

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SPRINGVILLE
CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION POLICY
Approved 4/19/2009**

Applicability

This policy shall apply to any paid or voluntary church worker who has regular, close contact with minors, including teachers, teacher's helpers, and church van/bus drivers.

Prevention

Ministry Staff: The following procedures shall be used when considering Ministerial Staff who may have regular contact with minors/

- All applicants shall provide three references, which shall be verified by the personnel committee
- The personnel committee shall seek three additional references not provided by the applicant
- The personnel committee shall evaluate the applicant's resume for significant gaps in service and make inquiry as to the reasons for such gaps in service
- During the interview, the personnel committee shall ask specific questions intended to discover the moral character of the applicant, including such questions as:
 - Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a crime?
 - During your ministry, has your moral life been above reproach?
- Perform a criminal background check, a credit check, and obtain a child abuse/neglect report from the Alabama Department of Human Resources (www.dhr.state.al.us)

Non-ministerial Paid Staff: The following procedures shall be used when employing non-ministerial paid workers who may have regular contact with minors.

- All applicants shall provide three references which shall be verified by the personnel committee
- The interview process shall inquire as to the moral character of the individual with respect to minors
- A criminal background check will be obtained for all final candidates
- A child abuse/neglect report from the Alabama Department of Human Resources will be obtained for all final candidates (www.dhr.state.al.us)
- A credit check will be obtained for all final candidates

Volunteers: Volunteers shall include all non-paid workers who have regular, close contact with minors, including van/bus drivers.

- Volunteers must complete an application that includes a statement of their conversion experience, the area of children's ministries they intend to serve, and a statement attesting that they have never been convicted of abuse or neglect involving a minor
- No volunteers will be considered unless they have been an active member of the church for at least six months
- A child abuse/neglect report from the Alabama Department of Human Resources will be obtained for all volunteers (www.dhr.state.al.us)

Other Requirements:

These requirements are not intended to replace more stringent requirements that may be imposed by other related policies of First Baptist Church of Springville.

Facilities

- Wherever possible, classrooms involving minors shall have viewing windows so that the activities occurring within the classroom can be monitored as necessary (Note: Current facilities do not support this.)

Supervision

- Reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure that all classes involving minors shall be led by at least two adults who are not part of the same immediate family
- No minor shall lead any other class involving minors without the presence of at least two adults who are not part of the same immediate family
- No child under the age of 14 will be allowed to assist in leading a class involving or giving care to grade school or younger children
- Every effort shall be made to ensure that no adult is ever alone with a minor. If it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a minor, they shall remain in an open and public location where their activity can be easily observed

Security

- All regularly scheduled classes/programs involving children birth through 6th grade shall employ a sign-in and sign-out security mechanism
 - No child shall be allowed to enter into the custody of the children's program unless he/she is signed-in by a parent
 - No child shall be allowed to leave the custody of the children's program without being signed-out by a parent
 - The parent shall notify the children's program of any special circumstances involving the signing out of their child
- Except as noted for 5th/6th graders below, only parents or adults who have legal and/or temporary custody of a child may sign the child in or out
 - Siblings shall not be allowed to sign a child in or out
- For birth through kindergarten, this sign-in/sign-out mechanism shall include a security token that shall be given to the parent at sign-in and returned at sign-out
- For 5th/6th graders, with the express consent of a parent, they may sign themselves in and out, but may not sign in or sign out a younger sibling

Travel

- A travel permission form signed by a parent or legal guardian shall be obtained for any church-sponsored trip involving a minor; this travel permission form shall include:
 - The date(s) of the trip
 - The intended purpose (location) of the trip

- Emergency contact information
- Statement of consent to treat in the event of an emergency
- Any special instructions associated with the child
- Once per year (or whenever such information may change), insurance information shall be obtained for all children.
 - This information shall be kept on file and carried on all trips
 - This form must be completed before any new child can participate on a trip
- All chaperones on church-sponsored trips involving minors shall meet all of the requirements of this policy except that a child abuse/neglect report will not be required.

Response

Alabama law requires all ministers and those working with minors to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.

At any point that a worker receives a report of abuse/neglect or if such worker either observes or suspects abuse/neglect has taken place, the following steps shall be taken:

1. The worker shall report the incident immediately to the appropriate minister (preschool, children, or youth) as well as the pastor, unless either the minister or pastor is implicated.
2. The pastor shall immediately notify the chairman of the deacons as well as the church's attorney and insurance representative to assist in the response.
3. It is recommended that the pastor also contact the director of missions or the Office of LeaderCare and Church Administration, 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 263, at the State Board of Missions for additional assistance.
4. The accused worker shall be tactfully removed from service until after the investigation has been resolved. However, see guidelines below regarding proper treatment and attitude toward the accused.
5. In accordance with the guidance of the church attorney and insurance company, the pastor or chairman of the deacons shall contact the proper civil authorities.

In Alabama, when child abuse or neglect is observed or suspected, it must be reported to the county DHR orally and then followed by a written report. The phone number for the St. Clair County DHR is (205) 812-2100 for the main line and (205) 812-2165 for Child Support Services.

Questions regarding the reporting process can be answered by your county DHR or by calling 334-242-9500.

6. The pastor or chairman of deacons shall notify the parents of the victim.

7. At the discretion of the pastor, a prepared statement may be presented to the church congregation (see guidelines below)

In addition to the above procedures, the following guidelines should be observed during the response process:

- Although a cursory investigation may be necessary to obtain basic facts about the situation, do not attempt an in-depth investigation to ascertain guilt or innocence. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- Abuse must be reported. Members and ministers are mandatory reporters. The exception may be confidential communication with clergy (Alabama Rules of Evidence 505, Code of Alabama Section 26-14-3). If you are in doubt as to how this applies to you, contact your attorney or the Center for the Study of Law and the Church, 1-800-888-7303.
- Confrontation of the accused should not take place until the safety of the child or youth is secured.
- Discussions of this matter should be limited to a small and appropriate group.
- Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support helps prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- Do not respond negatively to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult, and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a church employee, there should be full compensation during the time of the initial investigation.
- Use the text of a prepared statement to inform the congregation, and, if necessary, be made available to the news media. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- Document all your efforts at handling the incident.

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Signature Page

This policy shall be signed and dated by the following:

Pastor, FBC Springville

Date

Associate Pastor in Music/Education

Date

Chairman of Deacons

Date

Preschool Director/Minister

Date

Children's Director/Minister

Date

Associate Pastor of Student & Family Ministry

Date