

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - FOREST CITY, IA

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (updated 6/2023)

Staff and Volunteer Expectations

All children's ministry staff and volunteers share a profound responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children.
- Recognize and remember the high calling we all share as children's ministry workers - the God given charge to love, protect, and shepherd children under our care.

Child Protection Overview

Our first concern is that children be safe while they are in our care. In order to accomplish this, we will:

- Screen all children's ministry adult volunteers.
- Perform background checks on all paid church staff, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.
- Require training for all children's ministry staff and volunteers.
- Use parent authentication identification system.
- Employ scheduling procedures and volunteer / child ratios that optimize safety.
- Utilize child care hosts and safety and security team members to maintain safety in the building.
- Educate our staff and volunteers to be aware of common behavioral patterns of sexual abusers, recognize suspected child abuse, require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting laws, and encourage them to report suspected abuse to church officials.
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry.
- Adhere to a two-volunteer room policy whenever possible.
- Equip our volunteers to know how to evacuate children safely in case of an emergency.



Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The child protection policy for First Baptist Church, in Forest City Iowa applies to all First Baptist Church volunteers and staff working with children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults in church related programs and activities.

Personnel Summary

Adult volunteers are individuals eighteen years or older who have successfully completed the screening procedure and childcare training.

Minor volunteers are individuals under eighteen years of age who have successfully completed the screening procedure (minus the background check) and childcare training.

Staff are the paid employees of the church. All paid church staff are required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.

Caregivers are both adult volunteers and minor volunteers.

Ministry Leaders are either paid staff or volunteers who oversee the leadership of a specific ministry within the church. (Kids on the Hill Coordinator, Youth Pastor, Children's Ministry Program Director, VBS director, etc)

Pastor/Elders are elected officers of the church who serve the church by providing teaching, shepherding, and leadership to the congregation as a whole. They must go through both the children's ministry training and screening procedures if they are to serve in children's ministry.

Protecting Children Before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before church programming begins. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through the screening process and complete the childcare training process.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, FBC has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers to work with our children (birth - high school).

- All volunteers must be regular attenders of FBC in good standing for at least six months. Exceptions to this rule will only be made when at least two references are checked that have knowledge of the volunteer's work with children in the recent past.
- Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years of age or older.
- Minor volunteers must be at least 12 years of age, and must always be in addition to adult volunteers.
- Personal interviews must be conducted by the ministry leader or their designated representative. An interview guide is available and should be used, especially in interviewing interested volunteers who are not well known to the ministry leader.
- All volunteers must have completed FBC's Child Protection Training.
- All volunteers must have completed the volunteer application and have been recommended by or in consultation with the ministry leader responsible for that specific aspect of children or youth ministry.
- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning service as a volunteer if the individual is not well known by the ministry leader(s).
- Criminal record background checks must be completed on all adult volunteers and paid staff. A modified background check can be requested for a minor volunteer over the age of 16 if deemed appropriate by the ministry leader.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- All volunteers must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks every five years.
- Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

FBC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any volunteer, helper, deacon, staff or elder (or any FBC member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant must report that knowledge to the ministry leader and/or the pastor or staff member who oversees children's ministry. He or she must also be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities.

Training

All children's ministry staff and volunteers must attend FBC's childcare training before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing volunteers to update them on policies and procedures. Full-time staff who do not have direct contact with children will receive training on child protection policies. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions.

Arrival and Departure Times For Volunteers

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will ask the Kids on the Hill host or other appropriate ministry leader to locate the parents.

Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child in to the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that FBC event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Kids on the Hill Food and Drink Policy" section below.

