

SafeWATCH

Child Abuse Prevention Policy
for
First Baptist Church, Inc.
Statesboro, Georgia

Purpose: It is the purpose and intent of First Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and youth of our faith family.

Goal: Our goal is to protect children and youth from abuse, molestation or any type of inappropriate behavior by employees or volunteers and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

1. **Child abuse** is commonly defined as physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker (by other than accidental means) neglect or exploitation of a child, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child. Child abuse may occur in the home by a caretaker, in a childcare situation, in an organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child.
2. **Sexual abuse** can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.
3. For the purposes of this document a **minor** is any individual under the age of 18 years.

Identifying Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Abuse/Neglect:

These indicators are not exhaustive and do not verify actual abuse; however, when observed, these indicators may warrant further investigation. If these indicators are present, then appropriate reports must be made.

- Wary of others
- Clingy (clinging) to others
- Uncomfortable with emotions (crying)
- Emotionally detached
- Extreme changes in behavior when not around parents
- Manipulative or controlling
- Poor self image

- Delinquent behavior
- Self mutilation
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Bruises, welts, burns, bite marks, bed wetting, fractures
- Reluctance to change clothes in front of others
- Questionable sexual behavior, knowledge beyond the particular development age
- Promiscuity
- Withdrawn, distant
- Self-conscious
- Obsessively clean
- Extreme compliance or defiance
- Anxious
- Fearful
- Pain or itching in genital area

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY: This policy applies to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in First Baptist Church facilities or church sponsored activities.

This policy addresses six (6) areas that are critical for the protection of all affected individuals and the church.

- Selection process
- Training
- Operating practices
- Reporting procedures
- Response to allegations
- Sexual Offenders

Administration of the SafeWATCH policy is handled through the office of the Church Administrator. The Church office keeps all records in a secured, confidential location.

I. SELECTION PROCESS

- A. **Employee** – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis.
All church employees will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate church staff person, have references checked, and give written permission for a criminal records check.
- B. **Volunteer** – anyone who is not paid by the church, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.
 1. All volunteers will be required to complete a confidential application form, may be interviewed by an appropriate church staff person, may have references checked, and must give written permission for a criminal records check.

2. In addition to the above requirement, a volunteer must be a member of First Baptist Church or regular attendee for at least (6) months. A volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon approval of the appropriate age-group minister.

- C. **Minors**-If a minor desires to be a volunteer worker with other minors, his or her parent or guardian must complete a confidential application form indicating that there are no known reasons why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.

II. TRAINING

A. Orientation

All employees and volunteers will be given appropriate policies that will familiarize them with established age group/ministry guidelines, definition of child abuse, identifying possible symptoms of child abuse, and the church's protection policies regarding safety, security, child discipline and reporting.

B. Annual Training

The church provides training to all employees and volunteers annually. Such training not only increases the awareness of child protection, but also demonstrates the church's commitment to ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable members.

III. OPERATING POLICIES

A. Supervision

Age-group ministers, division directors, hall monitors, greeters and/or program directors will be present, or nearby, and available on each floor and in the hallways where minors are present. A reasonable effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present in the room, or nearby, with children and youth during church activities. A reasonable effort will be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with one minor. A husband and wife working the same room will be considered as one adult for purposes of this policy.

B. View Windows/Open Doors

Children and youth will be placed in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.

C. Off Campus and Out-of-Town Activities

All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all of the SafeWATCH policies during First Baptist Church sponsored off campus activities. All participants should have written parental consent and a medical release form in order to participate in out-of-town activities. Medical release information may be completed for one-year periods and renewed annually. All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with First Baptist Church policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in SafeWATCH during First Baptist Church sponsored off campus activities.

D. Preschool Security Policies and Age-Specific Guidelines

In addition to the SafeWATCH policies First Baptist Church has a detailed, working preschool security policy which is available for view through the Children's Ministry. Similarly each of the other ministry areas may produce age-appropriate guidelines that apply to their children, youth and adult workers. All employees and volunteers should conscientiously follow all age-specific guidelines in the ministry area(s) where they serve. Questions about specific ministry area policies should be directed to that ministry office.

E. Weekday Programs

First Baptist Church Preschool will follow SafeWATCH policies.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Observed or reported child sexual abuse, child molestation, or any type of inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to a supervisory staff person. All reports should be referred to the appropriate age level minister.

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 staff members mentioned above to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family.

V. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

A. All allegations will be taken seriously. Church staff 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.

B. The official spokesperson for the church will be the Pastor or his appointee. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media regarding such matters.

C. The Church staff will thoroughly document all efforts in handling any incident.

D. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. First Baptist Church will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.

VI. SEXUAL OFFENDERS

A sex offender is someone who commits sexual offenses against another person, adult or child. Sexual offenses can include crimes such as rape, assault, or indecent exposure.

The church is unique in that, based on the uncompromising message of the Christian gospel, doors are open to all persons. The message of redemption and forgiveness preached by Christ is to be embodied by His church, and the congregation's response to sex offenders must properly balance a redemptive mission and a commitment to the safety and security of minors.

Sexual offending can be extremely addictive, and the offender's sex drive can be so strong that inappropriate behavior is not easily controlled. Even if the offender has undergone treatment, he or she should not be assumed to be safe. Because of the addictive nature of sexual offending, on-going monitoring is essential and a careful assessment must be made as to whether First Baptist Church can safely and adequately work with the person or allow his or her attendance. Therefore, behavioral boundaries need to be enacted, which will not only protect the children and youth who attend church activities but should also help the offender feel secure and less at risk of false accusations.

The following guidelines constitute the procedures to be followed by any sexual offender attending FBC Statesboro:

- A sexual offender will not be allowed to attend FBC Statesboro unless he or she is accompanied by a church-approved personal attendant. At no time and for no reason shall a sexual offender be allowed in any building, structure, or facility owned or operated by FBC Statesboro without an approved attendant.
- At least one approved attendant must be present and act as an escort for the sexual offender at all times, including worship services, Sunday School or small group gatherings, as well as in elevators, hallways, stairwells, and restrooms.
- The sexual offender is not allowed under any circumstances to enter the Children's Building (all floors of KidzPlace), or to be present on the third floor of the D Building, church playground, or any areas designated for minors.
- The sexual offender will not be allowed to attend, assist, or participate in any church activity, even with an attendant, which is intended primarily for an audience of minors (i.e. Vacation Bible School, Fall Festival, Snow Night, etc.)

Any known sexual offender will be required to meet with the Pastor and/or appropriate age-level ministers to discuss the conditions of his or her attendance. If deemed appropriate, the offender will be offered the opportunity to enter into a

Limited Access Covenant with FBC Statesboro, based upon the conditions listed above. Upon mutual agreement, the covenant will be signed by all parties involved and kept in a secured, confidential location.

FBC Statesboro maintains the right to end a Limited Access Covenant at any time for any reason, and the establishment of this Covenant in no way relinquishes the Church's right to exclude the offender from being present on any church-owned property at any time.