

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES

First Baptist Church
2110 Sunset Drive
Holdrege, NE 68949



Purpose Statement

The Church family of First Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe environment for their children, youth, and adults. We are committed to ensure that the Church and its programs are safe and provide a joyful experience for those involved to learn to love and follow Jesus Christ.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ABUSE PREVENTION AND POLICY PROCEDURES

POLICY AND PURPOSE STATEMENT

In accordance with the recommendations of the Christian Education Board and the Board of Deacons, First Baptist Church adopts the following guidelines on abuse prevention. The congregation and staff of First Baptist Church are committed to providing a safe environment to help the church family learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. At this time, the disturbing and traumatic rise and recognition of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation, our society and this church. Churches with programs are not insulated from those who abuse. Therefore, First Baptist Church believes that it is vitally important to take decisive steps to ensure that the church and its programs are safe and provide a joyful experience for all involved. The following policies have been established and reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children when they are attending any church sponsored programs or activities. First Baptist Church is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

VOLUNTEER/EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

All persons engaged in the ministry of First Baptist Church (including leaders, employees, volunteers, and pastors) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or exploitation of parishioners or other individuals is unethical and unprofessional behavior will not be tolerated within this congregation. Because ministers (including leaders, employees, volunteers, and pastors) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, or spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of First Baptist Church to encourage its leaders, pastors, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the

importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

CHILDREN/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

First Baptist Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which children/youth can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends of First Baptist Church for one year. We also expect all employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit an application. References must be obtained from potential volunteers and a screening committee will check all references. All workers with children/youth should observe the two person rule which means that workers must avoid one on one situations with children whenever possible. It is required that there are circulating adults to check on situations when only one adult is present to supervise children and youth. Individuals who have been convicted of sexual abuse may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program with children or youth. Many opportunities for training in the prevention and recognition of abuse of children will be provided by our church. Workers will be mandated to participate in such training. Workers should immediately report to the Senior Pastor any behaviors or other incidents that seem abusive or inappropriate. Upon notification, appropriate actions will be taken and reports made in compliance with the operating procedure of these policies.

RESTORATION CLAUSE

Individuals who have been convicted of physical abuse will need to be reviewed by the Screening Committee. In order for those individuals to work with the children and youth of First Baptist church, they must complete the following criteria:

1. Meet with the Pastor, Program Director(s), and a Deacon Representative to discuss the situation.
2. Provide documentation that they have completed a program or counseling.
3. Review of the situation, while maintaining confidentiality, by the Screening Committee.
4. If approved, placed on a one-year probationary period.
5. Reviewed by the Screening committee after completing one year of volunteering.

MANDATED TRAINING

The Screening Committee will provide quarterly opportunities for training in the prevention and recognition of abuse. Updates of such training will be made available via the church bulletin and monthly newsletters. Volunteers

are mandated to participate in such training prior to any volunteer activity.

Objectives

- To establish a familiarity with the problem of child abuse as a general problem in society and in the church.
- To increase awareness of the symptoms and consequences of child abuse.
- To create an understanding of liability concerns and church policy guidelines pertaining to screening, supervision, and reporting.
- To provide instruction on volunteer selection and volunteer training.

Target Population

All paid or volunteer ministry leaders who oversee children and youth activities including but not limited to the following: nursery workers, teachers, leaders, helpers with youth, VBS director, Sunday school superintendents, youth ministers and other ministry leaders working with children or youth.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Prohibited Conduct - to achieve the goal of preventing any forms of abuse or the potential of false accusations of abuse, staff members, volunteer leaders or any church member providing care for children whether paid or volunteer shall not engage in any of the following conduct with program participants whether consensual or non-consensual:

