

Protecting Children Manual

Policies and Procedures for Protecting Children

December 1st, 2009

First Baptist Church
Seminole, Oklahoma

(Warning - This document contains sexual explicit information which may not be suitable for review by minor children.)

“Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14 (NIV)

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Introduction

1. These Policies are presented by First Baptist Church, Seminole, for the purposes of:
 - a. Protecting preschoolers and children (less than 18 years of age).
 - b. Protecting volunteers, teachers, and leaders.
 - c. Protecting First Baptist Church, Seminole.
2. These policies will apply to all persons volunteer or paid, who work with preschoolers, children, students, or any other minor (under 18 years of age) on a frequent basis in regularly scheduled church ministries including but not limited to Sunday School, Children's Choir, Falls Creek, Youth meetings/events, and over night activities in all areas of ministry of First Baptist Church, Seminole.
3. These policies shall become effective upon adoption by the church.
4. Background Checks: All persons enlisted, volunteering, or employed to work with preschoolers, children, and youth under the age of 18 years will be required to complete a Confidential Volunteer Worker Application Form (Attachment 1) or Employment Application Form (Attachment 2), a Personal Questionnaire (Attachment 3), and Background Check Consent Form (Attachment 4).
 - a. The Background Consent Form authorizes the background check company to confirm and verify a minimum of 2 references. The reference checks and responses by named individuals will be returned to First Baptist Church for record purposes.
 - b. The Background Consent Form authorizes the background check company to verify as a minimum a state-wide criminal or sexual offender database check.

Screening Procedures

1. Screening
 - a. No person with known prior incidences of sexual misconduct or abuse will be eligible to serve in any capacity involving custody or supervision of minors (those under 18 years of age).
 - b. All employed workers will follow the personnel procedures of First Baptist Church, Seminole as established by the Personnel Team and this policy.
 - c. The Confidential Volunteer Application Form and related information will be kept confidential and only accessed by a supervisory staff member.
 - d. Denial Procedures:

(1) Any person denied a volunteer position as a result of the screening process, may appeal in the following manner:

- (a) First, meet with his/her supervisory staff member to discuss eligibility as it relates to the screening process.
- (b) Secondly, the volunteer shall submit a written request to the chairman of the Personnel Team for a hearing or review by the full team. The volunteer shall also submit a release form, allowing the Personnel Team to review the confidential file in the appeal process, but solely for the purpose of the appeal .
- (c) Thirdly, the Personnel Team shall make a final written determination of the volunteer's eligibility to serve.

f. Volunteers who desire to review their information may do so by scheduling an appointment with the supervisory staff member.

General Policies

1. Each enlisted, volunteer, or employed worker should be a Christian; 18 years of age; physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy; have a pleasant manner with children and be receptive and open with parents.
2. Only members of First Baptist Church, Seminole for six months or more will be eligible to serve as volunteers with children or students. The supervisory staff person must review any exception and the exception must be approved by the Senior Pastor.
3. All Activities with minors shall be scheduled through the supervisory staff person and shall be church-sponsored activities or functions. Permission to participate and proper medical forms shall be obtained from parents/legal guardian (when appropriate). A church sponsored activity or function shall be defined as any activity, on or off church grounds, planned or approved by the supervisory staff person and scheduled on the official church calendar.
4. No photography shall be permitted when person(s) are dressing and undressing.
5. The Supervisor Staff person responsible for the member will periodically revise the Confidential Volunteer Application Form or request updated information from volunteers as needed. An annual update of each confidential file (volunteer and employed) shall be conducted by the Ministerial Staff Supervisor responsible for the volunteer or employee.
6. It will be recommended that a minimum of two adults working together with preschoolers and children be maintained. The pupil teacher ratio of 1 to 3 for babies, 1 to 6 for toddlers, 1 to 8 for twos through fives should be maintained.
7. A child who has not yet enrolled in Kindergarten shall not be on church campus alone without a parent or adult custodian (over the age of 18) remaining on campus with them.

An exception to this rule may be made by a member of the ministerial staff. (* Children who have not begun Kindergarten are often unable to give address, phone numbers, or provide allergy or medical information.)

8. In a children's Sunday School or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual small groups with one adult teacher/leader provided the department or group leaders are present. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency. The pupil teacher ratio of 1 teacher to 7 children is preferred.

9. On rare occasions, a youth apprentice may be asked to work with children. Persons under the age of 18 years of age who serve as youth apprentices shall do so under the supervision of an adult. Male apprentices and single men are not appropriate in small classes (less than 15). They should be used only in larger classes. No male under the age of 18 will serve in the nursery or pre-school ministry area.

10. For camps, retreats, or similar situations, two adults shall be in the sleeping room.

11. The supervisory staff members for all ministries will regularly implement appropriate procedures and continuing education concerning child abuse regarding children and students 18 years old or younger.

12. Teachers are required to comply with protective procedures for changing diapers, assisting a child in the rest room, touching (age appropriate and needs based), arrival and dismissal from church programs, counseling, visitation, permission to participate, and medical forms.

13. For classrooms, a small window should be available for viewing the room.

14. Ongoing teacher training will be conducted for new workers and to refresh returning workers on policies and procedures on abuse, security, protection, and age-level spiritual development.