In order to protect the children in our care, we require all families with children participating in FBC children's or youth programming to abide by the following check in and check out policies:

- Sunday mornings: each child from birth through Kindergarten must be checked into and out of his/her class by a parent or guardian for Sunday morning programming. Children 1st grade and up do not need to be checked in or out for Sunday morning programming.
- Wednesday evenings:
 - The Huddle: Parent or guardians must be present to check in all children to The Huddle program (all ages). Check out by parents or guardians is required for all children in the program. Huddle participants must be picked up directly from their program rooms. Two exceptions to this rule:

1. If a regularly attending child brings a friend who is attending for the first time. In this case, the regularly attending child's parent or guardian is responsible to check in the friend and provide the child's parent or guardian contact information. If the friend attends again, they must have the required registration paperwork completely filled out by the parent or guardian.
2. A regularly attending child has been given permission by their parent or guardian to be checked in or checked out by another adult. This permission must be given in writing to the on the registration / consent form.
 - Middle School (6th -8th grade): Please see check with ministry leaders for appropriate check in procedures.
 - Other church events: Check-in and check-out procedures for other church events (VBS, special events, etc) will be indicated at the time of those events.

Ministry leaders and the Kids on the Hill host have the right to refuse any child at check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the room being closed because of the adult-child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children. A parent or designated guardian must be in the church building or be immediately available by cell phone at all times while their children are checked-in.

Parental Authentication Identification System

At check-in, the parent/guardian will receive a parent ID label with a specific identification code that corresponds to their child's label.

Upon checking the child in, the child will receive a label with a specific identification code that corresponds to their parent/guardian's label. The intent is for the identification code to be used to match the parent with child.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The children's ministry ADULT VOLUNTEER will bring the child to the door and remove the child's label before releasing the child to the parent. They will check the parent/guardian tag from the parent/guardian and match the identification code on the child's tag with the identification code on the parent/guardian's tag. If the parent/guardian does not have their tag:
 - Sunday morning: They must go to the Kids on the Hill host to confirm their status as the correct person to pick up their child. The Kids on the Hill host must confirm this with the adult volunteer before the child is released to their parent/guardian.

- Wednesday evening: They must confirm with the Huddle room leader their status as the correct person to pick up their child. If their parent/guardian is unknown to the room leader, the room leader must confirm their status with the Children's Ministry Program Director or staff member overseeing children's ministry.
2. The ADULT VOLUNTEER will dispose of child labels before children leave their room. The parent/guardian will keep their tag, and proceed to the check-in area where they will use the tag to check out using the computer/scanner system.

Only the parent/guardian, spouse of the parent/guardian, or a known family member over the age of 12 of the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of an elder, ministry leader, staff member of FBC, or known relative of the child.
2. A parent/guardian may make prior arrangements with the ministry leader or Kids on the Hill host to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.

Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the staff member responsible for children's ministry or the children's ministry leader. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the staff member responsible for children's ministry.

Protecting Children While They Are In Our Care

Two Adult Rule or Rule of Three

Supervision of any church program or activity shall abide by the Two Adult Rule (1) when possible or Rule of Three (2).

1. Two Adult Rule: At least two screened adults must be present at every function or program. This includes each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children and youth.
2. Rule of Three: At least three individuals (at least one must be a screened adult and at least one of the remaining two no younger than 10 years of age) must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Adult volunteers and staff members must never leave a child alone in a classroom by themselves or only in the presence of a minor volunteer.

Adult caregivers and staff members may take individual children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in case of illness, emergency, or evacuation.

One-on-one Meetings with Children

Staff or volunteers must not have private one-on-one meetings with children in 5th grade or under. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the staff and parents.

Church staff and volunteer workers must obtain consent of the minor child's (6th -12th grade) parent or guardian before meeting with the child in an unsupervised situation and must notify the ministry leader of such meetings in advance.

Child-to-Volunteer Ratios

In addition to following the Two Adult Rule or Rule of Three, the following ratios are to be maintained during Sunday morning and Wednesday evening programming:

- Infants (under 2 years old): 1:3 (1 must be an adult)
- Toddlers (2-3 years old): 1:4 (1 must be an adult)
- Pre-k (4-5 year olds): 1:8 (1 must be an adult)
- Children age 6-12: 1:12 (1 must be an adult)

Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio unless and until additional volunteers are added.

Visibility & Identification

All volunteers and children in Kids on the Hill and Huddle programs must wear the provided name tags at all times when serving or being cared for in any programmed class or activity. Personal items that belong to children (diaper bags, bottles, etc) must be labeled with the child's name before bringing them into the rooms.