1. Abuse of any kind, including sexual abuse
2. Sexual exploitation or molestation
3. Disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying pornographic material
4. Hitting, kicking, slapping, or shoving
5. Selling, giving, or furnishing any child with any tobacco substance, alcohol, or controlled drug
6. Swear or use obscene, foul, or sexually explicit languages
7. Demonstrate any romantic or sexual interest in a child
8. Remove any dress clothing from another person, except when appropriately required under necessary circumstances
9. Wear anything but appropriate attire in the presence of others, especially children
10. Kiss any child or non-family member on the lips or in an intimate area
11. Extended or inappropriate hugging or embracing
12. Sleep in the same bed or bedding with any child
13. Remain in any building, room, motor vehicle, or private place with a child except as permitted in this policy
14. Assist any child in the restroom except as permitted by this policy

15. You shouldn't allow anyone, who is a threat to a child, access into a room, vehicle, or other place in which you are present with a child.

Permitted Conduct - it is quite natural, appropriate and desirable for Christians to express and share their love for each other and Christ. This sharing is essential for healthy emotional and spiritual well-being of individuals. This sharing of love is especially important to children for their normal, healthy, and happy growth and development. The expressing and sharing of one's Christian love to a child or another adult member shall not be considered abuse or be in any way prohibited, restricted, or limited by this policy. The following conduct by a staff member, volunteer leader or any other church member whether paid or volunteer shall be considered to be an expression of this Christian love and not abuse or even creating the appearance of child abuse:

1. Verbally expressing one's Christian love and affection to another.
2. Appropriately holding and comforting another person
3. Occasionally and appropriately hugging or embracing another person, especially when initiated by the other
4. Sharing emotional and spiritual concerns with another person
5. Providing necessary medical care and attention to another person
6. Encouraging another member to appropriately express and share Christian love

Private Conversations - before engaging in a private conversation with another member, whether child or adult, every staff member, volunteer leader or other member engaged in ministry should weigh and balance the following considerations:

1. Location - private conversations can be conducted more safely in public and populated locations. If possible, all conversations should be conducted in a public place, easily accessible to others.
2. Necessity - if the conversation does not involve confidential matters, but is generally "small talk", it is not necessary to be alone in a private location.
3. Relationship - be sure you have a good, healthy relationship with the other person. Private conversations and meetings should be avoided if any romantic interests start to develop.
4. Gender - private meetings and conversations with members of the opposite gender are more prone to abuse and the appearance of impropriety.
5. Frequency - frequent private conversations can create difficulties in a child's healthy development or lead to dangerous relationship dynamics among adults.
6. Ability of the Care Giver - if a person's spiritual or emotional needs are significant, the caregiver should refer him or her to the pastor or counselor. Don't overestimate your own counseling abilities.

7. Reliability - consider the emotional stability and maturity of the individual. If lacking, private meetings with that person may be dangerous because such individuals may create the highest risk of false accusations.
8. Appearance - maintain an appropriate appearance at all times. Remember, words and conduct that may be inappropriate, physical contact in private, isolated location creates a very high risk of being misconstrued and should be avoided.
9. Substance of conversation - The substance of the conversation should be appropriate at all times.
10. Touching - although hugging another person in a public location when several others are present may be appropriate, physical contact in a private, isolated location creates a very high risk of being misconstrued and should be avoided.
11. Safeguard - as an extra precaution, consider keeping records of all private meetings, and let some other adult besides his or her spouse know that the conversations are occurring, as well as the reasons for the conversations.

Discipline Guidelines - the primary means of discipline is the development of a healthy and respectful relationship between the adults leading to the program and the children or young people involved. Therefore, adults should do all they can to foster respect and care in their program, and treat the youth, as they would like to be treated. But there are times when the usual methods of maintaining order appropriate to the setting fail. If this is the case, then the following procedure should be used:

1. A misbehaving child should not be restrained unless he or she is about to harm another person in the program.
2. If someone is disrupting a program, he or she should be warned verbally. If he or she has to be warned a second time during the session of the program, the teacher/leader should speak to the youth one-on-one when the session is finished.
3. If the youth persists in being disruptive in succeeding weeks, the teacher/leader should contact the parents/guardian. If appropriate, the parent/guardian should stay with the youth in class at least once.
4. If the youth persists in being disruptive in succeeding weeks, he or she shall be forbidden to attend the program until after he or she, his or her parents/guardian, the pastor and program director(s) have met to work through the problem. As part of that meeting a written contract for appropriate behavior and consequences for misbehavior shall be drawn up and signed by the youth and his/her parents/guardian.
5. If the youth violates the contract, consequences for violation shall be enacted including expulsion from the program for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the Pastor and CE Board.

