

First Baptist Church New Braunfels Child Protection Policy (updated 8/25/22)

General Purpose Statement

First Baptist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children of First Baptist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the term child or children includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term worker or volunteer includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

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

a) Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Baptist Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. A waiver can be granted if a pastor approves, and additional references are checked.

b) Written Application

All new workers or volunteers seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at First Baptist Church.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, an interview will be scheduled to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all workers (regardless of position) and volunteers, as defined above.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the appropriate responsible church pastor or their designee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. The pastor will evaluate how long ago the offense took place, the severity of the offense, the steps that were taken by the applicant to reform, and whether the offense involves children. All convictions for child abuse and sexual assault will permanently disqualify the person from serving as a volunteer working with children or youth. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at First Baptist Church.

e) Student Volunteers

Students (14-17) may be used as volunteers in the children's ministry for children over the age of 2. Students who wish to volunteer must go through the same process as an adult volunteer minus the background check and be part of the Student Leadership Team (SLT). All volunteers must be at least five years older than the children being supervised. Student volunteers do not count as an adult for the two-adult rule.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during FBCNB sanctioned programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone with one unrelated adult in any activity unless in a qualifying counseling situation and in plain view of other adults.

It is recognized that particular counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adults and that the general guidelines for the supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. The minister or adult counselor must secure written permission from the parents for permission for such one-on-one counseling. If the parent is unavailable or securing permission will endanger the child, then the minister or adult counselor must secure written permission from the Senior Pastor. However, such counseling should only occur in a room where interior windows allow a clear view of the room's activities. Counseling relationships may not last more than sixty (60) calendar days. If the child needs additional counseling, the child will be referred to a Christian counselor approved by FBCNB.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

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

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- Spiritual abuse – Spiritual abuse is when one uses claimed spiritual truths or biblical texts to harm a child. Coercive spirituality is a form of spiritual abuse. Some abuse is spiritual abuse because it invokes divine authority to manipulate people into performing behaviors that meet the abuser's needs.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of the children's abuse or neglect under our care. Suppose an individual involved in the care of children at First Baptist Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care. In that case, this should be reported immediately to authorities as mandated by state law. Workers should also report the incident to the appropriate responsible church pastor or their designee for further action.

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

1. The child's parent or guardian will be notified unless directed by law enforcement not to notify the parents.
2. If the alleged perpetrator is a church worker or volunteer, the worker will immediately be placed on leave from working with children, pending an investigation, and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and First Baptist Church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. First Baptist Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Senior Pastor or his designee will be our spokesperson to the media concerning abuse or neglect incidents unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek legal counsel's advice before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media and the congregation.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Reporting Child or Sexual Abuse

If FBCNB receives an allegation of child abuse, it will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. FBCNB personnel will assume that all complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should not doubt that FBCNB takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, children's protection must be the most critical concern. It is the legal responsibility of any person with responsibility for children's care to report all cases of child abuse. They shall report visible signs of indicating abuse. Failure to report could lead to further harm for the child, and potential civil and criminal liability to the observer and the church.

While the confidentiality of the pastor/parishioner relationship is vital, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse can help individuals receive help for their problems and may prevent further harm to a child, that person, or others.

What is reasonable suspicion? Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining a child's suspected abuse.

A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse or neglect has occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that child abuse or neglect has occurred; instead, it is a request to assess the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, FBCNB has adopted the following guidelines for reporting:

- Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously and attempt to assure the safety and protection of persons who may have been harmed.
- Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
- The outcry witness will immediately notify the appropriate state office of the allegation. Texas law requires notification within 48 hours. Notify state agency at https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/report_abuse.asp
- The pastoral staff will immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the allegations unless requested by law enforcement not to notify.
- As appropriate, the church administrator shall immediately notify the church's insurance carrier of the possibility of a claim. If the abuse allegation does not implicate a church staff member or church volunteer, this step may be omitted.
- If the accused has assigned duties within the church's life, that person must be temporarily relieved of his duties until the investigation is concluded.

The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the alleged accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader, should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation, which could contaminate an official investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation. Remember that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors are all equipped with a window in the door. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room, except in the case of an active threat.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children Kindergarten and below, parents and guardians will follow a security check-in/check-out procedure during Sunday morning or other scheduled services. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child claim check" for the child. The parent or guardian must present the "child claim check" to sign out the child from our care. If a parent or guardian cannot present the "child claim check," the Preschool Director or Children's Minister or their designee will be contacted. The Preschool Director or Children's Minister or their designee will be responsible for releasing the child to a parent or guardian's care after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian. 1st-6th grade students will be checked in at the kiosk before entering their classroom. At the conclusion of the class, 1st-5th grade students will need to be picked up by their parent or guardian from the classroom they were dropped off at. 6th grade students may go to their parent if the parent is on campus.

FBKA students will enter through grade-level entry points and continue to their respective class where teachers will check them in for attendance purposes. Students coming tardy will have to be checked in at the office by the parent. Parents picking up mid-day will have to go through the office. Students may be released by teachers to the parent or guardian at the end of the day at the respective class pick-up locations.

Sick Policy

We desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First Baptist Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever over 99.4, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections;
- Other symptoms of a contagious or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children, and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day. Workers will also disinfect all surfaces after the child leaves, including toys, tables, and chairs.

We ask ALL teachers, volunteers, aides, staff, and/or all those who are working with children while on church grounds, commit to demonstrating love toward those they have been called to serve with good hygiene practices, cleanliness of their area, and serving ONLY when you are free of fever over 99.4 degrees or have symptoms of illness. FBCNB expects that anyone who comes to teach and work with children and students will come in love and understanding of the health of this church body, and will follow these procedures to the best of their ability. The Supervisor shall address any issues involving the health of the worker or the ability to remain in the class.

