

First Baptist Church, Zachary LA
Child Protection Policy

<p>Approved by Church Council 11/1/09 Amended Sections 4:1, 4.8 4/11/10</p>

PURPOSE

The members and staff of First Baptist Church of Zachary, LA (FBCZ) recognize that our children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults who lead church ministries and activities both on and off FBCZ property.

FBCZ is committed to maintaining an environment in which children and youth are protected from physical, verbal and sexual abuse, and in which church staff, teachers, and volunteer workers are protected from potential false allegations of abuse.

To achieve the goals of preventing either incidents of abuse or the unfounded assertion of such conduct, FBCZ has developed appropriate procedures to be followed in the following areas:

- The screening and selection of workers involved in the supervision or custody of minors;
- Orientation and training of approved workers;
- Supervision of these workers by trained leadership;
- Reporting of and responding to any incident and/or allegation of the abuse of a minor.

This policy is intended to protect children and youth from abuse in church sponsored events. The general policy and procedures shall apply to all persons, whether compensated staff, teachers or volunteer workers, all church members, visitors and guests. This policy does not constitute a contract between the church and its workers. As situations arise in the future which are not adequately covered by the policy, revisions will be approved by the Church Council of FBCZ.

DEFINITIONS

FBCZ: First Baptist Church of Zachary, LA

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND/OR MINORS: Any person under 18 years of age involved in programs provided at or sponsored by FBCZ. Herein referred to as children.

“REGULAR” TEACHERS AND WORKERS: Any paid or volunteer worker who serves in a FBCZ ministry to children regularly. They agree to submit to the leadership and government of the church in their service.

“OCCASIONAL” TEACHERS AND WORKERS: Any other paid or volunteer worker who serves in some capacity in a FBCZ ministry to children on occasion. They agree to submit to the leadership and government of the church in their service.

CHILD ABUSE: Any wrongful treatment of a child which results in any non-accidental injury to

the child, including physical, emotional, and/or sexual injury. Evidence of injury may include scars, bruises, wounds, medical findings, etc.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY: The current version that has been approved by the Church Council.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: Any teacher, worker or other person or caretaker who has or is involved with the care of a child who commits, permits or encourages the commission of any sexual act, touching, or contact, or other sexual gratification, the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child in such, or any other offense against public morality and decency, by, with, or upon a child, or who commits, permits or encourages any act of prostitution with or by a child.

MANDATORY REPORTER: Any person who provides training and supervision of a child, except as excluded under Louisiana law for “church officials” (An ordained minister that receives knowledge of abuse or neglect during a “sacred communication” is not a mandatory reporter).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 1.1. FBCZ is subject to Louisiana law regarding the protection of children.
- 1.2. FBCZ will seek to prevent the abuse of children participating in church ministries. Preventative measures shall include screening, training and supervision of custodians of minors, particularly including teachers and workers as defined in this policy.
- 1.3. It shall be the responsibility of the FBCZ staff member accountable for any FBCZ ministry that involves minors to ensure that appropriate practices are implemented within those programs and activities to reduce the risk of abuse. The specific circumstances of each ministry shall be considered in the development of those program-specific practices.
- 1.4. Entities or other organizations that use FBCZ facilities in any way that involves minors must agree to abide by this policy. Requests for any exceptions to this policy and provision will be considered only when presented in writing and approved in writing by the Church Council or its designee.

TRAINING

- 2.1. All regular teachers and workers will be given a written copy of this policy. They will be required to have read this policy when applying to serve with the children’s ministry.
- 2.2. A newsletter will be sent annually to all regular workers. This newsletter will update them with any new information concerning the FBCZ Child Protection Policy and will also remind them of the major goals of the policy. These goals include:
 - Protection of all children in all FBCZ ministries and activities;
 - Protection of providers from exposure to “high risk” situations and false accusations;
 - Awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse;

- Understanding of the reporting procedures and the procedures for responding to incidents/reasonably suspected incidents of abuse.
- 2.3. This information and instruction is required training for each new regular teacher and worker involved in the custody of children.

SCREENING

- 3.1. All regular teachers and workers involved in the custody and care of children at FBCZ shall complete a confidential application including questions concerning child abuse. The application will be submitted to the FBCZ staff person responsible for the ministry for submittal to the Associate Pastor of Education and Administration or his designee to be used for execution of a background check.
- 3.2. All background checks and/or reference checks on regular workers will be made by or under the direction of the Associate Pastor of Education and Administration.
- 3.3. Application files for all regular teachers and workers shall be maintained by FBCZ and shall include the application and the results of any investigations or inquiries made pursuant to an applicant's responses on these forms.
- 3.4. The personnel files of all compensated FBCZ staff working with children shall include the application and the results of any investigations or inquiries made pursuant to an applicant's responses on these forms.
- 3.5. Confidentiality of the completed and signed forms utilized to implement this policy shall be maintained by limiting the access to these filed forms to the Associate Pastor of Education and Administration or his designee.
- 3.6. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the FBCZ family. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children with a member of the FBCZ ministerial staff prior to applying for or engaging in any volunteer service involving children.
- 3.7. The applications and information gained as a result of any background check or other related investigation of persons whose offer to serve is withdrawn or declined before service will be destroyed.
- 3.8. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse are not permitted to provide supervisory services in any church-sponsored activity or ministry for children.
- 3.9. Occasional teachers and workers who have not been screened will serve only in the presence of and under the supervision of a regular teacher or worker who has been screened and approved.
- 3.10. On a 5 year cycle the FBCZ will do routine re-screening of all regular workers.