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect - the following list include general token characteristics of abused children. Any one indicator does not necessarily mean that abuse has occurred. They may also indicate stress or anxiety in a young child. However, if a number of indicators are present, it is wise to consider the possibility of abuse.

Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained bruises or welts
- Unexplained burns
- Unexplained broken bones
- Unexplained cuts or scrapes
- Unexplained stomach injuries
- Unbelievable explanations of injuries or claiming no knowledge of the source of injury
- Exhibits habit disorders: sucking, biting, eating disorders
- Fears adults; shrinks away from touch
- Afraid to go home
- Bald spots and scalp bruises
- Human bite marks
- Fears parents or caregiver
- Overly aggressive or withdrawn
- Seeks more than average amounts of affection from other adults
- Lags in emotional and intellectual development

Neglect:

- Under-fed or constantly hungry
- Constantly unclean/poor hygiene
- Unattended medical needs
- Growth rate below normal
- Begging or stealing food
- Lack of supervision
- Constantly fatigued or listless

Emotional Abuse/Neglect:

- Speech problems
- Slow mental and emotional growth
- Antisocial or destructive behavior
- Dramatic emotional swings
- Low self-esteem
- Slow physical growth
- Habit of sucking, biting, or rocking

- Long-term depression
- Loss of appetite

Sexual Abuse:

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Unusual knowledge of or interest in private parts
- Bed-wetting
- Depression or withdrawn behavior
- Poor relationships with other children
- Acting out adult sexual behaviors
- Indirect hints that allude to problems
- Pain or itching around private parts
- Stomach-aches
- Sleep problems
- Sudden behavior changes
- Reluctance to go to the bathroom
- Anxiety, irritability, constant inattentiveness

Procedure for Helping Children or Youth When Abuse is Suspected:

1. When you first notice or suspect child abuse and/or when the child first comes to you, be sure to take the child seriously. Don't deny the problem. Stay calm, and listen to the child, but leave the interviewing to the professionals. Remind the child that he or she is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone!
2. Immediately report such a case to the senior pastor.
3. After reporting, remember to keep this information confidential.

DEFINITIONS

Adult - a person at least 18 years of age

Child or Youth - a person under 18 years of age

Staff - any person serving at First Baptist Church in an official paid capacity.

Volunteer – all unpaid persons giving leadership in any of First Baptist's ministries including but not limited to nursery helpers, Sunday school teachers/helpers, Wednesday night club teachers/helpers, youth group leaders, transportation providers.

The Abuse Prevention Committee – consist of a representative from the Board of Christian Education, a representative from the Deacon Board, a representative from the Board of Trustees, the Senior Pastor, Youth Pastor, Children's Ministry Coordinator and the Sunday School Superintendent. They

will carry out the duties described herein, the Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures.

Screening Committee - consist of at least three members, male and female, appointed by the Nominating Committee with the Senior Pastor as an ex-officio member. They will carry out the duties described herein, the Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures.

Response Team – consist of three members, male and female, appointed by the Nominating Committee with the Senior Pastor as an ex-officio member. They will carry out the duties stated in the Child/Youth Abuse Reporting and the Adult Abuse Reporting guidelines.

Volunteer – All unpaid ministry leaders who oversee children and youth activities including but not limited to the following: nursery workers, teachers, leaders, helpers with youth, VBS director, Sunday school superintendents, youth ministers and other ministry leaders working with children or youth.

