



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
MARTINSVILLE, VA

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

*“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*  
- Mark 10:13-16

## I. Policy Purpose

First Baptist Church (FBC) is committed to providing a church environment that is a safe place for children and youth and that will protect them from any abuse when they are involved in the FBC Early Learning Center (ELC), Sunday School, and various youth and other church related activities. FBC adopts these policies and procedures not only to maximize safety and prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring within its church community, but also to guide and protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse and neglect.

## II. Commonwealth of Virginia Statutes

\*Section 63.2-100 of the *Code of Virginia* defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 years of age whose parent or any person responsible for his or her care (such as a child care provider, foster parent, or anyone responsible for the welfare of a child receiving residential care at an institution):

- Causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury;
- Has a child present during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a controlled substance or during the unlawful sale of such substance where such activity would constitute a felony violation;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care;
- Abandons the child;
- Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor or which registration is required as a violent sexual offender; or
- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

\*NOTE: Virginia law requires that mandated reporters report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services regardless of the abuser/neglector's relationship to the child. (Taken from "*A Guide to Mandated Reporters in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*," Virginia Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services Unit).

## III. Terms and Definitions

- A. Child Abuse** - An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

## B. Types of Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse** – Physical abuse is defined as any act, which results in a non-accidental physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonably severe corporal punishment. This may happen when the parent and/or caregiver is frustrated or angry. Intentional, deliberate assaults, such as burning, biting, cutting, and forcibly immobilizing or twisting of limbs, are also included in this category.
2. **Physical Neglect** – Physical neglect is defined as the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. Physical neglect is often chronic in nature. Physical neglect may include, but is not limited to: Abandonment, lack of supervision, lack of adequate bathing and good hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition, lack of adequate shelter, lack of medical or dental care, or knowingly leaving a child alone with a person who is not related by blood or marriage to the child, and who is required to register as a violent sex offender.
3. **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may consist of many acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Sexual abuse is generally perpetrated by someone known to the child and often does not involve violent actions. Both boys and girls are victims of sexual abuse.

The nature of sexual abuse, the shame of the child victim, and the possible involvement of trusted parents, stepparents, or other persons in a caretaker role makes it extremely difficult for children to come forward to report sexual abuse. Sexual abuse includes: Incest, rape, intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling, sexual propositions or enticement, indecent exposure, child pornography, or child prostitution.

4. **Emotional/Mental Abuse or Neglect** – Emotional/mental abuse or neglect is defined as physical injuries that can scar and incapacitate a child, emotional maltreatment can similarly damage a child emotionally, behaviorally, and intellectually. Varying degrees of emotional and behavioral problems are common among children who have been emotionally abused. Emotional/mental maltreatment can include patterns of: Verbal assaults (e.g., screaming, intimidating, rejecting, ridiculing, blaming, sarcasm), ignoring and indifferent behavior to children, or constant family conflict. Emotional abuse can be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live down to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caregiver.
5. **Spiritual Abuse** – Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.
6. **Bizarre Discipline** – Any actions in which the caregiver uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.

A **combination** or **pattern** of indicators should alert you to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

#### **IV. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse**

##### **A. Screening**

###### **1. Background Requirements – Staff and Volunteers**

Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment or volunteer work (policy beginning July 2019, prior volunteers are grandfathered in) at FBC will be required to provide, complete, or undergo the following:

- Before beginning the first year of service, each employed or volunteer leader for children or youth ministries, children or youth teacher, childcare worker, or youth worker will be asked to sign a statement indicating that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse, sexual abuse, sex offender nor had such a conviction expunged.
- Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction, sexual abuse, sex offender or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children or youth.
- Each paid staff person and volunteer leader shall also undergo a national criminal record check. The church will cover the cost of this check for paid staff and volunteers will assume the cost when possible.
- Background checks will be performed every 5 years.

Anyone who has been screened by a public or private school system, scouting group or social services will be exempt from screening by FBC if they provide the organization's name and a contact person at the organization. A Background Check Information form should be signed and placed on file at FBC for their records. Background checks will only be valid for 5 years for the purposes of this policy.

##### **B. Six Month Rule for Volunteers**

A volunteer must be a member of FBC, or have regularly attended FBC, for six months before working with youth or children. This requirement does not apply to paid staff or volunteers involved in activities in which their own children are present. The Senior Pastor shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request, where appropriate.

##### **C. Two Person Rule**

1. Any adult who is present in a church sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. FBC employees and volunteers should not, during an FBC program, be alone with a single child where others cannot observe them.

2. In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.
3. Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. **No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom. When decorating classroom doors for special occasions, teachers should cut out around the classroom door window.**
4. In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door must be left open. The leader should not position him or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.
5. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
6. Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window or a half- door, such that the upper half may be kept open. **If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.**

#### **D. Staff Training**

1. Before beginning their first year of service, all paid and volunteer leaders, childcare workers, children and youth Sunday School teachers and youth workers will be required to read FBC's Children and Youth Protection Policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and that they understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed.
2. Leaders will be required to successfully complete a three module training session on child protection titled Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training offered by the church. Other workers with children and youth will also be encouraged to successfully complete such training sessions. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the training has been completed.
3. Training from public or private school systems, social services, and Scouting groups will be honored as valid training. The worker should fill out the form for Child Protection/ Child Abuse Prevention Training Information to be filed at FBC in lieu of attending the training offered at FBC. This training will also be valid for only 2 years.