Program hosts and security team members will be used to observe classrooms and activity areas through windows and open doors on a roving basis. When children's classes or programs are in sessions, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room. All occupied classrooms must have a door with an un-obstructed window or remain open.

Diaper Changing and Bathroom Policy

0 months through 3 years old

- Volunteers are to check to see if the diaper bag is available or if the name tag specifies whether to change diaper or to get the parent.
- If parents have indicated permission for volunteers to change diapers, only an adult should change a child's diaper, and only if another adult is present.
- Volunteers are to follow the protocol as designated in the infant room for changing diapers.
- Parents whose children are potty training or have been potty trained should let the volunteers know this information and what the volunteers can do assist with this learning process.
- Children that are in the infant or toddler room that are capable of using a bathroom should use the child-sized bathroom located in the toddler room. Adults should supervise the child outside the door, unless direct help is needed, in which another adult will observe from outside the door.

Pre K

- Children in the Pre K room that need physical assistance should use the child sized bathroom in the toddler room.
- Parents must let the volunteers know if their child needs assistance using the bathroom when they drop their child off.
- Children who are self sufficient should use the male and female bathrooms at the south end of the Kids on the Hill Hallway (across from the chapel sound room). The adult volunteer who accompanies them to the bathroom should wait for the child outside the bathroom.
- Volunteers should encourage the child to be as self-sufficient as possible.

Kindergarten and up

- It is assumed that all children kindergarten and above are self sufficient using the bathroom unless specifically notified by their parent/guardian. In such cases, the parent/guardian must give specific instructions that are to be followed if their child needs to use the bathroom during class time.

For any child who has had an accident and needs a change of clothes or pull-up, parents should be notified for assistance. A limited amount of clothes/diapers are available in the infant room under the diaper changing table if needed.

Healthy Child Policy

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and volunteers.
4. Toys and equipment should be washed and disinfected regularly.
5. FBC is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. Ministry leaders and staff have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the *Healthy Child Policy* guidelines.

A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea (Note: Children should be free of a fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to children's ministry.)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold - from onset of symptoms and one week thereafter
- Flu or COVID 19
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo

- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who appear ill or are injured during a class will be kept at the Kids on the Hill sign-in desk with a volunteer while the host locates the parents.

Discipline Policy

Goals and Methods for Guiding Preschoolers

Good discipline is not what we do to a child but what we do with and for him or her. We guide a child to help him or her grow toward self-control in knowing and doing what is good. We give loving guidance to establish a positive atmosphere for learning. Setting clear expectations and rules for the children is essential for kids to feel safe and secure.

Steps to take dealing with difficult behaviors:

1. Calling a child's attention to the consequence of his action. A child that is breaking crayons can be told, "When you break all the crayons we will not have any more to use." Of course, if the child defiantly replies, "I don't care." The next step needs to be taken. During correction, the child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete, but never outside of the sight of others.
2. Removing what the child is misusing (natural consequences). If a child continues breaking crayons after a warning, the natural consequence is that the child can't use the crayons anymore for a time. The consequence should be directly related to the offense.
3. Temporary exclusion. A child is separated from the group while they refuse to behave appropriately. A child is helped to leave the group until they are able to participate and follow the rules established. This is different from a time-out, in that there is no set time of separation. The child can come back as soon as they are ready to cooperate.
4. Restitution. Restitution means, "making good that which you have harmed." This is the most powerful tool to help children think about their actions and the consequences of their actions.
5. Parental involvement. If the child is not responding to any of these, parents will be personally summoned to come and help decide the next course of action (likely leaving the class). Please fill out an incident report if the child's behavior has led to parents picking them up early.

- Never use corporal punishment with a child.
- Only physically restrain a child if the child is harming himself or others and only until a parent can be reached.
- Never verbally yell at a child or make negative comments about a child.
- Never tell a child that God will punish them for their behavior or that they are making God mad at them.
- Always discuss any issues with parents when they come to get their child. We want them to hear it from us first, not from the child later after they get home.

