

# **Child Protection Policy**

## **First Baptist Church of Christ, Macon, GA**

**Passed by Church Conference on April 25, 2012**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of our policy is first and foremost to provide for a safe and secure environment for our children and their families. This includes the protection of our children from all forms of abuse, and protection for those who work with children from compromising situations, false accusations, and unwise practices.

As the people of God we are charged and entrusted with the nurture, safety and faith formation of our children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Children are a gift from God. When we honor this gift by welcoming and receiving children into our sacred care, we welcome God (Matthew 18:1-5). As a whole community we are responsible for the safety, nurturance, and faith formation of our children and youth. The following policies give guidelines and extended definition as to how we fulfill our commitment to safe, secure and faithful ministry with our children and youth.

### **Definition of Child Abuse**

The State of Georgia defines child abuse in several ways (O.C.G.A. Section 16.5-70, 19-15-1, and 19-7-5). Persons supervising the welfare of or having immediate charge of a child under the age of 18 commit child abuse or child cruelty when:

1. Causing cruel or excessive physical or mental pain
2. Depriving the child of necessary sustenance to the extent that the child's health or well-being is jeopardized
3. Intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature
4. Intentionally causing substantial physical harm or visible bodily harm to another in front of a child.
5. Causing physical injury to a child.
6. Causing neglect or exploitation.
7. Committing sexual abuse.
8. Committing emotional abuse.

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, exhibitionism or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.

Child emotional abuse is verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or other similar acts, as defined by state law, directed at or to a minor or in the presence of a minor.

## **Other definitions**

### **A. Child**

Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law, or is classified as a minor.

### **B. Adult**

Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.

### **C. DFCS**

The Department of Family and Children Services, which is a state agency with local offices in each county. A reference to DFCS would be to the appropriate local DFCS office.

### **D. Employee**

Any person hired according to the personnel policies of First Baptist Church of Christ and receiving compensation from First Baptist Church of Christ is considered an employee. This includes both part-time and full-time personnel.

### **E. Non-member Contracted**

Individuals who are contracted by First Baptist Church of Christ to lead in retreats or other church sponsored functions, and, that may potentially have direct involvement with minors.

### **F. Volunteer Leadership**

**Primary volunteer:** Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. Must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. For example, primary volunteers would include Sunday School teachers, missions group and children's/youth choir leaders, W.O.W. (Working on Worship) leaders, and regular youth ministry volunteers.

**Secondary volunteer worker:** Persons who occasionally interact with children and/or do so in less risky circumstances. This category may include Vacation Bible School workers who only interact with children in a large group setting and guardians of participants who help supervise activities. Generally, secondary volunteers would be present with children only if primary workers are serving in a supervisory role.

All volunteer workers under the age of eighteen (18) will be considered secondary workers. Minors may assist adults, but may not take the place of adult workers.

## **Scope of This Policy**

The policy and procedure set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors in First Baptist Church of Christ facilities or church sponsored activities. This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of all affected individuals and our church: employee and volunteer selection process, employee and volunteer training, operating practices, and procedures for reporting and responding to alleged child abuse.

### **I. Employee and Volunteer Selection Process**

#### **A. Employee**

1. All church employees, whether or not they work with directly with children, will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate church staff person or the Personnel Committee, have references checked and give written permission for a criminal records check.
2. All records, forms and reports regarding employees remain confidential with limited access by the Pastor, Personnel Committee, and appropriate Supervisory staff only.

#### **B. Primary Volunteer**

1. All primary volunteers will be interviewed by an appropriate staff person and must give written permission for a criminal records background check.
2. In addition to the above requirement, a primary volunteer must be a member or regular attendee of First Baptist Church of Christ for at least six (6) months. As an exception, a primary volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon the recommendation of the appropriate age-group minister.
3. All records, forms and reports regarding volunteers will remain confidential with limited access by the Pastor and appropriate age-group minister.

#### **C. Secondary Volunteer**

1. Secondary volunteers will not be required to have background checks, but there must be at least two workers (one of whom has been approved with a background check) with any group of children at all times.

#### **D. Minor Volunteer**

1. If a minor desires to be a volunteer working with other minors, his or her parent or guardian must sign the Minor's Disclosure Form (see Appendix I) in the appropriate place indicating that the parent or guardian knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with the other minors.

Approved primary volunteers and employees will be required to sign additional consents for background checks as needed and shall consent to background checks as needed.

