

# Protection Policy

for Children, Youth, and  
Adults with Mental & Emotional Disabilities

(Revised 10.28.2012)



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## **Rationale**

The members and staff of First Baptist Church are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which all children and youth, and adults with mental/emotional disabilities, are protected from sexual/physical abuse and neglect. Our goals are to:

- Protect those in our care and send a message to parents that we care about their children
- Provide sufficient measures to protect the “least of these” among us
- Educate workers and caregivers concerning abuse issues
- Protect the staff, volunteers and church from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

In recognition of these goals First Baptist Church has adopted the following policies and procedures. These policies and procedures will be reviewed as needed or at least every two years by the Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Church Council. Revisions will be made with the approval of Church Council.

### **I. Procedure for Hiring and Screening of Compensated Workers and Volunteers.**

1. All volunteers with children, youth or adults with mental/emotional disabilities including without limitation, clergy, custodial, day or overnight trip chaperones, interns, Sunday School teachers, Children’s Church, Nursery Volunteers, Vacation Bible School teachers, RA’s, GA’s, Upward Sports, Children’s Choir, and bus drivers will complete a Volunteer Worker Application Form for Children and Youth Workers. All persons employed by the church (whether or not scheduled to work with children and youth) will complete an Employment Application and Employee Screening Form.
2. Prior to serving with children, youth, or adults with disabilities, personal interviews will be required of all compensated workers and all volunteers who have regular contact with children, youth and adults with disabilities. Interviews will be conducted by the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or other ministerial staff or in some cases by someone from the Personnel Committee for compensated workers.
3. Reference and background checks will be made on all employees and will be made for volunteers who have regular contact with children, youth or adults with disabilities. Reference checks will be conducted by documented phone interviews and/or by mail as directed in the Volunteer Worker Application. Background checks will be performed by an outside agency.
4. All information provided in the Volunteer Worker Application Forms and the Employment Application, as well as any information collected through reference checks or other investigation or inquiries, is to be considered confidential and will be kept in a secure location at First Baptist Church. This information will not be released to any other party except on a need-to-know basis with the approval of the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor.

## II. Policy Statement

1. Persons who have ever been convicted of, or pled guilty, or “no contest” to any misdemeanor or felony offense which in any way involved physical and/or sexual abuse or assault upon a child under the age of 18 years or an adult will not be allowed to work with children under the age of 18 or adults with mental or emotional disabilities. Nor will persons whose prior employment was terminated on account of any alleged incident of physical and/or sexual abuse or assault towards a child of such age or an adult with mental or emotional disabilities, unless such termination was overturned by judicial order or by the order of an administrative law judge.
2. Persons who have been convicted of, or pled guilty or "no contest" to any felony or misdemeanor which in any way involved an act of physical violence or mental cruelty towards an adult with mental or emotional disabilities will not be allowed to work with adults with mental or emotional disabilities.
3. Persons who have had a civil judgment entered against them for intentional or negligent infliction of mental or emotional distress of an adult with mental or emotional disabilities will not be allowed to work with adults with mental or emotional disabilities.
4. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the family of First Baptist Church. Individuals who have such a history are encouraged to discuss their desire to work with children or youth with one of the pastoral staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.
5. A volunteer must attend our worship service and an Adult Bible Fellowship or Small Group for a minimum of six months before working with children, youth or adults with disabilities. In addition, they must have attended our Starting Point Class. In some cases, this will be waived based on a person’s ability to provide positive character references from other organizations, from our ministry leaders, and a person’s prior history working with children in a previous Christian faith community.
6. Organizations who provide workers or volunteers for children, youth, or adults with mental/emotional disabilities to First Baptist Church must operate under adequate hiring and screening procedures issued by such organization. Such procedures must be submitted to and approved by the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor.

