



**May 11, 2018
SAFETY & SECURITY**

Dear Gathering Grown-ups,

You and your youth will be more safe at the Gathering than you are in your home town! The gathering has its own security and medical teams which is supplemented by local law enforcement and the medical community. As long as the youth are with you and their group, they are very safe. Nonetheless, there are a few simple tips and rules that will prevent the inconvenience of seeking medical assistance or the panic of misplacing a youth.

**Cell Phones
THIS IS IMPORTANT AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED
OPTIONAL.**

Make sure you have the cell phone numbers of every youth and adult participant from your congregation programmed in your phone and that they have each others and yours! This will be very important if you get separated in a crowd but will also be helpful in organizing meals and getting kids out of bed. You should also share your cell number with the parents back home. Of course, all this assumes you and your group have your phones charged. Emphasize to your group that it is their responsibility to keep their phones charged and with them because a dead phone in the hotel room will not help you find a lost youth. Adults should carry a cell phone power bank and charging cord. They are available at almost any store or gas station for under \$10. [Here is an example.](#) You will also be wearing a wristband that provides a phone number you may call in an emergency, to solve a problem, or to simply ask a question. You may also communicate directly with Gathering staff via Twitter or Facebook messenger.

Medical

The four most common conditions that required professional medical care at the last Youth Gathering were:

- DEHYDRATION — Even by Iowa standards, it will be very hot and very humid in Houston. Look for temperatures in the mid 90s and humidity around 75%. Encourage youth to drink lots of water (not pop or coffee) and make yourself familiar with the signs of the onset of dehydration by reading THIS. Those who have worked in outdoor ministry know that you should drink enough water everyday that you “pee” clear. Anything less should be treated with a nice glass of ice water. Sun Screen and hats are also going to be very helpful.
- CONSTIPATION — Anxiety, not enough fluids, a dramatic change in diet and, especially, bathroom shyness (lots of these kids have not shared a bedroom bathroom before) can cause a very uncomfortable case of constipation. The lead adult should have a laxative in their kit.

- MONKEY’S JUMPING ON THE BED — Yes, kids doing horse-play in their hotel room is a common cause of needing medical treatment at the Gathering, talk to your kids about not jumping on the beds.
- FLIP FLOPS — Flip flops are not safe on city streets or on long walks. Here are Pastor Anderson’s rules about shoes:
 - Barefoot — in your room only,
 - Flip flops — in your room or hallway or to/from pool area but not the restaurant or breakfast area,
 - Close-toed shoes — everywhere else and are REQUIRED on the service day.

By the way, here is another Pastor Anderson rule: if your hotel offers breakfast in the lobby, wearing your PJ’s to breakfast is cute only if you are under 5 years old, otherwise it’s just inappropriate (you won’t believe what I’ve seen on my travels.)

Health Forms

These are not collected by the Gathering, but are your responsibility. You should carry them with you at all times. Yes, you can scan them or take a picture of them and carry them on your phone.

First Aid

Avoid the expense and grief of having to seek medical attention by having what you need to treat the youth’s minor ailments yourself. I recommend each adult carry a ‘boo-boo kit.’ That is a pocket size first aid kit that would include: antiseptic wipes, bandages in several sizes, gauze pad, tape, sun screen, ibuprofen, gloves, etc. These are available on-line and in stores like Walmart for between \$5-\$20, but you probably have most of this in your medicine cabinet. I also recommend that each congregation or bus group carry a full size first aid kit (more than 100 pieces) that would include ace bandages, calamine for insect bites, and lidocaine lotion for sunburn. Your congregation should have one, but they are available for under \$50.

Unless they are in the bathroom, a youth should never be alone on this trip and never more than shouting distance from an adult. This will keep everyone safe and sound.

Please note that this email is being sent to the Primary Leader of each group registered for the ELCA Youth Gathering from Northeastern Iowa. Please share this email with other adult leaders, parents, and youth as you see fit.

Your Gathering Partner in Ministry,

Pastor Mark A. Anderson