

Child/Youth Safety & Protection Policy
First Baptist Church, Athens, GA

I. Purpose

A. Context

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. When a family stands before us at child dedications, we voice our commitment to partner with them in the raising of their child. 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.

B. What the policy addresses

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.

II. Definitions

A. Preschool/Children/Youth/Minor

Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law is classified as a minor. Three age groupings in this age range are referred to in this document. These are: Preschool (birth-Pre-K), Children (K-6), and Youth (grades 7 – 12).

B. Adult

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

C. Paid Employee

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

D. Non-member Contracted

Individuals who are contracted by First Baptist to lead in retreats or other church sponsored functions, and, that may potentially have one-on-one involvement with preschool, children and/or youth.

E. Volunteer/Chaperone

Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults. This also includes those who are ongoing program leaders/chaperones, overnight volunteers, volunteer nursery workers, or overnight trip chaperones.

F. Sexual Abuse

The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, 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.

G. Emotional Abuse

Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law directed at or to a minor or in the presence of a minor.

III. Worker Selection/Screening

Selection of volunteer workers and paid personnel will be carried out according to the following procedures. The table below provides a ready reference for the detailed information.

Position	Six Month Rule	Application	References	Interview	Background Check
Paid Staff		X	X	X	X
Contracted Paid Nursery Workers		X	X	X	X
Non-Member Contracted Program Leaders (Overnight & Potential one-on-one involvement with minors)					X (Documentation from their organization will be accepted)

Program Volunteer Leadership	X	X		X	X
Overnight Volunteers	X	X		X	X
Volunteer Nursery Workers (both congregation members and non-congregation members**)	X	X		X	X
Overnight Trip Chaperones	X	X		X	X

**Non-congregation member nursery volunteers providing single event childcare are approved to volunteer upon receipt of a background check from his/her congregation.

A. Paid Employees

1. Written Application

All paid employees are to complete and sign a written application and the related waivers giving permission for background checks, unless specified otherwise in the First Baptist Church Personnel Policies.

2. References

All applicants for paid employment are to provide references as specified on the application form. (Exceptions may apply to paid ministerial staff. The personnel committee and/or personnel policies are to be followed in these instances). The designated ministry leader will check and document no fewer than two of the references listed on the application.

3. Interviews

A designated ministry leader will conduct an interview with the applicant.

B. Volunteer Leadership

Volunteer leadership includes those who teach, chaperone, supervise, and/or have direct contact with our children and youth, in on-going programs, overnight events on-site, daytime and overnight trips, and nursery volunteer workers.

1. Six Month Rule

All volunteer workers must be a regular attendee or member of First Baptist Church for at least six months. This time of interaction between our leadership and applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children and youth.

2. Application Form

All volunteers are to complete and sign a written application and the related waivers giving permission for background checks.

3. Interviews

A designated ministry leader and/or program leader will conduct an interview with the volunteer applicant.

C. Paid and Volunteer Leadership

1. Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check will be required for all paid staff, ongoing program leaders/chaperones, overnight volunteers, volunteer nursery workers, or overnight trip chaperones. A criminal background check will also be required for non-member program leaders who will attend overnight trips or will have potential one-on-one time with children or youth. 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 maintained in confidence. All background check results and any reasons for denial because of these results will be treated confidentially. This information will not be shared with the applicant or any other unauthorized person unless the church is required to do so by law.

2. Disqualification for Leadership

Ministry leaders will determine on a case by case basis in light of the circumstances, whether an individual would be kept from supervisory interaction with our children and youth. Generally, any of the following offenses would warrant disqualification:

- a. Offenses against humanity
- b. Sexual, emotional, physical, and/or neglectful offenses against or in the presence of minors
- c. Sexual offense of any nature
- d. Violent crimes

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. Training

All positions, paid and volunteer, involving the teaching, leading, or care of our preschoolers, children, and youth should have job/position descriptions with clearly written expectations. These expectations include participation in training organized by the church leadership. An initial training and annual review with our child protection policy is required.