## **E. Adequate Supervision**

According to the Virginia Department of Social Services, the following adequate supervision will be provided at all times. These are the standards for licensed preschool centers:

- ❖ Birth – 16 months = 1 staff for every 4 children
- ❖ 16 months – 2 years = 1 staff for every 5 children
- ❖ 2 years old = 1 staff for every 8 children
- ❖ 3-5 years = 1 staff for every 10 children
- ❖ 5-8 years = 1 staff for every 18 children
- ❖ 9-12 years = 1 staff for every 20 children

## **V. Code of Conduct**

1. Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the FBC Children and Youth Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no. (See Appendix A)
3. Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
5. While supervising children and youth participating in FBC programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Restroom supervision: Volunteers will make sure any restroom used is not occupied by any suspicious or unknown individual before allowing children and youth to use the facilities. Always send children in pairs with a volunteer. The staff or volunteer, will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff/volunteer (not being alone with a child). Staff and volunteers shall strongly encourage parents to take children to the restroom whenever possible.
7. Primarily staff members/paid caregivers should do diapering and potty training. Volunteers may be asked to help in certain situations and should follow posted nursery guidelines when performing diapering.
8. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse or neglect must be reported according to the FBC Children and Youth Protection Policy.
9. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
10. Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.

11. Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
12. Smoking or use of tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited. Smoking is not permitted in any indoor or common area in the church building. Smoking is only allowed in designated smoking areas.
13. Under no circumstances should Staff and volunteers release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior written permission has been obtained from the parent.
14. Slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child is prohibited.
15. Cell phones, tablets (and other electronic devices), texting, and personal phone calls are prohibited while employees are supervising children.
16. Staff and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device (cellphones, tablets, etc.), social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and youth.
17. Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth. For example, no loose fitting jewelry, perfume and/or scented lotions.
18. Movies used in all church settings shall meet the voluntary movie rating system guidelines established by the Motion Picture Association of America for age-appropriate content.
19. Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
20. Staff and volunteers must wear identification as a church employee or leader AT ALL TIMES. For ELC staff, please refer to policy handbook for dress code guidelines.
21. Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse or neglect and will attend training sessions on the subject.
22. Staff and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child to the individual him- or herself. Except for concerns related to alleged or potential abuse, which require specific immediate reports, these concerns may be reported to the individual initially. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to the Senior Pastor or Early Learning Center Director.
23. Although unadvisable, if it becomes necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all staff and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth. Driving record history shall be obtained on all youth leaders and volunteers. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth. It is always advisable for leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating. Two adults must accompany the child or youth home.

24. In the event that a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises, parent permission should be granted in writing or by phone when possible. It is preferred to have adults and youth meet in pairs or to meet in public places.

## **VI. Children and Youth Protection Policy Revisions**

The Senior Pastor and Early Learning Center Director will review the Children and Youth Protection Policy annually. The Senior Pastor and a legal representative of FBC should approve any proposed changes. Revisions must be approved annually. The Senior Pastor and Early Learning Center Director shall be responsible for the administration of this policy. A Children and Youth Protection Committee should be formed only if major revisions are required. The Senior Pastor should choose the membership of the Children and Youth Protection Committee.

## **VII. Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

God calls all ministry personnel to help each other as “iron sharpens iron” (Psalm 27:17) to develop a safe environment for children and youth.

### **A. Why Should I Report?**

The purpose of mandated reporting is to identify suspected abused and neglected children as soon as possible so that they can be protected from further harm.

Child protective services cannot act until a report is made. As a mandated reporter, you play a critical role in preventing any future harm to children.

Without detection, reporting, and intervention, these children may remain victims for the rest of their lives. Abused children don’t just grow up and forget their childhood. They can carry physical and emotional scars throughout their lives, and may repeat the pattern of abuse or neglect with their own children.

### **B. Who Must Report?**

Under Virginia law (*Code of Virginia* § 63.2-1509), certain professionals are required to report when acting in a professional capacity. Included among these professionals are:

- Teachers or other persons employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school;
- Persons providing full or part-time child care for pay on a regular basis;
- Persons 18 years or older associated with or employed by any public or private organization responsible for the care, custody, and control of children; and
- As of July 1, 2019, members of the clergy.