Medications Policy

FBCNB will not administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. A parent should administer medications. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the appropriate responsible church pastor or their designee to develop a plan of action. Exceptions can also be made for overnight trips, i.e. mission, camp, retreats, etc.

Discipline Policy

FBCNB will not administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission. If an altercation occurs between children, adults will use only the amount of force necessary to restrain the aggression. There will be no spanking, hitting, or other physical disciplines of children. Workers should consult with the appropriate responsible church pastor or their designee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children below kindergarten should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. A worker should never take a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child takes longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers will seek additional adult help before assisting a child. When assisting a child, prop the bathroom door open and leave the stall door open.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom before each class.

Authorization and Consent

All church outings and activities, including transportation to and from those activities, must be approved by a member of the pastoral staff. These activities must be documented on the official church calendar.

Workers should strive to keep the parents informed about and involved in their child's activities. Parents or legal guardians must sign consent and release forms for all activities that take minors off the church campus.

Transportation for church activities will be done by authorized church personnel only. If and when multiple vehicles are used, they are to stay together as a group, following the church's authorized coordinator's directions.

Gifts

No staff, either paid or volunteer, are to give personal gifts to individual children or without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible leadership. Because gift-giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

Overnight Trips

Situations where staff members must carefully plan taking children or young people out of the area for long periods of time or overnight outings. Only known, proven staff will be permitted to sponsor/chaperone the trips. New staff or volunteers may be used as additional sponsors but shall not be left alone with the children or young people in a situation where there is no other staff to observe. Under no circumstances will one adult be allowed to take children or youth on an overnight outing.

Accidental Injuries to Children

If a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's Supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

Inclement Weather Procedures

In the event that inclement weather conditions exist or dictate a class to move into a more appropriate and safe area, staff are asked to move in a timely and professional manner. In some cases the supervisor may decide and announce a new location for students such as the gym, Rushing Hall, or another classroom. Students will remain in the location that is deemed safe until an announcement from the supervisor has been made as soon as it is determined the weather is no longer a health hazard or danger to students.

Procedures for Power Outages and Emergency Evacuations

In order to minimize and prevent problems or injury during a Power Outage and Emergency Evacuation, it is imperative that this is accomplished in a timely and orderly manner. In order to accomplish this, the following procedures will be adhered to:

1. Once a Power Outage or an Emergency Evacuation has occurred all students, faculty, and staff must evacuate the building in a timely and orderly fashion. Classes who are already outside when evacuation procedures begin must follow accordingly.
2. Leadership will clear the building once all staff and students have been evacuated to ensure that no one is left behind.
3. Teachers/Leaders will be responsible to ensure students are organized and accounted for. Please make sure that your classroom door is closed but unlocked.
4. Exit the building with your class and move to the staging area (assigned by your supervisor) and once again ensure that all students are accounted for. If all students in your class are accounted for, please give a 'thumbs up' as leadership checks, if there is a student that has not been accounted for please immediately make leadership aware of who is missing and where they were last known to be.
5. Teachers will supervise their students and will remain with their class until the evacuation has been completed.
6. All staff and students must move to the designated staging areas located away from the building but remaining in the parking lot.
7. Once power has been restored or the building has been cleared, leadership will announce that staff and students can return to their classrooms in the same manner in which they evacuated the building in a timely and orderly fashion.
8. In the event that it has been determined that the power outage or evacuation will be the remainder of the day, leadership will work to notify parents to have their student(s) picked up. Please remain with students until all have been picked up by their parent(s).

Lockdown Procedures

Purpose:

Lockdown is used when it is safer to stay in an area that can be secured than to move through the building where the potential threat may be encountered. Drills are intended to test the efficiency of the lockdown procedure to assure that in a crisis situation staff and students have an understanding of how to respond during a lockdown.

As with other emergency situations, during a Lockdown, calm, quick, and deliberate responses are required. Actively support the safety of yourself and others.

All Staff/Student Involvement During a Lockdown

General Guidelines to be followed when a Lockdown has been announced or determined:

1. If not in a classroom, students/staff/guests should go directly to the nearest safe location.
2. Staff should check hallway and bring anyone in the immediate area into their classroom before locking the door.
3. Lock classroom doors, windows, barricade the door and pull shades down immediately. Cover all door glass.
4. Keep students away from doors and windows.
5. Maintain a calm environment by remaining calm yourself and reassuring students that everything possible is being done to return the situation to normal.
6. If gunshot or an explosion is heard, get everyone on the floor.
7. Contact your supervisor immediately if you have an emergency in your room.
8. Remain in secured classrooms until notified to release class.

Training

FBCNB will provide opportunities for additional training classes or events regularly. All staff and volunteers must attend at least one of these training events annually.

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward.” Psalm 127:3

First Baptist Church New Braunfels Child Protection Policy Signature Page

You are signing an enforceable church policy.

Do not sign this agreement until you have read and agree to all of its provisions.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NEW BRAUNFELS.

I AGREE TO AND WILL ADHERE TO ALL OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE POLICY.

VOLUNTEER/LEADER/TEACHER'S SIGNATURE* DATE

PRINTED NAME AREAS OF SERVICE

**PARENT SIGNATURE REQUIRED FOR MINOR*

MINISTRY HEAD SIGNATURE DATE

FAMILY PASTOR SIGNATURE DATE

"But Jesus said, "Leave the children alone, and do not forbid them to come to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14