A copy of the child protection policies and procedures will be provided for each volunteer and paid staff member. Each individual is required to sign a form stating receipt and review of the policy and materials. (moved from below)

A. Initial Training

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

The training session will include explanation and discussion of:

- a. Review of Child/Youth Safety & Protection Policy
- b. Behaviors which signal problems of child abuse
- c. Guidelines for the prevention of child abuse or injury to minors
- d. Procedures for reporting alleged child abuse
- e. Procedures for responding to alleged abuse

B. Annual Review

An annual child protection policy review will be held for all paid and volunteer personnel. Anyone unable to attend the review, or recruited for service between review sessions will be given a written manual including training information and the review of Child/Youth Safety & Protection Policy. A signed form stating receipt and review of the policy and materials will be required.

V. Operational/Participation Policies

A. Two Adult Rule

A minimum of two adults (one of which has been screened) will be present at all times for any scheduled church event. The two adults present will not be related (i.e. married, siblings, etc.). No child or youth shall be alone with one adult AT ANY TIME except in counseling situations. In the case of counseling, the session should take place where other people are nearby.

B. Adult/Child Ratios

- a. Babies—Kindergarten 1:3
- b. Babies—Twos 1:3
- c. Threes—Kindergarten 1:4
- d. Babies 1:2
- e. Ones-Twos 1:3

- f. Threes-Pre-K 1:4
- g. Kindergarten 1:5
- h. Elementary-Age Children 1:6
- i. Middle-High School 1:10

C. Ages of Leadership

Those adults (included in the above ratio(s)) working with preschoolers, children, and youth will be at least 18 years of age. It is preferable for those who work as teachers on a regular basis with ages 12-18 be at least 5 years older than the youth they work with.

D. Off-Site Events

1. Transportation:

An event officially begins at check-in for the event. All transportation to the location following the start of registration must be approved by the supervising ministry leader. Official transportation should be as follows:

- a. If personal vehicles must be used, drivers should have personal insurance and be the driver of those vehicles.
- b. No 15-passenger vans that do not have rear double axels can be used for transporting children, youth or college students.
- c. Drivers must be 25 years or older to transport children or youth. Documentation of parental/guardian permission is required for students (aged 16-18) to drive themselves from the church to/from an off-site activity and/or transport additional students to/from church events. For situations that fall outside of these parameters, parental/guardian permission is required. All drivers must have a copy of their driver's license on file at the office prior to driving. Drivers should sign the volunteer driver form, submit permission for a DMV check, and also have gone through volunteer training (see p. 5) prior to transporting children or youth.

2. Accommodations:

In the event that an overnight trip requires hotel style accommodations, sleeping arrangements should be worked out so that the following guidelines are kept:

- a. All adults and minors sharing a room will be of the same sex.
- b. An adult may not share a bed with an unrelated minor.
- c. 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.
- d. The above rules do not apply if all adults and minors sharing a room are related.

E. Counseling and/or Meeting with Students

Counseling or meeting with a youth “to talk” is important in relationship building. As volunteers, we are not necessarily ‘trained counselors’, however, we may lend a caring shoulder to cry on or an open ear for listening. If you find yourself in a situation where a youth wants to “meet with you to talk”, here are some guidelines to consider:

1. If meeting off of church property, be sure that parents of those students under 18 are aware of the meeting.
2. Meet in public places like coffee houses, restaurants, etc.
3. When meeting in the church, try to meet in non-isolated areas and leave the door cracked open if there is not a window in the room that is open to other areas of the building.