Physical Touch Policy

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults.
- Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch

Inappropriate Touch

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a child for any reason.
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling children over 5 years old.
- Children sitting on laps for children over 5.
- Holding or restraining children on the lap, with the exception of limited time when comfort is needed or the child's behavior is out-of-control or endangering other children.
- Touching a child in the genital areas except for a diaper change or with necessary assistance in the bathroom.
- Kissing a child anywhere. A child should not be allowed to kiss others either.
- Slapping a child on the behind, even if meant playfully.
- Fondling children, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a child piggyback unless the child is unable to walk.

Appropriate Touch

- A comforting pat on the shoulder and back, or allowing an emotionally distressed child to lean their head on your shoulder is appropriate.
- Back rub to help comfort, or put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.
- High-Fives, handshakes, or fist bumps are appropriate and recommended touch, especially when interacting with older children.
- Holding hands is permitted with children 10 years and under when initiated by the child, or when helping a child to walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent a child from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.

Food and Drink Policy for Kids on the Hill

- All classrooms kindergarten and under must be nut free. No food containing nuts of any kind are permitted in these classrooms.
- All volunteers are required to be aware of any allergies the regularly attending children in their classroom may have BEFORE bringing food into a classroom.
- Anything that is brought from home for a child should be labeled with the child's name. If needed, an extra tag can be printed when the child checks in.

Safety Procedures and Emergency Response

Severe Weather (Tornado Warning)

Teachers or program leaders will lead children to any one of the 11 rooms that are designated as shelter rooms in the church building. These rooms are Toddles, Infants, Pre K, 140, the men's and women's bathrooms west of the chapel, the storage rooms across from the Fireside Room, and the men's and women's bathrooms between the Kids on the Hill check-in and the worship center. On Sunday morning, the Kid's on the Hill teachers and students will all gather in the Infants class room, and only their parents and immediate family members with their ID tags will be allowed to shelter in that room. If a class moves rooms, the teacher must take their clipboard or attendance book with them.

Fire

Teachers should line their children up at the door, and proceed together, in an orderly fashion (holding hands together for kindergarten and below) toward the closest evacuation exit. Children must stay with their teachers or leaders until they are released back to their parents. Normal checkout procedures must be followed if possible. Infants should be placed in the evacuation cribs located in the small room between the infant and toddler room and wheeled out. Teachers must take their clipboard or attendance book with them.

Medical Emergency

Medical volunteers are available at most church gatherings. They should be summoned as soon as possible in a potential medical emergency. The program leader, Kids on the Hill Host, or Front Door Ministry leader will know who the medical person is and how best to summon them. A volunteer should not hesitate to call 911 if there is any question the severity of the situation. Every attempt should be made to occupy the other children in the room, which may mean moving them to a different room depending on the severity of the situation.

Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting & Response

Definitions

What is child neglect and abuse?

Child neglect is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate feed, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

Child abuse is any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.

Sexual exploitation includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child spiritual abuse the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

Prevention

FBC takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In order to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff, elders and volunteers about neglect and abuse.
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual.
- Train and screen volunteers prior to contact with any children. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references, and requiring a criminal background check.
- Require all full-time staff to submit to a criminal background check within a month of joining staff.

- Repeat some screening procedures and criminal background checks for full-time staff and volunteers every five years.
- Require volunteers and staff to be regular attenders for at least six months prior to serving in children's ministry.

Reporting of Neglect & Abuse

Point of Contact for Reporting

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the ministry leader overseeing the specific ministry, the pastor who oversees specific ministry, or any elder at FBC. This reporting includes questionable or inappropriate behavior, any violations of church policy, or you see a child exhibiting any physical, behavioral, or verbal signs of sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect.

Any person who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report all allegations and/or eye-witness accounts to the specific ministry leader, pastor, or elder.

