

First Baptist Church

Children and Youth Ministry Policy

First Baptist Church's vision statement is "Our urgent mission is to develop Christ-like individuals to reach a lost world." As such, every child, teen and adult, regardless of age, disabilities, cultural background, or sex, when coming in contact with the people and the ministries of First Baptist Church, should be able to find a safe place and a refuge from any and all physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Scripture is very clear concerning working with Children and youth.

Luke 17:1-2 *"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."*

James 3:1b *"you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly"*

1st Peter 5:2-3 *"Be Shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"*

Ecclesiastes 12:14 *"For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil"*

2nd Corinthians 8:21 *"For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men"*

1 Timothy 3:10 *"they must first be tested; then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons (in our case Volunteers)"*

In keeping with the Holy Scriptures, First Baptist Church views abuse as a violation of the standard of conduct expected of all persons in the congregation. It is the intention of First Baptist Church to deal promptly and fairly with any complaint of abuse when alleged to have been committed by an employee or Trained Volunteer of the church.

This policy is set out to enforce standards of ethical behaviour, which are in keeping with Scripture and both Civil and Criminal law. This policy speaks to the protection of children and youth, but it is expected to be applied to all ministries of First Baptist Church

Definitions

Physical Abuse: *Physical abuse is any deliberate physical force or action that results or could result, in injury to a child/youth. It can include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a person. It is different than what is considered reasonable discipline."*

Sexual Abuse: *Sexual abuse occurs when a child/youth is used for the sexual stimulation or gratification of an adult or an older child. It can take many forms. This includes sexual intercourse, exposing a person's private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual pleasure, allowing a child/youth to look at or perform pornographic pictures or videos.*

It is against the law to touch a child/youth for a sexual purpose, to encourage or force a child/youth to touch another person in a sexual way or to tell a child/youth to touch him/herself for an adult's or older child's sexual purpose.

Child sexual abuse exploits and harms children by involving them in sexual behavior for which they are unprepared, to which they cannot consent and from which they are unable to protect themselves.

In determining whether behavior is of a sexual nature, you should ask-if a person seeing or looking at the behavior would conclude that it is.

This would exclude normal affectionate behavior towards children and normal health or hygiene care.

You are not to misuse your authority and power to gain advantage over another for your own personal pleasure. If a child/youth invites sexual content in the relationship – it is your responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and put a stop to it.

Emotional Abuse: *Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that attacks a child/youth's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child/youth beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constant criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child/youth. It also includes failure by caregivers to provide children/youth with love, emotional support and guidance.*

It is the responsibility of the Pastor(s), Deacons, Volunteer Leaders, Volunteer Helpers, Employees and Trained Volunteers of any kind at First Baptist Church to exercise integrity, sensitivity and care in all your relationships. You need to build a trust relationship.

Do not take advantage of children/youth that are less powerful and cannot take care of themselves. We are to be servants in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It is our responsibility to protect the vulnerable from harm.

These definitions include both actual or implied threats and action.

First Baptist Church – also known as Listowel Baptist Church or FBC.

Definition of a child/youth is any person less than 18 years of age.

Volunteer Helpers – aged 13-17 or Adults designated by Deacons

Volunteer Leaders – age of 18 and older

Trained Volunteer(s) – Any person over age 13 who has taken the Children and Youth Ministry Policy training.

Who can help in Ministries here at First Baptist Church?

Our church is concerned with the safety of the children and families we serve. At the same time we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and youth who volunteer to make our ministries possible. It is First Baptist Church's commitment to provide a safe environment for children/youth and declare zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect committed by any Trained Volunteer, Employee or Pastor(s).

There is an ongoing process designed to identify any person – whether paid or unpaid, volunteer or staff – who may potentially cause harm to children/youth. Screening of all applications helps to create and maintain a safe environment. The courts look for a process by which a church screens volunteers before engaging them in service. A court may find a church legally liable if the church is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers.

First Baptist Church Children and Youth Ministry Policy requirements are: to complete an application, provide 2 acceptable references, all Pastor(s) and the Deacons Board approvals, Criminal Record Check including Vulnerable Sector Check and a training session. All trained volunteers must be members or adherents in good standing who support the doctrines, values, direction and constitution of First Baptist Church.

We, as established by the Board, require all personnel who have management authority and power to submit to the Children and Youth Ministry Policy requirements. This includes all Pastor(s), Deacons, Trustees, Leadership Committees, any paid employees, (such as caretakers, secretaries.)

Any individual age 13 or older that works with children/youth is subject to the same screening requirements as Volunteer Leaders at First Baptist Church before he/she can begin service. Youth who are 13-17 are considered Volunteer Helpers and must be assigned to work alongside a Volunteer Leader over the age of 18. The Volunteer Helpers do not require a Criminal Records/Vulnerable Sector Check until they turn 18 and wish to become Volunteer Leaders. The Volunteer Helpers are not authorized to take children (except their own siblings) to the washroom. (Exception being: our church nursery where there is a washroom within the nursery that is staffed by a screened Volunteer Leader). Once a Volunteer Helper turns 18 they will be required to reapply as a Volunteer Leader.