F. General Guidelines for Parents, Children, and Youth

1. All children through the fifth grade are to be escorted to and from group activities/classes by an authorized parent or adult. Siblings should not drop-off or pick-up children. Should an adult other than a parent need to pick up a child, parents must communicate designated responsible party to the paid worker/volunteer.
2. Children and/or Youth should be dropped off only where there is adult supervision. In the event that child/youth arrives prior to adult supervision, parents/guardians should wait with child/youth until paid worker/ministerial staff/volunteer arrive.
3. Children and Youth must stay in a supervised area. They should not travel or play throughout the church building or property (including church playground) without supervision or special permission from the event leader and/or parent.
4. Children must complete a permission form in order to participate (without parents) in certain off campus activities. For youth events requiring a permission form or medical release/information form, the form must be signed by parent/guardian and submitted in order for the youth to participate in said event(s). A medical treatment consent form is required for out of town events for children and youth. All designated forms must be signed by parent/guardian.
5. Any prescribed medications to be given during an on campus activity must be administered by the parent. Permission forms for prescribed medications to be taken during off campus/overnight activities must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge. The group will be accessible to parents by way of phone.

H. Behavior Covenant Expectations for Children and Youth

1. All children/youth participating in events are expected to sign a behavior covenant, specifically for off-site/overnight events as designated by ministerial staff. All parents are expected to sign this covenant at the time of check-in or prior to the event.

2. Covenant does include clean-up procedures for events. It is important for children and youth to maintain the cleanliness of the areas they use.
3. If there is a break in covenant that involves illegal substances including, but not limited to, alcohol, drugs, or weapons of any sort, or if a child/youth violates the rights and space of another child/youth to the irresolvable extent, then the child/youth will be sent home at the parent's expense. At events (both on and off-campus) the event leader reserves the right to send a student home in the event of a covenant break that endangers one or more students.
4. All other actions resulting in a broken covenant will be addressed by the ministry leaders as needed and as they see fit.

VI. Safety Guidelines and Procedures

The following guidelines and procedures are to be followed in accordance with policies created by the FBC Security Team.

A. Facility and Equipment

1. Youth

- a. Doors will be locked at any youth event when the students are the only activity occurring in the building.
- b. No youth will be outside of the building during a youth event unaccompanied by an adult.
- c. All equipment used by youth will be in good repair, age appropriate, and safe. Broken equipment will be removed and replaced in a timely fashion.
- d. Hallways, rooms, and stairwells will be clean and clutter-free. If materials/equipment is not needed, it should be put in cabinets or removed from the room to a supply area.
- e. There will be an accessible and functioning telephone available with emergency numbers clearly posted.
- f. Cleaning supplies and unsafe sharp objects will be stored in a location inaccessible to youth.

2. Children

- a. Doors will be locked at any children's event when the children are the only activity occurring in the building.
- b. No child/children will be outside of the building during a youth event unaccompanied by an adult.
- c. All equipment used by children will be in good repair, age appropriate, and safe. Broken equipment will be removed and replaced in a timely fashion.
- d. Hallways, rooms, and stairwells will be clean and clutter-free. If materials/equipment is not needed, it should be put in cabinets or removed from the room to a supply area.
- e. There will be an accessible and functioning telephone available with emergency numbers clearly posted.

- f. Cleaning supplies and unsafe sharp objects will be stored in a location inaccessible to children.

3. Preschool (reference preschool handbook)

B. Security: For additional security information/protocol, refer to Security Team Policies.

C. Food and Medication

1. Youth and Children

- a. Records of food allergies for youth and children will be maintained and consulted. Leaders will be trained to respond to accidental ingestion of allergens.
- b. Food served to children and youth will be obtained only from food handling establishments that have health department permits/inspections.
- c. Once foods or snacks have been opened, all leftovers will be discarded or transferred to clean storage containers.
- d. If youth or children must receive medication while at church, it must be administered by a parent/guardian. Permission forms for prescribed medications to be taken during off campus/overnight activities must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge. Medication will be given in the exact dosage and should come from the original, labeled container (which includes printed instructions).
- e. Epinephrine (epi) pens prescribed for anaphylactic shock may be kept in a location readily accessible to caregivers (inaccessible to children and youth). Should an epi pen need to be kept on campus, ministry leaders/caregivers must be trained in the administration of the epi pen. Written permission from parent/guardian is also required in this case.

