be stamped with the date [of each Sabbath] so there will be no confusion," says Alain Sanon, coordinator for the Junior/Youth Sabbath School and Worship Service.

Master Guides who have completed the "Shield the Vulnerable" training will be posted at all exits during the Junior/Youth Worship Service to prevent children from wandering off. In addition to convention security, this adds an extra layer of protection for children.

As with any convention the size of GC Session, the possibility of losing your child increases. Have a plan in place, be aware of the hazards and download the GC Session App so you are prepared for any emergency.

If you have purchased the [GC Session Travel Insurance Policy](#) and need assistance during your time in San Antonio, the ARM team will be in Room 210 of the convention center to assist you.

While at GC Session, don't forget to visit the ARM Booth for free giveaways and more resources on how to keep your family safe.

References

¹<http://www.safetytat.com/child-id-safety-tips/>

²<http://www.parentguidenews.com/Articles/PreventingKidsFromGettingReallyLost>

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