



Child Protection Policy

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First Baptist Church, Stephenville, Texas

PURPOSE:

The staff and congregation of First Baptist Church are committed to providing a safe environment in which all children and youth are able to learn to love, worship, and to follow Jesus Christ. The Scripture is very specific about the importance of children and that they are to be protected (Matthew 18:1-10). Therefore, the following objectives are in place to best serve and protect the children, youth, and families of First Baptist Church.

1. *The Protection of the Children* – It is of the utmost importance that children have a safe, secure environment while at FBC. In order to best accomplish this objective all volunteer and compensated workers will undergo a screening process, including but not limited to a criminal history check.
2. *Good Stewardship* – The church must acknowledge that no church is immune from allegations, whether true or untrue, of child abuse. We as a church must not be found unprepared or unwilling to provide protection to our resources, both human and financial.
3. *Ministry Support* – The implementation of these policies and procedures ensures continued support of the ministries which in turn provides the best environment possible for the workers, children, and youth.
4. *To Raise the Awareness of the Church* – The goal of these policies and procedures is not to raise suspicion of any involved, only to educate the church about the processes and systems regarding the protection of the workers, children, and youth of FBC.

Throughout this policy, the terms “child,” “children,” “student,” and “youth” refer to all persons under the age of 18. Preschool/Children’s programs and activities include infants through 6th grade, and youth programs and activities include 7th grade through 12th grade. The guidelines set forth in this Child Protection Policy seek to uphold our commitment to the safety of the children and students of First Baptist Church, Stephenville. This policy governs all volunteers and compensated workers enlisted to work with children and youth at First Baptist Church, Stephenville.

ENLISTMENT OF WORKERS:

All prospective workers of children ages birth through 18 years at First Baptist Church, Stephenville (hereafter known as FBC), whether compensated or volunteer, are required to fill out the application packet and agree to undergo a screening process.

Volunteers:

All prospective volunteer workers must be a member of FBC for a period of no less than six (6) months before being allowed to apply for a position.

Volunteer and Paid Workers:

- ◆ Upon receipt of the application packet, the area appropriate supervisor will ensure the packet is complete, including the application, acknowledgements form, and security background check release.
- ◆ The prospective worker must agree to and sign a release for FBC to conduct a security background check by the church staff member designated by the church. This will be done prior to engagement and will be repeated within a reasonable time frame.
- ◆ Reference forms will be sent to references listed via mail or email or phone calls will be made.
- ◆ All reference checks and interviews will be conducted by the area appropriate supervisor.

EXCEPTIONS:

Six (6) Month Rule:

With the approval of the area appropriate supervisor, an exception may be granted in regard to the six (6) month rule. The area appropriate supervisor must:

- ◆ Give written and signed approval for the exception for volunteer workers desiring to work on a regular basis with children/students.
- ◆ Ensure that all steps listed in the previous section are completed.

Short Term Volunteers/Special Events:

Members of FBC that volunteer for events such as VBS, summer day trips, Mission trips, Choir trips, Extended Session workers, and the like are instances in which a six month rule exception may be made. The age appropriate supervisor will be responsible to make the decision regarding exceptions. The Minister of Education/Administration will affirm the exceptions made.

DISQUALIFICATIONS:

Any person wishing to serve with children ages birth through 18 years will not be allowed to serve if there was any prior offense involving abuse, where the individual:

- ◆ was convicted
- ◆ was placed on regular or deferred adjudication
- ◆ agreed to any kind of pre-trial plea bargain
- ◆ pled guilty
- ◆ pled nolo contendere or no contest

There will be no exception to this rule, regardless of when the individual's conversion experience occurred. They may however, be allowed to work in other areas of service with the approval of the Pastor and/or Minister of Education/Administration.

RECORDS RETENTION:

FBC will keep a personnel file on each worker, both compensated and volunteer, who applies to work with children between the ages of birth through 18 years. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep all files confidential.

RECORDS ADMINISTRATION:

- ◆ The Minister of Education/Administration will oversee the records retention process.
- ◆ All files will be maintained in a secure storage system.
- ◆ Only the Pastor, Minister of Education/Administration, Minister to Students, Preschool/Children's Minister, and Nursery Coordinator shall have access to the files.