2. Preschool (reference preschool handbook)

D. First Aid and Incident Reporting

1. First Aid Kits should contain the following items:

- a. Disposable gloves approved for medical use
- b. Scissors
- c. Tweezers
- d. Thermometer
- e. Bandage tape
- f. Sterile gauze pads
- g. Roll of gauze
- h. Triangular bandages
- i. Bandaids
- j. Antibacterial Ointment

- k. Safety pins
- l. Eye irrigation saline solution
- m. Eye dressing
- n. Pen/pencil and note pad
- o. Syrup of ipecac
- p. Emergency phone numbers (including Poison Control Center)
- q. Cold pack
- r. Infant/child choking and CPR guide
- s. Antiseptic
- t. Red washcloth
- u. Hand sanitizer

E. Emergency Action Plans

1. Building diagrams with emergency evacuation procedures and routes will be posted throughout the church as required by fire marshall. These diagrams should include location of fire extinguishers and AEDs.
2. Fire extinguishers will be inspected routinely by facility manager.
3. Designated meeting place in the event of an evacuation will be the Interfaith Day Center house. Parents should be made aware of this location.
4. At children and youth events, there will be at least one leader present who is trained in CPR, security, emergency procedures, AED, and First Aid. This person should be aware of the church's evacuation procedures and the locations of fire extinguishers and AEDs.
5. First Aid supplies will be kept in children's area, youth area, preschool area, staff break room and Fellowship hall. First Aid supplies will be checked to ensure sufficient quantities and adherence to expiration dates one time per year.

VII. 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 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.
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. The insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

B. When a report is made of alleged abuse

1. Reporting Procedures

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, shall act in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. Secure the safety of the child if possible.
- b. Make an oral report immediately to a paid Ministry Leader (i.e. Senior, Educational, Music, Youth, or Children's Minister).
- c. Document any information in writing as soon as immediately practicable, which written report shall be signed dated, and forwarded to the Senior Minister and Chair of the Response Team.
- d. If the Senior Minister is the accused party, notify a paid Ministry Leader and the Chair of the Response Team.
- e. Notify the parents unless safety concerns for the child dictate otherwise.
- f. Notify the church Insurance Carrier.

2. Reporting of abusive behavior between adults in the presence of minors

3. Response Team's procedures

Upon being notified of any allegations of child abuse, the Senior Minister or Chair of the Response Team shall convene a meeting of the Response Team. The Team shall consist of the following members, provided none of the team members are part of the accused party:

- a. Chair of the Response Team
- b. Ministerial Staff
- c. Chair of the Deacons
- d. Youth Ministry Team Chair
- e. Children's Ministry Team Chair

Team Will:

- a. If alleged abuse is defined by law, immediately from the time of the initial report, the team makes an oral report to DFACs and shall follow with a report in writing.
- b. If possible, the reporter, who made the report of abuse, shall be present when the report is made to DFACs.
- c. In the absence of DFACs, the reports shall be made to the appropriate police agency or district attorney.
- d. After initial report, team will coordinate with DFACs or appropriate police authority or both.
- e. Prepare any statements regarding the allegation. Such statements may be released to the media, the congregation, or other appropriate parties.
- f. Determine the impact of the allegation and develop a plan of ministry to the victim, the accused, their families, and the congregation.
- g. 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, required by law.
- h. Spokesperson will be selected by the Response Team. No other members of the Team or the congregation should make public statements.
- i. Balance the needs to protect the parties involved in the allegation while fulfilling reporting obligations.

C. Persons who observe questionable activities or suspicious behavior

Any person who observes or has reasonable suspicions of inappropriate activity should follow these steps:

1. Write brief notes to document specifically what you have observed.
2. Contact the paid Ministry Leader as soon as possible. In a private conversation, the paid Ministry Leader can help evaluate any suspicions.
3. The paid Ministry Leader will document the report in a confidential file and will respond appropriately. Possible responses can range from reminding the worker about following policies to reporting the incident to law enforcement.