SUPERVISION

- 4.1. Teachers, workers and other persons involved in the custody and care of children **6th grade and under** at FBCZ shall observe the "two adult rule," which requires an adult working with children to be accompanied by another worker. The "two

- 4.2. One-on-one supervision of a minor or any other exception to the “two adult rule” is acceptable ONLY in the event it occurs in a public area that is not considered to be a high isolation setting OR if parental permission is received in advance. The ministerial staff members are exempt from this item in emergency crisis counseling situations.
- 4.3. All rooms used by adults and minors together should be accessible (unlocked doors) and have open visibility (a window in the door or the door left wide open).
- 4.4. Compensated church staff or their designees shall make unannounced visits to all scheduled classes or small group situations involving children, youth, teachers and workers.
- 4.5. Parents or legal guardians are welcome to observe any activity involving their child.
- 4.6. FBCZ teachers and workers will not search children.
- 4.7. Physical force will not be used except in self-defense or when deemed necessary to prevent possible injury. Teachers and workers will work in teams in all significant discipline problems.
- 4.8. All planned **overnight** children’s and youth activities away from church property will require a signed permission statement from parents or guardians.
- 4.9. All teachers or workers for any overnight church activity involving minors must go through the screening process and be approved in advance by the FBCZ staff responsible for that program. Any exception to this rule must be an absolute emergency (i.e. the presence of the non-screened worker is necessary to provide the required worker/youth ratio) and the non-screened worker must be approved by the Pastor or one of the ministerial staff. This approval shall be based upon the individual’s responses on the standard screening form and the ministerial staff workers’ personal knowledge of the individual.
- 4.10. The parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring that the child is not left alone in an unsupervised area. Pick up of children up to and including kindergarten shall only be by the parent or guardian unless written, signed notification is provided for other arrangements.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING INCIDENTS OF ABUSE INVOLVING MINORS

- 5.1. Incidents of abuse that occur or are reasonably believed to have occurred at

- 5.2. Reports to local authorities can be made in person, by telephone, or otherwise. Reports from persons requesting to remain anonymous shall be made by telephone in the presence of a witness of the reporter's own choosing to verify the filing of the oral report. Such a witness may include the FBCZ staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry involved.
- 5.3. Organizations that use FBCZ facilities that have reporting procedures of their own shall follow those established reporting practices. In addition to following their notification procedures, however, any outside organization that uses FBCZ facilities shall also notify the FBCZ senior pastor or his designee as soon as possible about any such incident involving any person affiliated with that organization using FBCZ facilities.
- 5.4. The identity of any person making such a report will, pursuant to Louisiana law, be kept confidential by the agency or department receiving the report, except as provided by law. Such exceptions would include the DSS providing such information to the law enforcement agency investigating the report.
- 5.5. FBCZ will follow and comply with Louisiana law concerning reporting of abuse.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO QUESTIONABLE CONDUCT INVOLVING MINORS

- 6.1. All members of FBCZ, staff and other adults participating in programs on the property of FBCZ are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children and youth. They shall be encouraged not to hesitate to caution others that conduct they observe is, or may appear to be, questionable.
- 6.2. *Questionable conduct* when observed shall be reported to the FBCZ staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry involved, as such conduct can *precede* abuse, even though the observed act itself is not abusive.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING MINORS

- 7.1. Facts and circumstances of an incident shall be documented. Concurrently with DSS notification (refer to "Reporting Procedures"), the FBCZ staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry involved or the senior pastor shall be notified of the incident of abuse. In the event the person making the report wishes to remain anonymous or otherwise prefers not to document the report, the FBCZ staff person or senior pastor notified of the incident shall document the report.
- 7.2. The senior pastor or designee shall be responsible for securing the safety of the

- 7.3. In the event any in-depth investigation becomes necessary, it shall be carried out by DSS and/or appropriate law enforcement personnel and not by church personnel.
- 7.4. Any person accused of child abuse shall be immediately relieved of further responsibilities involving direct contact with minors until all investigations are completed and the allegations are cleared, or formal criminal charges are brought against the accused. Any person formally charged with criminal act(s) of child abuse by the office of the District Attorney for East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, shall be subject to immediate termination from employment at FBCZ.
- 7.5. The senior pastor or his designee shall report incidents of alleged abuse to legal counsel for the church and the liability insurer for the church.
- 7.6. The senior pastor or his designee shall document all steps taken in the course of handling the incident or report. The documentation shall be kept in a confidential file maintained by FBCZ.
- 7.7. All parties involved in an alleged incident, including the accuser, the accused, and the victim, shall be treated with dignity, support, and love. Confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded to the fullest extent possible.
- 7.8. The senior pastor shall be the sole spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned. However, where appropriate, the senior pastor and the personnel committee may designate another individual to act in such a capacity with regard to a given case. The confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded to the fullest extent possible.