

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CARROLLTON, TEXAS

**POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF
CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

I. General Purpose and Scope of Policy

- A. In following the instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ to “let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14 NIV), it is the goal of the members and staff of the Church to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, and youth entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage those preschoolers, children, and youth and their families to come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and to grow in their relationship with Him. A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of Child Abuse or Neglect. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our preschoolers, children, youth, employees, volunteers, and the entire Church family.
- B. This policy shall apply to all current and future Workers of the Church, compensated and volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers, children, and youth in Church-sponsored activities.

II. Definitions of Terms Used in This Policy

- A. “Adult” shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen years of age.
- B. “Child Abuse” shall be defined as verbal, physical, mental, emotional, and sexual injury or impairment of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor.
- C. “Child Neglect” shall be defined as failing to provide food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain life or health of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor or placing or failing to remove a preschooler, child, youth, or minor from a situation which a reasonable person would know exposes the preschooler, child, youth, or minor to risk of harm.
- D. “Coordinator” shall be defined as the individuals currently employed by the Church in any preschool or children’s coordinator position.
- E. “Director” shall mean the Church’s Weekday Preschool director.
- F. “Minister” shall be defined as any current full-time pastoral employee of the Church, including the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, any Associate Pastor, the Minister, Childhood Education, and the Director, Preschool Education.
- G. “Preschooler,” “child,” “youth,” and “minor” shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen years.

- H. “Teenage Worker” shall be defined as any worker at least fourteen years old or older but under the age of eighteen years.
- I. “Worker” shall be defined as (1) any Adult or Teenage Worker who serves as a volunteer to work with a preschooler, child, youth, or minor and (2) all employees of the Church.

III. Enlistment of Workers

- A. Volunteer Workers considered for a position in the preschool, children, or youth areas of ministry must be members of the Church for a minimum of six months before serving in one of these areas. Exceptions may be permitted on a case-by-case basis provided that the Minister overseeing the area of ministry in which the volunteer Worker is applying to serve receives a letter of recommendation from the former pastor or minister of the Worker. A copy of the recommendation will be placed in the Worker’s file.
- B. All Workers must complete a “Leadership Profile Application” and the “First Baptist Church Carrollton Church Worker’s Statement” (both of which are attached to the end of this policy).
- C. Each Worker will be required to provide photographic identification. A copy of the photographic identification will be attached to the Worker’s Leadership Profile Application.
- D. Reasonable effort will be made to verify the information on the Leadership Profile Application. A nationwide criminal background check shall be performed on all Worker applications, including both volunteer and paid Workers. The background check shall be updated from time to time.
- E. The Minister or Coordinator responsible for a particular ministry area or the Director, as appropriate, will interview volunteer Workers being considered for service. Based upon the background check and interview, such Minister, Coordinator, or Director will make a determination if the volunteer Worker is suited and qualified to serve in the preschool, children, or youth areas of ministry.
- F. Individuals who have entered a plea of guilty, no contest or nolo contendere to, have been placed on probation for, have been given deferred adjudication for, or have been convicted or found guilty in, a civil, criminal, or military proceeding of either sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, assault of a minor, or injury to a child will not be allowed to volunteer nor will they be employed for any Church-sponsored activity or program related to the preschool, children, or youth areas of ministry. As a point of clarification, individuals who have been convicted of other crimes may also be found to be unsuited or unqualified to volunteer.
- G. All Workers authorized to work with minors shall be listed alphabetically on an “Authorized Worker List,” which shall be compiled at least annually. The Authorized

Worker List shall be circulated to all Ministers and Coordinators in any ministry area of the Church that involves minors and to the Director.

- H. Potential volunteer Workers who are adult survivors of child abuse or neglect may be asked to meet with a Minister prior to working in the preschool, children, or youth areas of ministry.
- I. A file will be maintained on each individual who completes a Leadership Profile Application. All materials in a Worker's file including, but not limited to the Leadership Profile Application, Church Worker's Statement, records of any contacts with churches, work or personal references, criminal background checks, or interview notes, will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.
- J. No one under the age of fourteen years shall be permitted to supervise minors. All Teenage Workers must be approved by the Minister or Coordinator assigned to each area of ministry or the Director, as appropriate, and must serve with an Adult Worker.
- K. The Church shall adopt an identification system so that it can be determined at a glance if a particular Worker is authorized to be with a preschooler or child. All Workers must wear the appropriate identification badge when serving in the preschool or children areas of ministry.

