

Make Lock-Ins Fun and Safe

Teenagers; food; games; movies; soda; pizza; sports; friends—all “locked in” with no place to go! Sleep is often ‘optional,’ and many teens stay awake all night. This might not be your idea of a fun time, but it is a common activity for youth groups and other church organizations. A “lock-in” can be enjoyable for both participants and organizers, but care must be taken to avoid risky situations or practices.

The following are steps you can take to help make your lock-in safe and successful:

- **Seek the pastor’s approval for all activities.**
- **Prohibit games that could potentially harm students.** Games such as ‘gross-out’ food tasting competitions can go wrong quickly. Avoid activities that could cause illness, injuries, or that could result in students feeling embarrassed or humiliated.
- **Require parents/guardians to sign a permission slip.**
- **Provide adequate supervision.** Chaperones must be 21 years of age or older and in proportion to the number of males and females. The number of required adults must be the greater of 2 adults or as follows by grade level:
 - Grades 6 through 8: 1 adult to every 8 minors
 - Grades 9 through 12: 1 adult to every 10 minors
- **Require all chaperones to complete sexual abuse awareness training, background checks, and all related forms prior to the event.** This is diocesan policy. Speak with your parish Safe Environment Coordinator for further information.
- **Limit lock-ins to teens of similar age.** You may also want to consider scheduling separate events for males and females.
- **Pay attention to physical safety in the building.** Close off any isolated or restricted areas.
- **Keep the lights on during all activities** so that the adults can closely monitor the group.
- **Supervise bathroom use.** Consider taking regularly scheduled bathroom breaks; schedule boys and girls to take their breaks at different times.
- **Take attendance periodically.** Schedule unannounced, periodic roll calls. This will help you to keep track of the students and quickly alert you if anyone is missing.
- **Educate the students to report misconduct.** Let the teens know that if anyone- whether a peer or an adult- exhibits unsafe behavior or does something that makes them feel uncomfortable, they should tell a trusted adult right away.

Following the steps above will help to ensure that youth are safe at your lock-in and that everyone, adults included, enjoys the activity.

For further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Diocese of Manchester.

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Safe Environment Office: 669-3100 x 149