## **II. Employee and Volunteer Training**

### **A. Initial Training**

An initial training is required and will include the following elements:

The training session will include explanation and discussion of:

1. Review of Child Protection Policy
2. Behaviors which signal problems of child abuse
3. Guidelines for the prevention of child abuse or injury to minors
4. Procedures for reporting alleged child abuse
5. Procedures for responding to alleged abuse

All ministers and employees who work with children, full or part-time, will receive training in CPR for children and adults. All volunteers are encouraged to receive the training, but at least one regular worker in each department or class should receive the training.

### **B. Annual Review**

An annual child protection policy review will be held for all employees and primary volunteers. Anyone unable to attend the review, or is recruited for service between review sessions, will be given a written manual including training information and the review of Child Protection Policy. A signed form stating receipt and review of the policy and materials will be required.

## **III. Operating Practices**

### **A. Two Adult Rule**

A reasonable effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults (at least one of which has been screened) present at all times for any scheduled church event. At least two adults present will not be related (i.e. married, siblings, etc.). A reasonable effort will be made to assure that no child or youth shall be alone with one adult except in counseling situations. In the case of counseling, the session should take place where other people are nearby or with view windows or open doors.

In the case of last-minute emergency situations or situations in which one worker has to step away for a brief period of time (such as to accompany a child to a parent's class, to deliver a Sunday School roll notebook, or leave early for choir rehearsal) or when children arrive to class before two adults are present, an effort should be taken to leave the door open and to notify a nearby adult that a teacher is temporarily alone. In the case where an adult and child would be in a one-on-one situation with no other adults within sight or earshot, the adult should accompany the child to a space where others are nearby.

### **B. Safe Spaces**

Minors should be placed in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.

Counseling or meeting with a youth or child “to talk” is important in relationship building. The following guidelines will ensure that such encounters happen in a safe space:

1. If meeting off of church property, parents/guardians of minors should be aware of the meeting.
2. Meetings should take place in public places like coffee houses, restaurants, etc.
3. When meeting in the church, meetings should be held in non-isolated areas and in a space with view windows or an open door.

### **C. Overnight or Out-of-Town Activities**

All participants should have a written parental consent and medical release form (Appendix II) in order to participate in overnight or out-of-town activities. Consent forms may be completed for one-year periods and renewed annually. All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all First Baptist Church of Christ policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in this child protection policy during First Baptist Church of Christ sponsored overnight or out-of-town activities.

In the case of overnight accommodations, the following guidelines will be kept:

1. All adults and minors sharing a room will be of the same sex.
2. An adult may not share a bed with an unrelated minor.
3. One or more adult(s) may not share a room with one unrelated minor but may share a room with two or more unrelated minors.
4. The above rules do not apply if all adults and minors sharing a room are related.

### **D. Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check will be required for all employees, primary volunteers, and overnight or out-of-town chaperones. A criminal background check will also be required for non-member contracted leaders who will attend overnight trips or will have potential supervision of children or youth.

1. Before a criminal background check is run, the applicant will sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. The background check authorization form and results will be viewed by the appropriate ministerial staff member(s) and will be maintained in confidence. All background check results and any reasons for denial because of these results will be treated confidentially.
2. Background checks will be performed at the expense of the church.
3. Those who obtain a certificate confirming that they have cleared fingerprint and background checks to work with children by another agency (i.e. school teachers, etc.,) may submit a copy of their certificate for proof of their clearance status and criminal background search report, though the church may still keep a signed consent on file for ongoing background checks.

## **Disqualification for Leadership**

The ministerial staff will determine on a case-by-case basis, in light of the circumstances, whether an individual would be kept from supervisory interaction with children. Generally, any of the following offenses would warrant disqualification:

1. Offenses against humanity: i.e. human trafficking, manslaughter, assisting suicide, opprobrious or abusive language, kidnapping, false imprisonment, hijacking, interference with custody, hazing students, reckless conduct by infected persons, stalking or cruelty to the elderly.
2. Sexual, emotional, physical, and/or neglectful offenses against or in the presence of minors; abandonment of a child
3. Sexual offenses of any nature including distributing obscene materials and electronic pornography, distribution of unlawful materials to minors.
4. Violent crimes, i.e. assault, battery, murder, etc.

Charges of a sexual or violent nature that did not result in convictions will be subject to further inquiry. Generally, all other offenses are a questionable offense and will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Factors such as date of offense, number of offenses, and the work the applicant will be doing will be taken into account.

## **IV. Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse**

This policy is appropriate for allegations involving church and non-church related forms of abuse.

### **A. General Principles**

Anyone working with minors has a legal responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. When responding to allegations of abuse, the church and its representatives will keep several key principles in mind.