IV. Supervision of Workers

- A. A Church-sponsored activity shall be registered with the appropriate Minister. It is the responsibility of the Director, each Coordinator, or in some instances the Workers planning the event to inform the appropriate Minister of the event. Each Minister will be required to maintain a list of Church-sponsored activities occurring in his or her ministry area.
- B. An adequate number of Adults must be present for all Church-sponsored activities involving minors. The number of required Adults will be determined based upon the following criteria: nature of the event or activity, anticipated number of participants, age of participants, location of the event, and training and experience of the adult leaders. As a general guideline, the Church will strive to achieve a Worker/child ratio as follows:

<u>Age of Minor</u>	<u>Adult:Child Ratio</u>
0-12 months	1: 3
12-23 months	1: 4
2 years	1: 5
3 years	1: 6
4-5 years	1: 8
6-18 years	1:12

- C. A minimum of two Workers from the Authorized Worker List should be present at all times in teaching and social situations sponsored by the Church which involve minors, with the exception of the Weekday Preschool. No Worker shall meet with any preschooler, child, youth, or minor off of the Church's premises except as part of a planned and approved trip or meeting and following all other applicable rules.
- D. A Worker may not visit in seclusion with a minor or take a minor out on a one-on-one basis without the permission of the parent(s) or legal guardian of the child.
- E. A minimum of two Adult Workers should accompany any group of preschoolers, children, or youth to off-campus Church-sponsored activities. Oral or written permission from the parent(s) or legal guardian of the minor is required prior to any off-campus Church-sponsored activity.
- F. A parent or guardian of a minor must give written permission to the Church in order for a Worker to provide transportation for the minor to or from a Church-sponsored event. No Worker shall permit himself or herself to be alone with a minor who is not his or her own child.
- G. Oral permission from a parent or guardian for any Church-sponsored event must be followed by a written note and given to the Minister or Coordinator of the respective area of Ministry or the Director, as appropriate.
- H. Parents and Adult chaperones must complete a Leadership Profile Application before supervising an off-campus or overnight event sponsored by the Church.
- I. Information concerning the sleeping accommodations for minors at any overnight event will be available for parents. No Worker shall be alone with any minor at any time on such events.
- J. The Minister or Coordinator assigned to each area of ministry or the Director, as appropriate, will personally supervise ongoing programs and make periodic unannounced visits into each Bible study classroom where minors are being supervised.
- K. Any room in which minors are being supervised should remain accessible to parents, Ministers, the Director, and the Coordinators. Doors to rooms without look-in windows should always remain open.
- L. To review existing policies for pick up and release of children to authorized persons, see the explanation in Section VI. A-E of the Preschool Policy booklet. An identification system shall be adopted so that the Adult who drops off a child who is in kindergarten or below is the same Adult who picks up the child.
- M. For children who need a diaper change or assistance in going to the bathroom, there shall always be two Workers present. It is never acceptable for one Worker to be alone with a minor in a bathroom stall out of view from other Workers. Children who are six years

and older should not need assistance in going to the bathroom as a general rule, but in instances in which they do, two Adult Workers (neither of whom may be related either by blood or marriage) must be present.

V. Substitutes and Visitors

- A. Only individuals listed on the Authorized Worker List will be allowed to substitute as a volunteer Worker when working with minors.
- B. Visitors (persons not on the Authorized Worker List) can attend a Church-sponsored event, provided the Minister or Coordinator assigned to the related area of ministry or the Director, as appropriate, is informed. Visitors may be required to wear a visitor badge in certain Church-sponsored activities.