### C. Procedures for Mandated Reporting for Child Abuse and Neglect

Should there be an allegation of child abuse and neglect at First Baptist Church, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Any allegation of child abuse or neglect shall be treated seriously.
2. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.
3. All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner.
4. **Immediately** begin documenting all procedures which occur in handling the allegation.
5. Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident of child abuse or neglect must immediately report the matter to the Early Learning Center Director, who then immediately reports to the Senior Pastor.
6. Upon receipt of an alleged allegation of child abuse or neglect the Early Learning Center Director shall require the mandated reporter to complete a Child Abuse and Neglect Report form (Appendix A).
7. If the Senior Pastor determines that there is a reason to suspect that child abuse or neglect may have occurred, then the following steps shall be taken:
  - a. Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation.
  - b. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge.
  - c. Immediately notify the church's insurance company.
8. Do not confront the accused with the allegation. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church or Early Learning Center, that person must be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the Child Protective Services investigation is concluded.
9. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the Child Protective Services.

### VIII. Privacy Policy

No ELC teacher, church staff, or church volunteers (i.e. children's church worker, Sunday School teacher, youth group worker, etc.) should post recognizable photos of any child/at-risk adult on their personal online website (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat); nor should they post any personal comments or opinions about a child in their care on any online website. The FBC Early Learning Center and the Church may post photos on their website with proper photo release permission from parents/guardians. *We understand that the youth of today utilize this technology extensively as part of their lifestyle. FBC youth group leaders and members should exercise caution when posting to their personal online websites. A parent may indicate that their youth/child/at risk adult be exempt from having their image put on a website affiliated with FBC.*

## Appendix A: Touch

Healthy, caring touch can edify and encourage a child; yet, unhealthy touch causes distress and is abusive. Staff and volunteers shall observe the following guidelines.

- Touch should always be open and public rather than secretive. A hug given in the context of a group is very different than a hug given behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- Touch should be with the child's permission. If the child resists, the staff member shall respect the child's response and stop touching him/her.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for a child that he/she is able to do for himself, including dressing, bathing, etc.
- Touch should not include violent behavior. Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold a child against his/her will, or in any way assault a child.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts:

- Verbal praise; side hugs; shoulder to shoulder hugs; pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate).
- For smaller children, touching hands, faces, shoulders, and arms; placing your arm around the child's shoulders; hugging or holding the child when others are present.

The following behaviors are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate; therefore, staff and volunteers shall refrain from:

- Touching a child's buttocks, chest, genital area, or thighs;
- Showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child;
- Making inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development;
- Making flirtatious or seductive looks (even in a joking way);
- Showing any form of affection that is unwanted by the child;
- Showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with a child;
- Engaging in any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature;
- Making or participating in jokes that are sexual, degrade other people groups, or cut down fellow FBC staff, children, members or others attending FBC.

Adult staff and volunteers shall monitor each other regarding physical contact with children and hold each other accountable by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted. It is always better to confront gently someone whom you believe is behaving in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate. The goal is to create a culture where children are safe and adult workers strive to remain above reproach regarding interaction with children/youth.

## **Appendix B: Resources and Helpful Links**

***Child Protection Policy and Procedures*** for the First United Methodist Church, Martinsville, Virginia, April 20, 2013

<http://fumcmartinsville.net/docs/childpolicy.pdf>

***Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children at Youth eXcelling in Leadership Conferences***, Christian Education and Publications (CEP), Updated 4/14/2104

<http://www.ppacep.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CEP-Code-of-Conduct—Child-Protection-at-YXL.pdf>

***Child and Youth Protect Policy, First Presbyterian Church***, Greensboro, North Carolina, June 30, 2016

<http://www.fpcgreensboro.org/child-and-youth-protection-policy>

***A Guide For Mandated Reporters In Recognizing And Reporting Child Abuse And Neglect***, Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services

[https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro\\_page/publications/general/B032-02-0280-00-eng.pdf](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro_page/publications/general/B032-02-0280-00-eng.pdf)

***Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-100***, Revised, Effective July 1, 2013

<https://vacode.org/63.2-100/>

***Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers for Virginia***, Revised, Effective November 1, 2012

[https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro\\_page/code\\_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/code_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf)

***Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training***, Virginia Department of Social Services Online Training Modules

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/abuse/mr.cgi>

***Frequently Asked Questions – Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training, Virginia Department of Services Online Training***

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated\\_reporters/cwse5691/story\\_content/external\\_files/FAQ.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cwse5691/story_content/external_files/FAQ.pdf)

## Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Report Form

### PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

To Be Completed by Mandated Child Abuse Reporters

#### **REPORTING PARTY**

Name of Mandated Reporter	Report's Telephone (Daytime) (     )
Reporter's Business Name and Address	City    State                          ZIP
Reporter's Signature	Today's Date

#### **VICTIM**

Name (First, Middle, Last)	Birthdate or Approximate Age
Sex	Ethnicity
Address	City    State                          ZIP
Telephone (     )	Parents' or Guardian Name

#### **INCIDENT INFORMATION** (If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) or other forms and check this box)

Date/Time of Incident	Place of Incident
Narrative Description. Please describe the incident. What the victim said/what the mandated reporter observe.	

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

After reviewing the foregoing Policy and Procedures, please sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate that you have read, understood and accept the Children & Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of First Baptist Church.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Children & Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of First Baptist Church. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures.

I have no convictions for child abuse, sexual abuse, sex offender or expungements of such convictions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*This document will remain in effect for 2 years from the date of signing.*