15. For infrequent and unusual church situations that are not easily classified elsewhere in these policies, the standards and spirit of this policy shall be recognized as being in force. It is the responsibility of the supervisory staff persons to make sure that all volunteer/paid workers are aware of the church policies.

Child Abuse

1. First Baptist Church, Seminole has an obligation to prevent child abuse, prevent injury to the congregation and to avoid legal liability.

a. Preventing Child Abuse is a core belief of our congregation. We understand that "A Church, as an organization, embraces volunteerism, thus creating an atmosphere alluring to child abusers and pedophiles, in the sense that these criminals have the opportunity to get to a large number of children and to check out which ones might be the easiest victims." (Gene Abel, director of the Behavioral Medicine Institute of Atlanta states)

b. Preventing injury to the congregation: Parents are attracted to a church based on the facilities, personnel, and activities for children. Security for children is a priority for parents.

Once an incident or false allegation has occurred, trust may be lost and it may take years to regain the trust.

c. **Avoiding Legal Liability:** If a court finds that a church or employer didn't use reasonable care in selecting its paid and volunteer workers, most likely there will be legal repercussions for the church. The church is not required to be perfect, only reasonable in taking precautions to protect its Children and Youth. ("Prevent child abuse in church ministry; www.liveit.net/ministry/mnst20000323.)

2. Child Abuse Defined:

a. Child abuse is defined as a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse is usually a pattern of behavior rather than a single occurrence and includes:

- (1) Non accidental physical injury-may include severe shaking or beating, burns, strangulation, human bites, broken bones, or serious internal injuries.
- (2) Neglect-the withholding of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene, protection, or supervision.
- (3) Sexual abuse-the exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of another person as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, and the use of children in the production of pornographic materials.
- (4) Psychological emotional abuse-a pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. Examples include constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, and/or the failure to provide the understanding, warmth, attention and supervision necessary for a child's healthy psychological growth.

3. Reporting Abuse:

a. First Baptist Church, Seminole has not only the biblical and moral obligation; we have the legal responsibility to take immediate action in reporting abuse.

- (1) Title 10, Chapter 71 of the Oklahoma Statutes shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma Child Abuse Reporting and Prevention Act".
- (2) Title 10, section 7102 states "It is the policy of this state to provide for the protection of children who have been abused or neglected and who may be further threatened by the conduct of persons responsible for the health, safety or welfare of such children."
- (3) Title 10, section 7103 compels every person, private citizen or professional in Oklahoma who has reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime.

A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

b. A report of suspected abuse should be immediately presented to a member of the ministerial staff not personally involved in the suspected abuse. The information will be immediately recorded by the first hand witness in order to keep the information fresh.

c. A report of suspected abuse will be reported to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services at 1-800-522-3511 or to the Seminole County Department of Human Services located at 206 E. Second St., Wewoka, OK 74884-2604. The Wewoka Phone number is 405-257-7400 or 1-800-270-0796.

d. A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation. A request for investigation should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused. The person making the request for investigation does not need to prove the abuse. Investigation and validation of abuse reports are the responsibility of the Department of Human Services and law enforcement personnel.

Transportation:

1. Drivers: Drivers of First Baptist Church, Seminole vehicles will be capable, dependable, mature and disciplined drivers.

a. Our vehicle insurance policies require all drivers who operate church vans with or without passengers to be 25 years of age.

b. In order to drive our 11 and 15 passenger vans you must complete and pass a required insurance test.

c. All drivers must be licensed with a current copy on file with the Staff Liaison/Minister who oversees transportation.

d. Drivers are responsible for reporting license suspensions or revocations.

e. No one who has been convicted for DUI within the last ten years should be allowed to drive a church van, nor anyone with excessive traffic violations within the past two years.

2. Safety: Transportation Safety is priority one. Safety measures are essential and mandatory.

a. All passengers must remain seated and buckled (if available) while the vehicle is in operation.

b. All body parts will remain inside windows.

c. Loud noise and disruptions will be kept to a minimum.

3. Passenger Rules:

a. Any Child under six (6) years of age, or any Child who weighs less than forty (40)

pounds, regardless of age; must have an approved child passenger restraint system (car seat). (Oklahoma Statute 47-11-1113)

b. All Children ages six (6) years of age but younger than thirteen (13) years of age must be seated behind the driver and remaining seats. (Oklahoma Statute 47-11-1112)

c. To ensure continuity, the spirit and intent rules for classroom adults and teacher to pupil ratio should be maintained.

- (1) All persons enlisted, volunteering, or employed to work with preschoolers, children, and youth under the age of 18 years will be required to complete a Confidential Volunteer Worker Application Form (Attachment 1) or Employment Application Form (Attachment 2), complete a Personal Questionnaire/Consent Form (Attachment 3), and give permission for a background check (Attachment 4)
- (2) A minimum of two adults should be available in our vans when minors are present. In rare occasions; while the vehicles are in convoy mode; only one adult is allowed.
- (3) A child who has not yet enrolled in Kindergarten will not be allowed to ride in a church van or be on the church campus alone without a parent or adult custodian (over the age of 18) with them who will remain on campus with them. An exception to this rule may be made by a member of the ministerial staff (* Children who have not begun Kindergarten are often unable to give address, phone numbers, or provide allergy or medical information)

