

# HOSTING RESPITE NIGHTS



**FOR PARISH  
FOSTER CARE MINISTRY**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS**  
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# WHAT IS A RESPITE NIGHT?

Adopting or being a foster parent can be beautiful and rewarding—it can also be very demanding! Sometimes we just need a well-deserved break. That’s why churches like Colonial Presbyterian Church in Overland Park, Kansas, host respite nights for foster and adoptive families.

Over the last few years Colonial's Foster Adopt Ministry has grown into a thriving respite night program that regularly hosts over a hundred children at their respite nights so families get a well-deserved break!

**How do they do it? | Can our parish do something like that? | I'm so in... what's next?**

Below Hannah Mabie, Coordinator of Colonial's Foster Adopt Ministry, outlines how they do it! Hannah knows first-hand the need is in every community and she would love to see more communities offer similar respite nights. **Interested in more information for yourself or your parish?** Email Debra Niesen, Archdiocesan Foster Care Task Force Chair, at [dniesen@archkck.org](mailto:dniesen@archkck.org).

## RESPITE NIGHT PLANNING OUTLINE PREPARED BY HANNAH MABIE, COLONIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### CONCEPT PLANNING

#### Host Facility:

- How many children can you safely host? *Colonial hosts 100*
- How many volunteers will you engage? *Colonial has regularly engages over 40 volunteers, per event*
- What is the layout of your building?
  - Can you serve food? Is there a place for a sack lunch for allergies?
  - Is there a place for a bounce house or outside activities?

#### Sponsorship Relationships:

##### Food, Bounce Houses, Crafts

- Cost efficiency of finding a food sponsor, perhaps Chick-fil-A - Wyandotte County?
- Benefit of having a bounce house
  - Concerns of hosting a bounce house someone always bonks a head, older children and younger children cannot jump at the same time, it requires a bossy volunteer
- Benefit of having crafts
  - Colonial budget friendly crafts- repurposing VBS materials
  - Use what’s on hand- be creative!

#### Time Frame:

Picking a time which is most available to families attending with coordination from hosting facility.

- Saturday Nights
- Summer Season

## LIABILITY PLANNING:

### Review building or organizational insurance policies

- Church's General Coverage
  - Volunteer Liability
  - Child Liability
  - Review building or organizational childcare policies
  - Review Volunteer policies which may apply
- Create "Release Form" for event with appropriate coverage - *typically includes volunteer, bounce house and building liability.*

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING:

- **Registration Form** *volunteers have a separate link for registration, once registered volunteer can select being served dinner, volunteer receives background check in follow up link, background check approval is noted on volunteer spreadsheet, volunteer has a place to mention their desire to serve.*
- **Time Frame:**
  - Occurs the same day hours before Respite Night - *one hour before, information on registration form*
- **Information necessary to cover:**
  - **Empathy Training** *this is a big night for some children, sibling visit, transition of child from place to place, role reminder- we're not here to "rescue" just to be an encouraging adult.*
  - **REMOVED Film-** Please show to volunteers
  - **Practical Tips** for the evening:
    - **Event Outline** - 30 minute rotations
    - **Volunteer Expectations** *kindness, patience, - NO PARENTING - reminder to retired teachers that this event is about being a brief "respite" in their lives -- a breath of fresh air, WHEN there's a melt-down: distraction, humor.....and yes - even bribery.*
    - **Reporting a Concern + Emergency Plan**
    - **FUN :: FUN :: FUN-** is the theme of the evening
    - The legend of the **Traveling Roster:** *take your children's names with you! Recount at every stop, make sure all children are always accounted for.*
    - **Checkout Process** - parent must have photo id which matched name on "check out list"
    - **Bathroom Protocol and Reminder:** "an adult should never be alone with a child."
- **Volunteer Background Checks**
  - Background checks must be approved prior to the event

**RETURN, OH MY SOUL TO YOUR REST;  
FOR THE LORD HAS DEALT BOUNTIFULLY WITH YOU  
PSALM 116:7**



## **VOLUNTEER ROLES:**

### **• Event Coordinator**

- Confirms bounce house and food sponsorships
- Oversees Volunteer Registration
  - Confirms background checks are completed and approved
  - Reports concerns with denied background checks
- Oversees Child Registration
  - Communicates confirmation of registration with parent
  - Emails reminders of the event to parent
  - Confirms liability forms are complete
  - Alerts registration form of any concerns: food allergies, special requests: sibling visit
- Creates Classrooms
  - Assigns volunteers to age groups
  - Assigns children to classrooms
  - Creates name tags
    - First name, classroom #
  - Creates “Check Out” sheets/Classroom roster
    - Each sheet should include child’s first and last name, any concerns or allergies, guardian to release to (name and phone number)