What must be reported:

- You must report any violations of church policy.
- You must report any inappropriate conduct, conversation, behavior, or relationships with children.
- You should report suspected cases of child abuse to a member of the pastoral staff or the ministry leader when you see a child exhibiting any physical, behavioral, or verbal signs of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse.

Guidelines for Mandatory and Permissive Reporters

In reporting of neglect or abuse to the authorities, it is important to distinguish between permissive and mandatory reporters. Iowa law defines classes of people who must make a report of child abuse within 24 hours when they reasonably believe a child has suffered abuse. These "mandatory reporters" are professionals who have frequent contact with children, generally in one of six disciplines: health, mental health, education, law enforcement, child care and social work. Permissive reporters include anyone who is not a mandatory reporter, which will be the majority of FBC's volunteers and staff.

The church has a moral and ethical obligation to report any neglect and abuse, so if the person suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person

must talk to the point of contact for reporting—the ministry leader, or the pastor who oversees specific ministry, or any elder at FBC.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a mandatory reporter, he or she must follow the guidelines and laws set out for mandatory reporters. He or she must fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to the Iowa Department of Human Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be prohibited or discouraged from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement. If you are a mandatory reporter, it is important that you know whether you must report only in the context of your professional duties or whether the obligation to report also applies when you're away from your professional duties or functioning as a volunteer at our church.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a permissive reporter, they should contact the ministry leader and/or the pastor who oversees ministry, or any FBC elder. Because permissive reporters do not have professional training or experience in recognizing abuse, they are asked to report first to the ministry leader, the pastor who oversees the ministry, and/or any FBC elder. If reporting to Department of Human Services or police is deemed as warranted by the the church leadership then this person who suspects or witnessed abuse must report. At all times, this person will be required to fulfill their obligations to the law. **The goal is to help volunteers who have no training or experience in recognizing abuse and little to no experience with children get guidance on what's best to do. At no time will the permissive reporter be prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement.**

More Guidelines on Reporting

When available, the following information will be documented and reported when helpful:

- The name, age, gender and address of the victim(s).
- The name, age, gender and address of the alleged perpetrator/offender(s).
- The nature, frequency, date(s) and location(s) of the abuse alleged to have occurred.
- The relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator/offender.
- Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitness, medical exams, confessions, etc.)

Response to Neglect & Abuse

FBC will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

Rational for Reporting Abuse that is Suspected Within the Church Ministries.

Reporting suspected abuse that may have happened during a ministry event or gathering in a discrete and confidential manner is critical to our goal of abuse prevention. Suspected cases reported in good faith reflect your caring for children and the church body. Volunteer workers must report a reasonably-suspected case of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. Child abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed and unreported.

A sound reporting procedure promotes accountability among church workers, reduces the risk of child abuse and maintains a high level of confidentiality.

Who Should be Notified?

The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate by the ministry staff leader or elders. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.
- Notify church disciplers, counselors or medical personnel in order to obtain ongoing care for the victim(s) and victim's families.
- Notify an insurance agent, denominational leaders, or any other outside officials.
- Notify and consult with a church attorney.

How Will FBC Respond to Allegations, Admission or Criminal Conviction?

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by staff, elder, volunteer, helper, or any member or regular attender of FBC, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- be reported to FBC's elder board. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed to the elder board within

48 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction.

- immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children;
- result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The elders of FBC will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some of which may include:

- Contacting police or DHS.
- Notification of staff, elders and any volunteers.
- Reporting allegations, self-admission or criminal conviction to the congregation during FBC's members' meeting.
- Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the children's ministry areas at the church building.
- The ministry leader will designate FBC members or staff who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on FBC's property or anywhere in FBC's buildings. The alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to staff or elders.
- Disciplining (removal from membership) of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a public members' meeting by the congregation.
- Barring the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
- Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position.
- Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, an elder, volunteer, helper, or any member of FBC for misconduct or abuse against children.

If staff or elders learns from DHS or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the FBC elders should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or DHS;
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate;
- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation.

If an adult alleges an incident of neglect or abuse that happened when they were a child in a FBC program, then:

- The elders should hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide the elders with an assessment. The

victim will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the elder board in confidence.