### III. Background Checks

1. At the expense of FBC, thorough background checks shall be completed by the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor prior to any individual working with infants, toddlers, children and youth through age 17, as well as any adult with mental/emotional disabilities, on FBC properties and/or offsite FBC ministries/activities. The Personnel Committee will ensure that staff background checks are completed for all compensated workers.
2. Current or potential staff/volunteer must agree in writing to a background check or they will not be considered.
3. If any criminal activity or abuse issues are uncovered in a background check, these shall be brought to the attention of the current or potential staff/volunteer and that person shall determine if they desire to continue to be considered for the paid or unpaid position in question.
  - a. If the current or potential staff/volunteer in question wishes to continue in the process they shall first meet in consultation with the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor. If that consultation determines that there are errors in the background check or that issues in the past do not present a current threat, then the person in question may serve.
4. In the event that a scheduled, screened volunteer becomes unavailable for a church activity, a temporary screening form and a background check may be completed for a church or Sunday School member by a ministerial staff member.

### IV. Supervision

1. Two unrelated adult (age 18 or older with one at least 21 years of age) workers should be present at all times during any activity involving children or youth\*, even if only one child or youth is present. This rule reduces the risk of abuse and reduces the risk of false accusations.

Some classes may have only one adult in attendance. If this situation occurs, doors to the classrooms will remain open if there is not visibility into the room. An adult should not be in a room or an enclosed area alone with a child.

2. If it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a child or youth and out of the sight of others, the appropriate age group minister shall obtain parental permission or authorization. Such one-on-one situations should be avoided whenever possible.
3. Questionable or inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to the appropriate age group minister; as such conduct can precede abuse, even though the observed act itself does not constitute abuse.

4. If a person desires to plan an activity off campus, he/she must:
  - a. Request permission from the appropriate age group minister;
  - b. Notify parents, in advance, of specific plans and attempt to receive permission in writing;
  - c. Always have at least one other unrelated adult present.
  - d. Overnight adult supervision should be a 1 to 8 same gender ratio with a minimum of 2 adults.(unless a lower ration is required by other organizations)
5. Doors to classrooms and offices used by children or youth should be modified to include windows made of shatter-proof glass. If a door does not have a window, then the door should be kept open.

\* Where appropriate these standards apply to workers with adults with mental or emotional disabilities.

## **V. Reporting Incidents**

1. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children, youth, or adults with mental/emotional disabilities, will be reported as soon as possible (and at least within 24 hours) to the Director of the Department of Social Services of Carteret County, to local law enforcement, to the First Baptist Church minister directly responsible for the area of ministry where the incident occurred, and to the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor. Reports will initially be made orally and then in writing to the Senior Pastor.
2. The Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor will report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the Director of the Department of Social Services of Carteret County within twenty-four (24) hours or verify that such a report has been made.
3. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances. The Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
4. Reports from persons requesting to remain anonymous will be made in the presence of a witness of the reporter's own choosing to verify the filing of the oral report.
5. All adult members of First Baptist Church, staff, and other adults participating in programs on the property of First Baptist Church are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children, youth, or adults with disabilities. They will be encouraged not to hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, inappropriate. The church will be supportive of individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse. All reports will be taken seriously but not judged prematurely.

6. Organizations that use First Baptist Church facilities that have reporting procedures of their own will follow those established reporting practices. In addition to following their notification procedures, any organization that uses First Baptist Church facilities will also notify the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident of abuse involving any person affiliated with such organization and who uses First Baptist Church facilities or about any incident or suspected incident occurring at First Baptist Church facilities.
7. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

## **VI. Responding to Allegations**

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. All procedures listed in the previous section on reporting will be strictly followed.
3. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
4. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
5. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
6. The liability insurer and attorney for the Church will be notified about the incident by the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor.
7. The safety and security of the child, youth, or adult with disabilities must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
8. An in-depth investigation will be carried out by the civil authorities rather than church personnel.
9. The Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor will be the sole spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned.
10. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared or substantiated.

## **VII. Training and Education**

1. All staff and volunteers will be trained during an orientation period regarding protection of children, youth and adults with mental or emotional disabilities from abuse, and protection of adult workers from false accusations of abuse. This training will include the following:
  - a. The need for the Child Protection Policy.
  - b. Church policies governing working with children, youth, and adults with mental or emotional disabilities.
  - c. Procedures for reporting observed or suspected misconduct.
2. Information on the Child Protection Policy will be a part of the new member orientation.
3. Policies and procedures will be reviewed with all workers of children, youth and adults with disabilities every two years.