
Your Church, Royal Ambassadors, and the Law

Litigation has grown immensely in the last few decades. Churches have not been immune to this phenomenon. Do not endanger your church's ministries because you do not take the necessary precautions. We encourage you to check your state's laws and protect your church, the boys, their families, your RA leaders, and yourself.

Charitable immunity, if it ever existed, is now less than a shadow. Churches, church organizations, and ministries must operate on the assumption that they, their employees, and volunteers are subject to being sued for negligence, and for the negligence of anyone connected with them. Even churches that have successfully defended themselves have had enormous legal costs. Insurance costs have also dramatically increased.

RA ministry leaders and RA leaders need to make the best use of the resources provided by those who faithfully give to your church. You need to minimize the risks to your church. The safety of the boys must be the highest priority.

In general, you and other volunteers are held to the standard of care that prudent persons would have exercised under the same circumstances.

- Is it prudent to take 8-year-old boys camping overnight in a wilderness area?
- Is it prudent to allow RAs to jump on a trampoline?
- Is it prudent to take RAs rock climbing? If so, what safety equipment is needed? What condition is it in? Are proper safety procedures explained and followed?
- Is it prudent to load cleaning supplies and food in the same container?
- Is it prudent to allow someone to drive for the group without checking his or her driving record?
- Is it prudent to have *anyone* work with children without having a background check? (Many churches now require this routinely before anyone works in their children's ministry.)
- Do the leaders have the proper training?
- What safety procedures are in place?

Every RA activity should be appropriate for the age and experience of the boys involved. As you plan, think through safety issues. Exercise care as you plan the activity. Check the equipment. Make sure instructions to the leaders and the boys are clear. Sometimes you will need to advise parents in advance to make sure they agree to their son's participation.

Consider the proper ratio of leaders to boys. *Always* have at least two adults in the room with RAs. If only one RA attends, and the leader is not his father, you should have two adult leaders. In general, you need one adult leader for each five boys. So as you grow, add more leaders.

Sample medical permission slips and activity permission slips are in the RA Forms section. Have someone with knowledge of the legal situation in your community check them

before you use them. You may need to make adaptations based on the requirements of your community.

Courts have asked these questions about how churches select employees and volunteers:

- What did the church know about the volunteer?
- What care did the church take in making the selection?

Your duty as leader of the church's Royal Ambassador ministry includes not only making sure that leaders are good people who will be faithful to do the job. You also need to train them suitably. Training podcasts and other helps can be found on the Royal Ambassador Web site at www.royalambassadors.org. Material in this book may also be used in training. A page of extremely useful Risk Management Tips are in this section.