VI. Training of Workers

- A. Comprehensive training and education are the foundation for the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. The training program will be required for all Workers and will be offered to parents and legal guardians. The Church shall maintain appropriate records to document that all Workers have received the training.
- B. All Ministers and Coordinators of the Church and the Director will receive training in the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.
- C. All Workers will be given training in the prevention and recognition of Child Abuse and Neglect during the orientation program. Additional periodic training will be provided for new Workers as needed.
- D. A training session will be scheduled by the Church on an annual basis. Periodic retraining will be scheduled by the Church as needed.
- E. Workers must attend a training session within one year of beginning work in the preschool, children, or youth areas of ministry.
- F. Training may be provided for interested parents or guardians of minors who are involved in any area of ministry at the Church.
- G. Topics covered in the training program should include, but not be limited to:
 - 1. The definition of child abuse and neglect according to the Texas Family Code and Texas Penal Code;
 - 2. How to recognize sexual and physical abuse and neglect symptoms;

3. What constitutes inappropriate conduct;
4. Church policies and procedures that govern working with children;
5. The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct;
6. Legally required reporting procedures for observed or suspected abuse or neglect and criminal and civil consequences for failing to report or making a false report;
7. Local agencies that have the resources to help parents with Child Abuse and Neglect questions and assistance;
8. The rationale behind the Church's policies and procedures;
9. The Church's security system and procedures with preschoolers.

VII. Response and Reporting of Allegations of Abuse

- A. Every person is legally responsible for reporting known and reasonably suspected cases of alleged child sexual or physical abuse or neglect to the state officials of Child Protective Services ("CPS") or to the local police.
- B. All allegations of Child Abuse or Neglect will be taken seriously and acted upon by the Church. The well-being of the alleged victim is paramount. All situations will be handled directly with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all parties concerned. The following procedures will be followed:
 1. A report must be made immediately to the Executive Pastor or his designee if there is a suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect. A Church incident report will be made in writing by the person(s) who suspects the abuse or to whom the abuse was reported. A copy of the report must be retained by the Church and placed in a confidential file. This may become important if the Worker is charged with negligence for failing to make a report.
 2. The Executive Pastor or his designee will notify the local police or state officials promptly after the Child Abuse or Neglect or potential Child Abuse or Neglect is reported to the Church. The Executive Pastor or his designee will also inform the person who has made the report to the Church of their responsibility under Section VII.B.1. of this policy.
 3. The care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority. The accused should not be confronted until the safety of the child is secured and the proper governmental entity or agency is informed. Workers are not required to confront the accused and should not undertake an investigation other than if necessary to determine if there is a reason to suspect Child Abuse or Neglect. It is not the Worker's job or duty to

determine the truth of any suspicion or allegation, but merely to report it. Law enforcement will make its own investigation and determination.

4. If necessary, the insurance carrier will be notified and full cooperation will be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the Executive Pastor or his designee.
- C. The Executive Pastor or his designee will obtain the pastoral resources needed to care for the alleged victim, parents of the victim, and the accused.
- D. If an investigation of the Worker is conducted by the appropriate governmental entity or agency and if the accused is a volunteer or employee, that Worker will be relieved temporarily of duties until the investigation is concluded.

VIII. Compliance

- A. Every Minister and Coordinator assigned in the preschool, children and youth areas and the Director are responsible for carrying out the provisions set forth in this policy.
- B. This policy applies to employees of the Church regardless of whether they are specifically assigned to a preschool, children, or youth ministry position, and all must comply with the policy.
- C. All volunteer Workers must familiarize themselves with and abide by the provisions set forth in this policy. Each volunteer Worker shall sign a copy of this policy and return the signed copy to the Church, with the following statement:

“I, the undersigned, acknowledge and agree as evidenced by my signature below, that (1) I have read the foregoing Policy for the Prevention of Child Abuse or Neglect, (2) I understand it, and (3) I will follow all policies and procedures described in it. I know of no reason why I cannot follow the policy. If I am arrested or placed under suspicion for any felony offense, any offence in which abuse or neglect of a child is alleged, or have any other change in circumstance that reasonably places my suitability as a volunteer in question, I will immediately notify the Minister in charge of the area of ministry in which I am serving and cease my volunteer activities in that area of ministry.”
- D. Changes, amendments, or clarifications to this policy will be made by the Personnel Committee.

IX. Other Pertinent Information

- A. The employment rights of an employee shall not be deemed to be enlarged or diminished by reason of the establishment of these policies and procedures. Neither this policy nor any other policy or plan referred to herein constitutes, or shall be deemed to constitute, a contract of employment or a guarantee of employment for any period of time.
- B. The Church reserves the right to amend or discontinue this or any other policy at any time without giving advance notice.