- If the accused is no longer a part of FBC then the elders should consult with legal counsel to determine legal and moral need to report to police or DHS and any other organization that the accused may be a part of since his departure from FBC.
- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, FBC should respond to all allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual.

Confidentiality

The church, as well as permissive or mandatory reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy manual.

Response to Media

If appropriate, the FBC elders will respond to the media. Normally, one elder or member will be designated by the elder board to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

Sexual Offenders in the Church

When An Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends FBC or a FBC Related Activity

If FBC's elders or children's ministry staff learn in advance that an alleged or convicted sexual offender is wanting to attend a FBC service:

- The elders must decide whether to admit him or her to church services or FBC related activities. Admission of the offender will be based on factors such as extent of prior convictions, and his or her willingness to follow guidelines set out by this policy. This is not a comprehensive list of admission criteria.
- An elder (or a designated member of FBC) will contact the offender letting him or her know that he or she must be accompanied at all time while on FBC's property or anywhere in FBC's buildings.

If an alleged or convicted sexual offender participates in any FBC related activity or public service that has the possibility of children being present:

- The pastor overseeing children's ministry, children's ministry staff, the nursery team leader serving on that day, should be notified.
- The elders will designate FBC members or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on FBC's property or anywhere in FBC's buildings.
- He or she will not be allowed in any designated children's ministry areas.
- The elders will work with staff or members to come up with guidelines for FBC related activities that are not on church property, but elsewhere.

When An Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends Regularly

If he/she chooses to attend regularly:

- The elders will be notified.
- The congregation will be notified in a public service of the church, most likely the members' meeting. FBC reserves the right to forbid someone from coming to the church for worship services, programs or activities. When participating in church activities outside of the church building, the same guidelines apply.
- The sexual offender should provide the overseeing elder with the name of his/her probation officer. The elder or their designated representative will contact the probation officer and find out 1) more about the underlying offense - offenders tend to minimize their offenses, and 2) the specific terms of the probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while at the church.

When A Sexual Offender Seeks Membership at FBC

If the offender seeks membership at FBC, the elders retain a right to refuse membership. If the elders offer membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

- Verify the history of offenses, convictions, and adjudication of sexual offenses and disclose them to the FBC elders and appropriate children's ministry staff.
- An elder or designated representative contacting his/her probation officer to find out the underlying offense and the specific terms of probation.
- A thorough criminal background check. If the information provided by the offender differs from the information given by the probation officer or gathered by the background check, that will be grounds for denying membership.

- Disclosure of information to parents and the congregation. The information released to the church is at the discretion of the elders. A letter detailing this information will be sent directly to all regularly attending parents.
- Refrain from any form of communication (including phone, IM, texting, email, social media or any type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, baby-sitting, or coaching with children or youth or participate in any activities or programs related to children or youth both inside and outside of the church.
- The elders will designate FBC members or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on FBC's property or anywhere in FBC's buildings or in attendance at any church related services, activities or gatherings that has the possibility of children being present.
- Any restrictions that elders determine.
- Permission to notify the leadership, congregation, and parents of anything that the elders deem significant for these groups to know.
- A warning that the church will report any suspected activity to civil authorities.
- A warning that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) can result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church related programs and activities.
- Sign a written document that details all of these items, plus anything else that the elders deem important to include.

Other Guidelines About Sexual Offenders

If a convicted sexual offender applies for a volunteer or staff position, he or she will be denied by the church. Exceptions may only be made upon the approval of the elders, full-disclosure to the congregation and a congregational vote.

If a sexual offender does not disclose a former allegation, conviction or adjudication, and it is revealed later, the offender will be removed from any paid or volunteer position immediately and may be removed from membership as well.

If a sexual offender is a minor, the church reserves the right to bar that minor from any children or youth activities, and will follow the guidelines set out above for any sexual offender who seeks participation in church-related public services, programs or activities.

If a sexual offender leaves FBC (as a member or regular attender) and begins attending another church, the elders will disclose allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse to the leadership at the next church.