

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH – WILMINGTON, NC
 CHILDREN & YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY
 Compiled By: Child/Youth Protection Policy Lead Team

I. GENERAL PURPOSE:

First Baptist Church of Wilmington, NC (FBC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth (birth to age 18) who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children and youth of FBC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

II. WORKER SELECTION/SCREENING POLICY

FBC will use the following policies to select and screen those who desire to work with our children and youth. We recognize that different volunteer and paid positions require different levels of involvement with our children and thus are screened accordingly. **An overnight volunteer is defined as an individual who is participating in an activity in order to assist paid staff in the supervision of minors during the activity. An overnight participant is an individual who is at least 18 years of age and who is participating in the activity for themselves without providing assistance to paid staff in the supervision of minors.** The grid below indicates the policies that each group of workers are subject to:

POSITION	Six Month	Application	Reference	Interview	Background Check
All Paid Staff (Includes: Interns & Pre-school Staff)		X	X	X	X
Non-Member Program Leaders (Overnight & Potential One-On-One Involvement W/ Children Only)					X (Documentation from their organization will be accepted.)
Program Volunteer Leadership	X	X		X	X
Overnight Volunteers	X	X		X	X
Overnight Participant					X
Volunteer Nursery Workers*	X				

*Volunteer Nursery Workers for Church-Wide Events and Services are excluded from applications and background checks. FBC operational policies and the presence of Paid Screened Nursery Workers provides equivalent protection.

Six Month Rule

All volunteer workers must be a regular attendee or member of FBC 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.

Written Application

All paid staff, program volunteers, and anyone going on an overnight trip must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check background information (and references in the case of paid staff.)

References

For all FBC staff and paid positions, a designated Ministry Leader will check and document at least two references on the application. References will be checked by the Ministry or Program Leader in which the applicant will work. For example:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Ministry Leader Checking References</u>
Paid Nursery Workers	Director Of Children's Ministry or Designee
Children Intern	Director of Children's Ministry
Youth Interns/Associates	Youth Minister
Pre-school Workers	Director Of Preschool
All Other Paid Staff	Senior Pastor, Min. Of Administration, Chairman of Personnel Committee or Designee

Interviews

A Designated Ministry Leader will conduct an interview with applicants for paid staff, program volunteers, and anyone going on an overnight trip to discuss their suitability for working with youth or children. Interviews will be conducted by the Ministry or Program Leader in which the applicant will work. (See above, "References")

Criminal Background Checks

A criminal background check will be required for all paid staff, program volunteers, and those going on overnight trips. 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. (A non-member program leader may provide documentation from their organization indicating that their own policies have met the minimum standard established by FBC, in lieu of a criminal background check.)

Before a 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. It is FBC-Wilmington's policy that all background check results and any reasons for denial resulting from these results are confidential. This information will not be shared with the applicant or any other unauthorized persons unless the church is required to do so by law.

Disqualifying Offense

Ministry Leaders will determine on a case by case basis in light of the circumstances, whether an individual should be kept from supervisory interaction with our children and youth. Generally, any of the following offenses is a disqualifying offense:

- 1) Offenses against humanity.
- 2) Sexual, Abusive, Or Neglect Offenses against minors.
- 3) Sexual Offense of any nature.
- 4) 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.

III. OPERATIONAL POLICIES

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. 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.

In the event where there are not two adults in a classroom, a roving superintendent or monitor will be present during the meeting or teaching time.

In the event that an overnight trip requires hotel style accommodations, sleeping arrangements should be worked out so that following guidelines are 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 adult may not share a room with one unrelated minor but may share the room with two or more unrelated minors.
- 4) The above rules do not apply if all adults and minors sharing a room are related.

Preschool/Nursery Policies

The following policies are in place to protect our infants and preschoolers:

- 1) Two Adult Rule (See Above)
- 2) The top portion of ½ doors will remain open for those preschool rooms that are equipped with this style of door..
- 3) Roving Deacon Security and/or a Nursery Host are scheduled during Sunday morning worship services.

ONGOING SUPERVISION OF THE POLICY

Waiver of Policy

The Children/Youth Protection Policy may be waived for exceptional circumstances. Our goal is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in Youth and Children's Ministry. The waiver of this policy must be authorized by at least two of the following:

1. Senior Pastor
2. Associate Pastor
3. Music Minister
4. Minister of Spiritual Formation
5. Director Of Children's Ministry
6. Minister of Youth
7. Minister of Administration
8. Other Ministerial Staff

Any approved waiver must be properly documented and filed in the Children & Youth Protection Policy Notebook.

Annual Review

The Children/Youth Protection Policy will be reviewed annually by the Church Safety Protection Team. The annual review will seek to identify needed policy changes, patterns of violation, compliance with existing policy, and new safety risk factors. If a violation of policy occurs, the ministry leader will submit a brief written summary of the policy violation and his/her response to the violation. The summary will be filed in the Children and Youth Protection Policy Notebook. These reports would be reviewed during the annual review by the Church Safety Protection Team.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ABUSE

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

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 for people's privacy and confidentiality.

3. The church must cooperate with law enforcement and social services.
4. The alleged victim should not be blamed.
5. The church will seek to provide Christian support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families.
6. The insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

When a Report is Made of an Alleged Abuse

The person hearing the initial report should follow these steps:

1. Contact the Senior Pastor/Minister or Minister of Administration and either Minister to Youth or Director of Children's Ministry immediately.
2. If the suspected abuse involves a paid staff member, then the Chairman of the Personnel Committee along with the Senior Pastor/Minister, Minister of Administration, Minister to Youth OR Director of Children's Ministry must also be contacted. The Senior Pastor/Minister along with the Minister of Administration will help decide on the next step that may include consulting with legal counsel and making the report to law enforcement if appropriate.
3. If the Senior Pastor is being accused, the person receiving the initial report will contact a non-accused Senior Minister, the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Chair of the Trustees.
4. If the safety of the minor is at issue, the worker must use his or her own judgment to decide the best way to proceed. Youth and Children's workers may contact law enforcement or the Department of Social Services directly if timing is critical and paid Ministry Leaders are unavailable for consultation.

New Hanover County Department of Social Services

- During normal business hours at 798-3420.
- After hours, on weekends and holidays, call 911

Local law enforcement

- 911

Persons Who Observe Questionable Activities or Suspicious Behavior

Any person who observes or who 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.