Appropriate Conduct - conduct that one could reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by the child's parent or guardian.

Discipline - is helping children develop self-control. Discipline is setting limits and correcting misbehavior. It helps a child learn a lesson that will carry over and positively affect future behavior. Discipline is taught by example.

Child Abuse - refers to an act committed by a person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's welfare.

Child Neglect - refers to an act of omission, specifically the failure of a person in a position of trust to provide for the child's basic needs and proper level of care with respect to food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or supervision.

Physical Abuse - occurs when a person injures another and it is not an accident. It includes assault with an implement and other actions, such as shaking, slapping, burning, kicking, scalding or strangling, which leads to possible injury of a child.

Emotional Abuse - is any attempt to control another person's life through words, threats, fears, and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth.

Sexual Abuse - involves sexual contact between a child or teenager and an

adult or significantly older, more powerful person. Sexual abuse can include other exploitive behaviors such as inappropriate verbal stimulation, taking or showing explicit photographs, or exposing a child/youth to pornography or sexual activity.

Pastor - a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by the First Baptist Church.

Ministerial Relationship - the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Sexual Misconduct - any sexualized behavior with a volunteer or employee.

Sexual Exploitation - sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the volunteer or employee.

Sexual Harassment - repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual;
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment;
- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing, sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Abuse Prevention Committee

The Abuse Prevention Committee will consist of a representative from the Board of Christian Education, a representative from the Deacon Board, a representative from the Board of Trustees, the Senior Pastor, Youth Pastor, Children's Ministry Coordinator and the Sunday School Superintendent.

This group will be responsible for obtaining applications for potential children and youth volunteers and assuring that all potential children and youth volunteers are screened by the Screening Committee. The Abuse Prevention Committee will be called together by the Senior Pastor at the beginning of the calendar year.

The group will meet quarterly to discuss relevant abuse prevention strategies and concerns, and to receive updated screening lists. The Abuse Prevention Committee will choose a chairperson and a secretary. This group will also submit an annual report to the Christian Education Board.

Screening Committee Job Description

The Screening Committee will consist of at least three members, male and female, who are members of First Baptist Church, appointed by the Nominating Committee with the Senior Pastor or Chair of the Deacon Board (in the absence of the Senior Pastor) as an ex-officio member.

Members of the Screening Committee will commit to serving at least a three year term, staggered in appointments. There, however, will be no term limit and individuals can continue for another three year term after their term has been completed. If a member desires to not serve another year, then the Screening Committee and the Response Team will provide possible candidates for the position and present their requests to the Nominating Committee for approval. The team will take into consideration the confidentiality aspect and seriousness of the position when looking for another candidate.

CHILD/YOUTH ABUSE REPORTING

Nebraska State Law Statutes

Nebraska State Law states in LB557 Sec. 28-711 that it is the legal obligation for any person who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect to report, or cause a report to be filed, with the local Law Enforcement Agency or Health and Human Services. If you are aware of child abuse and do not report it, you are liable to a fine or jail sentence.

The church that does not do everything they reasonably can to protect their children may be subjected to a lawsuit. Not only is this a legal obligation, but a moral obligation for our First Baptist Church family. We wish to protect the children/youth of our church, and also the paid and volunteer workers that care for them.

Reporting Response

Any child/youth worker or any other person, who observes possible indications or symptoms of child abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or neglect, should report this to the Senior Pastor orally and by written document. The Senior Pastor, or Associate Pastor, in the case of the absence of the Senior Pastor will respond accordingly:

IN THE COMMUNITY: In the case of suspected child abuse or neglect originating outside the church, our response is to follow the state law by contacting the local Law Enforcement Agency. *DO NOT* interview the child regarding suspected abuse. Leave this to trained professionals. *DO NOT* discuss the suspected abuse with other workers, parents, etc. All information is to remain confidential.