1. Reports should be taken seriously.
2. Allegations should be handled with sensitivity to people's privacy and confidentiality. The "Response Team" (defined hereafter) shall keep all reports of alleged child abuse confidential until formal reports are in process. Respect for privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.
3. The church will cooperate fully with law enforcement and social services. The Response Team will take appropriate action to report allegations in accordance with the reporting requirements of the state of Georgia, insurance policy requirements and advice of legal counsel.
4. The alleged victim should not be blamed.
5. The needs of the victims will be given high priority. Victims include the abused, the family of the abused, the peers of the abused, the family of the accused, and the congregation.

6. The church will seek to provide Christian support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families.
7. If the alleged abuse occurs at church or at a church function, the church insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

## **B. When a report is made of alleged abuse**

Should any person through their affiliation with this church have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or is being abused as defined by State law (O.C.G.A. Section 19-7-5), whether occurring in a church or non-church related setting, s/he shall act in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Secure the safety of the child if possible.
2. Make an oral report immediately to a supervisory staff minister.
3. Document any information in writing as soon as immediately practicable, which written report shall be signed dated, and forwarded to the Pastor and appropriate age-group minister. If an employee is the accused party, notify a supervisory staff minister and the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to those involved, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, anyone having reasonable cause to suspect abuse should talk with the ministerial staff members mentioned above to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family.

## **C. Responses to Allegations**

Upon being notified of any allegations of child abuse, the Pastor, who will serve as the Chair of the Response Team, shall convene a meeting of the Response Team. In the absence of a Pastor, the Chair of Church Council shall serve as Chair of the Response Team. The Team shall consist of the following members, provided none of the team members are part of the accused party:

1. Pastor (Chair of the Response Team)
2. Ministerial Staff
3. Chair of Church Council
4. Chair of Deacons
5. Chair of the Appropriate Age-Group Committee  
(Nursery: birth-2K    Preschool/Children: 4K-Grade 5    Youth: Grades 6-12)
6. Appropriate Legal Counsel (selected by the Chair)

If the alleged offender is an employee, the Chair of the Personnel Committee will be added.

The Response Team will:

1. If alleged abuse is defined by law, immediately from the time of the initial report, the team will make an oral report to DFCS and shall follow with a report in writing.
2. If possible, the reporter, who made the report of abuse, shall be present when the report is made to DFCS.
3. In the absence of DFCS, the reports shall be made to the appropriate police agency or district attorney.
4. After initial report, team will coordinate with DFCS or appropriate police authority or both.
5. Prepare any statements regarding the allegation. Such statements may be released to the media, the congregation, or other appropriate parties.
6. A spokesperson will be selected by the Response Team. No other members of the Team or the congregation should make public statements.
7. Determine the impact of the allegation and develop a plan of ministry to the victim, the accused, their families, and the congregation.
8. Maintain accurate records of its actions. Records of reports, including minutes of Response Team's deliberations, interviews with involved parties, and written materials specific to each case are to be kept together by the appropriate ministry leader and marked "Response Team: Confidential" or otherwise, as required by law.
9. Balance the needs to protect the parties involved in the allegation while fulfilling reporting obligations.

## Appendix I

**\*\*\*This Form Must Be Notarized\*\*\***

### Minor's Disclosure Form

To be in compliance with the Child Protection Policy of First Baptist Church of Christ at Macon, please complete and notarize the following:

I hereby certify that I know no reason why the minor named below should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with the other minors in the ministries of First Baptist Church of Christ.

Print Minor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor's Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Parent's or Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's or Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Place notary's stamp, signature and date below\*\*\***

Sworn to and subscribed before me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

Notary Seal Below:

**Appendix II**  
**First Baptist Church of Christ at Macon, Georgia**  
**Parental Consent Form 2012**

I hereby grant permission as the (circle one) parent/guardian of (child's full name) \_\_\_\_\_ born on (month/date/year) \_\_\_\_\_ to the adult representatives of the First Baptist Church of Christ at Macon, Georgia to (1) transport the above named child in church and/or personal vehicles and (2) to seek and obtain emergency medical attention and treatment for the above named child during all church sponsored trips during the entire year of 2012.

<b>Emergency Numbers:</b>	Mother	Father
Home:	_____	_____
Work:	_____	_____
Cell:	_____	_____
Other (indicate name and relationship):		
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

**ATTACH FRONT & BACK COPIES OF INSURANCE CARD(S).** Make sure they include *primary member's* full name, birthdate, and social security number.

List any medications, allergies, or other pertinent medical information:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Notary

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Signed