### **• Nursery Coordinator (Separate Oversight is Necessary)**

- High needs, feeding schedules, allergy concerns
- Toddlers and infants cannot speak for themselves
- Volunteers must be well equipped
- A crying baby is tolerable for 3, 13 or 30 minutes but can become overwhelming for 3 hours for a volunteer.
- Separate schedule/coordinates with kitchen on their own

### **• Registration Desk**

- In charge of check in
- Double checks release sheet: Pick up parent
- Reminds parent- no release without a photo id! No exceptions- ever!
- Double checks liability form
- Friendly face
- Remains present at registration for any immediate concerns

### **• Volunteer Storyteller and Craft Role**

- Volunteer leads storytelling
- Volunteer leads craft time

### **• Kitchen Coordinator**

- Works with kitchen volunteers to produce food in accordance with the rotation
- Serves food and can observe food safety
- Clean up
- Prayer for food

## REGISTRATION:

- **Online Registration Form**
  - Form gathers: critical information, allergies (food to be served is listed in detailed fashion), guardian pick up information, liability form
- **Registration Time Frame**
  - First advertisement: 6 weeks prior to event
    - Follow up advertisements as registration allows
- **The Fine Points of Respite Night Registration**
  - Planning Your Classrooms
    - It's necessary to plan your classrooms and volunteers at the same time
    - Groups of 10 children with 3-4 volunteers
    - Rotation of preschool and elementary
      - Every 30 minutes
      - Rotation moves through the building
      - Group begins and ends in the same classroom
      - Nursery age groups don't always rotate- they have their own routine

## EVENT OUTLINE:

- **Volunteer Roles**
  - !! Introduce yourself !!
  - Take role at the beginning of the event
  - Prepare your class for the evening
  - Begin your rotation according to your time frame
  - Take your roster along
  - Report any concerning behaviors immediately to Event Coordinator or Registration
- **Minute by Minute**
  - Outline provided (see example below)
  - Groups of 10 rotate every 30 minutes
    - Crafts
    - Bible/Storyteller
    - Bounce House/Playground
    - Dinner
- **Safety and Security**
  - Appropriate doors are locked.
  - Event coordinator is prepared for emergency (medical personal resources are identified, first aid kit is available, protocol for a missing child or a "runner" are reviewed).
  - Event Coordinator has provided "communication contact" number to classroom volunteers.
  - Registration roster is double checked in each classroom at the beginning of event, and again at the end.
  - Guardians/Parents are reminded they will not receive their child without a photo id.
  - Power of Prayer – This documentation would not be complete without the acknowledgement of the critical importance of praying before this event occurs!

# RESPIRE NIGHT

## MINUTE BY MINUTE PROGRAM (EXAMPLE)

### Preschool: Purple #110

5:00- 5:30	Welcome/Introductions/Lesson 1	<b>Leaders:</b>
5:30-6:00	BIBLE in #119	Bible Leader
6:00-6:30	Large Playground (Outside/East Side)	
6:30-7:00	Dinner in Fellowship Hall	Kitchen Team
7:00-7:30	Art in BLUE ROOM 112	Art Leader
7:30-8:00	Wrap Up/Play in room/Prepare for pick up	Group Leaders

### Preschool: Red #109

5:00- 5:30	Welcome/Introductions/Lesson 1	<b>Leaders:</b>
5:30-6:00	Art in BLUE ROOM 112	Art Leader
6:00-6:30	Dinner in Fellowship Hall	Kitchen Team
6:30-7:00	BIBLE in #119	Bible Leader
7:00-7:30	Large Playground (Outside/East Side)	
7:30-8:00	Wrap Up/Play in room/Prepare for pick up	Group Leaders

### Preschool: Yellow #114

5:00- 5:30	Welcome/Introductions/Lesson 1	<b>Leaders:</b>
5:30-6:00	Large Playground (Outside/East Side)	
6:00-6:30	Art in BLUE ROOM 112	Art Leader
6:30-7:00	Dinner in Fellowship Hall	Kitchen Team
7:00-7:30	BIBLE in #119	Bible Leader
7:30-8:00	Wrap Up/Play in room/Prepare for pick up	Group Leaders

### Preschool: Green #113

5:00- 5:30	Welcome/Introductions/Lesson 1	<b>Leaders:</b>
5:30-6:00	BIBLE in #119	Bible Leader
6:00-6:30	Large Playground (Outside/East Side)	
6:30-7:00	Dinner in Fellowship Hall	Kitchen Team
7:00-7:30	Art in BLUE ROOM 112	Art Leader
7:30-8:00	Wrap Up/Play in room/Prepare for pick up	Group Leaders