

Recommendations for Synod Assembly 2026 Child Care:

SEPA Synod Assembly Childcare Task Force: Initial Report

Submitted by Dr. Sherrell D. Mickens on behalf of the Childcare Task Force

Introduction

The Childcare Task Force was established to address the needs and requirements for providing safe, professional, and nurturing childcare services during SEPA Synod Assembly and other synodical-wide events. This report outlines the activities, findings, and initial recommendations of the task force, beginning with plans for the 2026 Synod Assembly, ensuring transparency and clarity for all assembly members.

Task Force Activities

The task force convened three times via Zoom to discuss and develop strategies for childcare at synod-related events. These meetings allowed for collaborative planning, feedback, and the sharing of expertise among members. As outcomes of these sessions, the task force produced a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, a detailed project management plan, and the summary brief contained in this report.

Summary Brief

The summary brief provides a synthesis of the key requirements and responsibilities for childcare provision at synod-related events. The Lead Childcare Staff/Volunteer(s) is tasked with direct supervision, care, and safety of children within their assigned age group. Staff must adhere to established supervision ratios and oversee all volunteers supporting the program.

Compensation is provided in the form of a stipend from the Synod for those overseeing event childcare. Based on the number of children registered, at least two to three lead staff are required, abiding by the approved state ratio of 3:1 children to staff. All required clearances must be submitted to Synod staff no later than two weeks before the event.

These clearances include:

- PA State Police Criminal Record Check (PACTH) – online at epatch.pa.gov if the report comes back with ANY infractions including ones that are non-disqualifying that potential volunteer will still be disqualified.
- PA Child Abuse History Clearance: compass.state.pa.us/CWIS
- FBI Criminal History Background Check and Fingerprinting: [Identogo website](#), if the report comes back with ANY infractions including ones that are non-disqualifying that potential volunteer will still be disqualified.
- National Sex Offender Registry Verification emailed to: RA-PWNSOR@pa.gov

Additionally, completion of Mandated Reporter Training is required, accessible through the University of Pittsburgh’s Child Welfare Resource Center [University of Pittsburgh’s Child Welfare Resource Center](#).

Staffing Requirements

Lead Childcare Staff/Volunteers must demonstrate professionalism and commitment to the highest standards of care. They are responsible for managing the childcare environment, ensuring compliance with all relevant clearances, and fostering a positive experience for children and parents alike. The outlined clearances and training are essential to maintaining safety and accountability within the program. In addition, they are responsible for overseeing key policies that have been defined and determined to be necessary by the Taskforce, including but not limited to: supervision ratios, the “two-adult” rule, secure check-in/check out procedures, emergency response procedures, program planning, and communication with parents/guardians. Details of these policies are on file with the synod and will be reviewed after each pilot child-care event for ongoing refinement and clarity.

Acknowledgements

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Conclusion

This report represents the collective work and recommendations of the Childcare Task Force. We are confident that the measures outlined will provide safe, reliable, and nurturing childcare for the 2026 SEPA Synod Assembly. The Task Force has proposed that

the Synod offer childcare, on a trial basis, at three (3) Synod Events, after which the team will reconvene to discuss whether this is a service which can be provided safely and affordably in an ongoing capacity. In addition, the Taskforce is also charged with the rewriting of the Synod's "safe place" policies for children and youth at Synod functions. These will be considered in the coming year with updated recommendations and next steps to come.

Submitted respectfully by Dr. Sherrell D. Mickens on behalf of the task force members.