



First Baptist Church Child/Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

First Baptist Church of Bellingham, WA (herein referred to as “First Baptist”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in programs and activities on church property and off-premises church-sponsored events. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children and youth of First Baptist from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms, “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Selection of Workers

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until s/he has been involved with First Baptist for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation to ascertain suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at First Baptist.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the references will be maintained in confidence on file at First Baptist.

e) Criminal Background Check

- a. A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:
- > Those who will be involved in our nursery/elementary/youth ministries;
 - > Those who will be involved with overnight activities involving minors;
 - > Those counseling minors;
 - > Those involved in one-to-one mentorship of minors; and
 - > Those having occasional one-to-one contact with minors (that is, vehicle drivers and Summer Academy volunteers)

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing First Baptist to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Associate Pastor and the Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and the resultant report will be maintained in confidence on file at First Baptist.

Statement of Restriction

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.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.

Rule of Three

Some youth (ages 12-18) classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, the doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than

three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one unrelated adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity.

Restroom Policy

When using the restroom, children, youth and vulnerable adults will be accompanied by a screened adult to and from the restroom. Before any child, youth or vulnerable adult enters the restroom, the screened adult will enter the restroom to make sure that it is safe. It is recommended that two screened adults be present when assistance will be required in the restroom. If assistance is required, the screened adult will assist the individual with the door propped open so that a second screened adult can visually monitor the assisting adult. Because of the statistical correlation between males and child molestation, only females assist small children in the restroom or change diapers.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- > Physical abuse- any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burning, and biting.
- > Emotional abuse- any emotional injury when a child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- > Sexual abuse- any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- > Neglect- depriving a child of his/her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Baptist becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Associate Pastor or the Senior Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by Washington State law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First Baptist or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be completed.