FILE CONTENT:

The following is to be kept in each workers file:

- ◆ Completed Application
- ◆ Completed standard reference form
- ◆ Security Background Check release
- ◆ Security Background Check
- ◆ Disclosure of personal abuse victimization
- ◆ Any reasons and documentation for disqualification from working with children ages birth through 18 years of age.
- ◆ A signed receipt for:
 - Acknowledgement of receipt and compliance to FBC Child Protection Policies and Procedures and Information on Reporting Child Abuse (Form 7261)
 - Acknowledgement of receipt of any changes or revisions to Child Protection Policy

WORKER EDUCATION:

FBC may provide education and training to all volunteer and compensated workers that are designed to better equip workers to serve the children at FBC. Training can include discipline techniques, safety, basic first aid, child abuse recognition and how to report abuse and other subjects as necessary.

PROCEDURES FOR FBC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

FBC area appropriate supervisors shall oversee and monitor all FBC sponsored programs and activities, on-campus or off-campus.

Two Person Rule:

As often as practical, a minimum of two (2) adults, compensated or volunteer, who are not married to one another will be present at all FBC sponsored programs and activities where any children ages birth through 18 years are present.* In the instance there is only one adult, door must be open and other groups must be in close proximity. A reasonable ratio of adults will be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of preschoolers, children, and youth. A child shall not be taken to an isolated area of the church campus alone with an adult.

**Note: A married couple working together shall be considered as only one approved adult.*

Restroom Procedures for ages birth through 6th grade:

For children that are in diapers:

- ◆ Whenever possible, men shall not change diapers of either a male or female child.
- ◆ Whenever possible, only paid workers are to change diapers of the children.
- ◆ Diapers are to be changed in close proximity to other workers.

For children out of diapers through age five:

- ◆ Children should be accompanied to the restroom but restroom doors should remain open.
- ◆ If at all possible, female workers should accompany both male and female children.
- ◆ If children do not require assistance, the adult should step out of the restroom in order to give the child privacy.

For children ages 1st grade through 6th grade:

- ◆ Adults are not to accompany children into the individual restroom stalls unless special help* is required.

*Special help is for medical conditions which require help.

Upset/Crying or Disruptive Children:

In the instance that children are upset/crying or disruptive and removal from the large group is necessary, they shall be taken into an open, public area in close proximity to the classroom. No child should be removed from an activity and left unsupervised in hallway or other area. A child shall not be taken to an isolated area of the church campus alone with an adult.

Five Year Rule:

Any person working with children birth through 8th grade on a regular basis must be at least five years older than the oldest child participating in the scheduled church sponsored activity to which they are assigned whether on or off-campus. Student interns are generally university aged students. These interns are occasionally called to lead group Bible studies and activities. In the event that an intern is in charge, there must be at least two adults present.

Appropriate Adult/Child/Student Interaction:

Anytime that children/students are in the presence of adults it is natural that demonstration of affection will occur. Adults must make an effort at all times to refrain from inappropriate behaviors which include children/students sitting on an adult's or student worker's lap, tickling, full body hugs, or a child sitting on an adult's shoulders or "riding piggyback."

One-on-One Meeting between Ministers, leaders, and child/student:

It is reasonable that occasionally a child/student will want to meet privately with a group leader. In order to ensure the protection of both the child/student and the leader the following guidelines must be followed.

- ◆ The meeting must occur in a public/semi public location. The minister's office is acceptable; however, the window must remain uncovered.
- ◆ If off-campus, the meeting must occur in a public/semi public location.
- ◆ The Student Minister, Children's Minister or any other workers, volunteer or compensated, should not transport a child/student alone in a vehicle.

Reporting Accidents:

If a child, student, or adult is involved in an accident during a church activity, an accident investigation form should be completed and turned in to the area appropriate supervisor who will inform the Minister of Education/Administration of the situation.

CHILD/STUDENT SLEEPOVERS:

Child/Student sleepovers, on or off campus, must adhere to the following guidelines as well as the understanding that parents are ultimately

responsible for their child's behavior after children/students and leaders have gone to sleep.