WITHIN THE CHURCH: Any child/youth worker or any other person who observes inappropriate or suspicious conduct between any adult worker and child/youth, must report this to the Senior Pastor, unless the Senior Pastor is involved in the incident, in which case the report will be made to the Chair of the Deacon Board, orally and by written documentation. *DO NOT* interview the child regarding suspected abuse. Leave this to the trained professionals. *DO NOT* discuss the abuse with other workers, parents, etc. **All information is to remain confidential.**

The Senior Pastor or Chair of the Deacon Board will contact the Response Team. The Response Team will be required to investigate within 24 hours with written documentation including the following criteria: *Who is involved, When and Where the incident occurred, and What occurred.*

Response Team Job Description

The Response Team will consist of three members, male and female, who are members of First Baptist Church, appointed by the Nominating Committee with the Senior Pastor or Chair of the Deacon Board (in the absence of the Senior Pastor) as an ex-officio member.

Members of the Response Team will commit to serving at least a three year term, staggered in appointments. There, however, will be no term limit and individuals can continue for another three year term after their term has been completed. If a member desires to not serve another year, then the Screening Committee and the Response Team will provide possible candidates for the position and present their requests to the Nominating Committee for approval. The team will take into consideration the confidentiality aspect and seriousness of the position when looking for

another candidate. These members need to understand the confidential and responsible nature of their duties and be gifted for this task.

The Response team will chose a chairperson and a secretary. They shall carry out the duties stated in the child/youth abuse reporting and the adult abuse reporting guidelines of First Baptist Church.

After the Response Team has finished their investigation, they will make any necessary reporting to the Senior Pastor.

ADULT ABUSE REPORTING

Any accusation of adult abuse or harassment originating in the Church ministry will be reported with written documentation to the Senior Pastor, unless the Senior Pastor is involved in the incident, in which case it will be reported the Associate Pastor. The Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor will report the matter as soon as possible. The Response Team will evaluate the accusation and respond appropriately, which may include reporting to the Denomination, Church Attorney, and Insurance Company.

CONCLUSION

For the safeguard of the Church family, all accusations and findings in the case of any suspected abuse or neglect, will be recorded and kept in a confidential file under lock and key. The team will contact the Church Attorney and Insurance Company any time it is felt necessary. In the case of adverse publicity arising, with any abuse allegation, the Response Team will designate a spokesperson to make any and all comments regarding the incident.

**APPENDIX A
VOLUNTEER AND STAFF APPLICATION APPROVAL PROCESS**

I. CONFIDENTIAL DATA SURVEY

II. VOLUNTEER

- A. Application for Children/Youth Ministry Worker
- B. Personal References
- C. Applicant's Statement
- D. Release of Information Form
- E. Volunteer Screening Approval Form

III. STAFF

- A. Employment Application
- B. Personal References
- C. Release of Information Form
- D. Employee Screening Form

**APPENDIX B
CONFIDENTIAL DATA SURVEY**

The questions listed below are a part of our process in order to help provide a safe and secure environment for our children. All information is held strictly confidential and will be reviewed only by the Screening Committee. Answering yes to any of the questions may not necessarily preclude your involvement in Children's/Student Ministries. Thank you for your understanding.

First Baptist Church checks references and may conduct criminal background investigations on potential volunteers. Is there anything this process might disclose that you may need to explain?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever been convicted of a crime (misdemeanor or felony) including child abuse, child neglect, or an unlawful sexual offense?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have any physical or mental conditions that may restrict your leading or participating in activities with children or youth?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you had any painful experiences in your life that may hinder you from a productive ministry with children /youth?

Yes _____ No _____

If you have ever experienced physical or sexual abuse, do you feel that could affect your ability to work with children or youth?

Yes _____ No _____

If you answered yes to any of the above questions please explain:

Would you like to meet with a Pastor regarding any of these circumstances?

Yes _____ No _____

Is there anything else you would like to share with us at this time?

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____