



Safe Child and Safe Church Policy
For Ministry with Children,
Youth or Other Vulnerable Populations

The First Baptist Church of Westfield affirms the biblical witness that children are a blessing from God and that all people whether children or adults, deserve the same compassionate regard we afford to ourselves. As followers of Jesus Christ we remember how Jesus rebuked those who hinder or exclude children from his presence, and welcomed children as the hope and expression of the reign of God. We further acknowledge Christ's compassionate and gentle treatment of all vulnerable persons who sought his blessing.

The First Baptist Church affirms the legal responsibility set forth in New Jersey statutes that obligate any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse to report immediately the suspected abuse to the Division of Youth and Family Services child abuse hotline (1-877-NJ ABUSE or 1-877-652-2873) or Adult Protective Services (Union County 908-497-3902 or 1-800-792-8820).

As a matter of faith, conviction and legal mandate, therefore, the First Baptist Church of Westfield (FBC) undertakes to safeguard the right and freedom of children, youth and other vulnerable persons to come into the presence of the Lord through the ministries of this church without fear and with confidence in the promise of Christ-like care.

FBC supports a no-tolerance policy regarding abuse against any human being. We are especially committed to creating a compassionate environment to safeguard the total well-being of children, youth and vulnerable populations.

The following guidelines are to be in place in any gathering of this church in order to uphold a no-tolerance policy regarding abuse against any human being especially children, youth and vulnerable population. FBC therefore expects any organization or group that uses the facilities of the church to abide by the Safe Child and Safe Church Guidelines set in this policy.

Recommended Guidelines

1. The Christian Education Committee is designated to administer the Safe Child and Safe Church policy for First Baptist Church of Westfield. A committee member will be designated for new teacher orientation/leader orientation.

All staff **and** volunteers who will work in any capacity with children, youth and vulnerable populations will be properly screened and pass all investigative steps as follows.

- a. A criminal records search will be performed. Paid staff and volunteers will *sign a release form that states they have given permission for the criminal records search to be performed*. This form should be completed by all paid staff and volunteers working with vulnerable populations. This form includes the following personal information: name, address, phone number, social security number, driver's license number, education and employment history.
 - b. Personal interviews will be conducted with **all** volunteers or paid staff.
 - c. Any person considered for a leadership position related to children, youth and vulnerable populations will have been involved in the life of the church for a minimum of six (6) months.
2. Adequate training and ongoing supervision will be provided before any paid staff or volunteer assumes his or her responsibilities, and throughout his or her tenure. This training includes:
- a. Understanding the nature of child abuse and the methods of abuse prevention.
 - b. Understanding our policies and how to carry them out.
 - c. Understanding our/their responsibilities regarding child abuse reporting.
 - d. Understanding behavioral parameters such as appropriate physical contact and relationships.
3. The church will maintain a complete file on each staff/volunteer which includes all the information collected during the screening process, information on all training received, and any other documents produced or received during the person's tenure.
4. A minimum of two (2) adults should be present in any room within the church facility when children, youth and vulnerable populations are present or in a vehicle, except in the event of an emergency. A minimum of two unrelated adults must be present in any room for all church sponsored gatherings off church premises and for any overnight activity in or outside of the church facility.
5. Doors should have clear glass windows or should be left open to ensure an easy view of activity.
6. Chaperones shall be at least five years older than the oldest minor (for example, a chaperone for a group whose oldest minor is 17, must be at least 22).
7. Supervisory people should be in place to oversee all programs and activities where children, youth and vulnerable populations are involved.
8. Emergency information and permission/release forms should be provided by the parents or guardians of all children, youth and vulnerable individuals.
9. Sign-in and out forms should be used for nursery, VBS and all other "drop-off" children's activities. For all "drop-off" circumstances, a parent or legal guardian will be required to provide a list of all individuals authorized to drop-off/pickup their child.

10. Following is the policy regarding activities that take place off site. This policy includes the following:
- a. One responsible adult will be appointed to take the lead in an emergency.
 - b. Two unrelated adults must be present in any room for all church sponsored gatherings off church premises
 - c. Specific guidelines regarding transportation.
 - I. Each driver must be an approved adult volunteer. Each driver must be 25 and over. Have a valid driver's license. Have a current auto insurance policy.
 - II. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears seat belts at all times.
 - III. Adheres to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.
 - d. Permission forms for each individual participating in the off-site activity.
 - e. At least one adult trained in first aid and CPR and a well-stocked first aid kit available.
 - f. Have a cell phone and emergency contact numbers available at all times.
11. Parents or guardians of children, youth or vulnerable persons shall have the right to observe, announced or unannounced, any church sponsored activity.
12. When the need for a report of abuse or neglect arises, a set procedure will be followed that states when, how and who makes the report.
- 1. The person suspecting any form of abuse or neglect needs to immediately contact the Senior Minister advising of the situation and that the person will call DYFS/APS to make the report.*
 - 2. The person will then call DYFS (1-877-652-2873) or APS (1-800-792-8820) to make the report.*
 - 3. The Senior Minister, or a staff person appointed in absence of the senior minister, will also call DYFS/APS to report the same incident.*
13. A person suspected of any form of abuse or neglect will be suspended by FBC from continuing their position with children, youth and vulnerable persons.

Approved by the Christian Education Committee on April 25, 2012

Approved by the Council on May 21, 2012

Congregational approval on June 10, 2012

Amended by the Christian Education Committee on June 20, 2012 per the Congregational approval

Approved by the Christian Education Committee on August 14, 2012