On campus sleepovers:

- ◆ The two adult rule must be followed at all times.
- ◆ Emergency contact information must be on file for each student.
- ◆ Good judgment must be used in regard to movies and planned activities.
- ◆ Appropriate sleepwear must be worn.
- ◆ Boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms properly supervised with leaders of the same gender.
- ◆ As long as any students are participating in activities, leaders must be present.

Off campus sleepovers:

All of the above guidelines are in effect with the addition of the following:

- ◆ The adult leaders must be present at all times.
- ◆ The adult leaders, if married, count as one person in the two adult rule, therefore, an additional adult must be in attendance at all times.
- ◆ The adult leaders must ensure the children/students do not have access to inappropriate materials including those found on the Internet or television, nor harmful items such as guns or other weapons.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE:

Abuse is the physical, mental or sexual mistreatment, neglect of the health and welfare, or the exposure to any unreasonable risk of a child, including the failure to help, remove or prevent a child from being subjected to abuse. The word, *child*, is defined as anyone between the ages of birth and 18 years.

- ◆ Physical abuse includes but is not limited to: striking, shoving, shaking or hitting a child, even if it is intended as discipline. It also includes a child being left in a situation where the child could be exposed to physical injury.
- ◆ Mental abuse includes but is not limited to: subjection to regular humiliation, yelling at, being ignored or blamed for things beyond their control.

- ◆ Sexual abuse includes but is not limited to: direct sexual contact such as intercourse, other genital contact or touching but also includes being made to watch sexual acts, look at an adult's genitals, pornography or its production.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE:

Any person supervising any child is responsible for the immediate report of any perceived "inappropriate behavior" to their immediate area appropriate supervisor. FBC is dedicated to swift and responsible action when any allegations are made. These actions include reporting allegations to the proper local and state authorities.

REPORTING PROCEDURE:

Any person observing inappropriate behavior shall report the behavior to the area appropriate supervisor in a swift manner.

- ◆ Workers in the Nursery/Preschool area are to immediately report to the Nursery Coordinator. The Nursery Coordinator will then report to the Children's Minister. The Children's Minister will report to the Minister of Education/Administration.
- ◆ Workers in the Kindergarten through 6th grade classes are to immediately report to the Children's Minister. The Children's Minister will report to the Minister of Education/Administration.
- ◆ Workers in the Youth department (grades 7 through 12) are to immediately report to the Minister to Students. The Minister to Students will immediately report to the Minister of Education/Administration.
- ◆ In all instances, the Minister of Education/Administration will communicate to the Pastor.

The worker that observed the inappropriate behavior, the area appropriate supervisor, and the Minister of Education/Administration and/or the Pastor will report the behavior in a timely manner to one of the following agencies.

- ◆ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – 1-800-252-5400 (24 hour hotline)
- ◆ Stephenville Police Department – 254-918-1200
- ◆ Erath County Sheriff's Office – 254-965-3318

A written incident report by the observing worker must be made within 24 hours of the observance of the behavior to the area appropriate supervisor. The report must include:

- ◆ The name of the child abused or neglected.
- ◆ The name of the parent or legal guardian of that child.
- ◆ The name of the person inflicting the abuse or neglect.
- ◆ Exactly what was observed, including areas, times and specific details.

State law protects persons reporting suspected abuse from liability when that report is made in good faith and without malicious intent.

Upon the observation of any inappropriate behavior and after the report of such behavior, the workers are expected to:

- ◆ Treat any observation or report with confidentiality and respect for the persons involved.
- ◆ Cooperate fully with civil authorities, ministers and other agents of FBC.
- ◆ Share no information regarding any allegation with anyone other than the above mentioned persons.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE PLAN:

- ◆ The area appropriate supervisor will immediately notify the Minister of Education/Administration.
- ◆ Upon an allegation of abuse, the accused is to be immediately suspended from duties until the investigation is completed.
- ◆ If there is confirmation of the abuse, the accused will immediately be terminated from service.
- ◆ If the evidence is inconclusive then FBC will take appropriate actions that may include termination of duties.

ABUSE ALLEGATIONS RESPONSE:

The central spokesperson for FBC will be the Pastor or Minister of Education/Administration.