There is a minimum waiting period of 6 months of regular attendance at FBC for new volunteers prior to eligibility to work with children/youth. Individuals who are unknown to First Baptist Church, or who have recently moved from another community, should never have immediate access to children/youth.

Criminal Records/Vulnerable Sector checks will be required for all Volunteers Leaders, aged 18 and over, who have the opportunity of being alone with children/youth (newborn through age 17). These are required every 5 years and done by a First Baptist Church Children and Youth Ministry Policy Committee person. If a prospective volunteer has had a history with Family and Social Services or other child welfare agencies, a request may be made by the church leadership for the individual to sign consent to inquire with the appropriate welfare agencies.

All Volunteers who serve in children and youth ministries will have a personnel file kept with church records. These files are kept permanently. In the fall of each year there will be a required mandatory retraining session to update all volunteers. If you do not attend one of two offered retraining sessions, you will be moved to the inactive list.

It is recommended that there be a five year age gap between the volunteers and the children/teens they minister to.

Occasional observers who join a class or ministry will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the attendance for that day. They will not be placed in a position of influence or trust with children who are not their own. FBC will allow a "one time" visit for potential volunteers to observe a ministry to see if this is an area/ministry they wish to serve in.

All First Baptist Church Trained Volunteers will have a nametag to identify themselves to parents, guardians, children and newcomers.

Individuals that have been legally accused, or convicted, or are under reasonable suspicion of offences against children/youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children/youth participate.

For the protection of our children, supervision of volunteers will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs by Pastor(s), Deacons or a Children and Youth Ministry Personal.

We have Hall Monitors assigned to be available during the Sunday services and the Discipleship groups. Their responsibility is to comply with the duties as set out in the Hall Monitor Information and Procedures Policy and to make sure all children and youth are kept safe. These individuals will be adults from our Trained Volunteer list.

Those providing support services to FBC programs involving children/youth (e.g. table set up, food preparation) are not required to go through the process explained above. Under

no circumstance are untrained parents/guardians or volunteers to be left alone with a child or a group of children and shall always be in site of the trained Volunteer Leader.

Those who wish to Volunteer in our Children and Youth Ministries from outside of First Baptist Church:

The Individual must be a regular attendee (member or adherent of good standing) of a church or attends, on a regular basis, one of our First Baptist Church ministries. They must be willing to support our doctrines, values, direction and constitution of our church. Individuals who are unknown to First Baptist Church, or who have recently moved from another community, should never have immediate access to children/youth. They will be required to comply with all policies and procedures set out in the First Baptist Church Children and Youth Ministry Policy. They will be required to do the application process. One of two references must be from their current home church minister/pastor, lay leadership, deacon, elder, or children's ministry worker. References must be adults that are not related to the applicant and are able to vouch for their character, reliability and suitability through experience and have had similar responsibilities. (The two references themselves must not be related.) These could include teachers in school, adults in a church who have known them for years, leaders in other organizations and parents from babysitting jobs. The pastor(s), deacons, of Listowel First Baptist reserves the right to ask for a personal interview with the new candidate or to speak personally with the references.

Volunteer Behavior, Discipline Guidelines and Safety Precautions

Trained Volunteers should always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave in a Godly manner, demonstrating Christian conduct, respect, honesty and trustworthiness.

Appropriate Touch:

Recognizing that children/youth need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with children will be age and developmentally appropriate. Love and care can be expressed in the following approved ways:

- Hold a preschool child who is crying – comfort them.
- Speak to a child/youth at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a child's hands when speaking, listening or walking him to his/her activity.
- Gently hold the child's/youth shoulders or hand to keep his/her attention while you redirect his/her behavior.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child/youth when comforting or quieting is needed.
- Pat a child/youth on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him/her. Gently touch his/her face.
- Use "high fives" or "knuckle bumps".

Inappropriate Touch:

Recognizing that the innocence of children/youth must be protected, Volunteers Leaders/Helpers will be made aware that the following actions are to be avoided:

- Do not kiss child/youth or coax them to kiss you.
- Do not engage in chest to chest hugging, extended hugging or tickling.
- Do not hold a child's/youth's face when talking to or disciplining him/her.
- Do not touch a child/youth in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in case of assisting preschoolers going to washroom.) Touching of thighs and above the knee should be avoided.
- Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap.
- Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child/youth (e.g. one on one wrestling, piggy back rides, back rubs).
- Avoid being alone or showing affection in isolated areas of buildings.

The Youth Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch area maybe different than above. Please see the Youth Info and Procedure page for their information.

In the event a child/youth approaches a Trained Volunteer with the intent to hug or kiss or unexpectedly does so, they should accept the affection, but should as quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical contact.

Trained Volunteers must model kindness, be calm, set age appropriate limits and teach children/youth to solve problems with words. Under no circumstances may children/youth be humiliated, neglected, pushed, slapped or spanked. No abusive discipline like threatening, hurling insults, or screaming at child/youth.

Concerns over a child's/youth's behavior should be handled as outlined in our Code of Conduct. Expectations and discipline of a child/youth must reflect their age level of comprehension. Some appropriate forms of discipline are:

- Distract/redirect the child/youth with another activity.
- Help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior.
- Isolate the child/youth from others if another Volunteer Leader is available to assist.
- Time out. They should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. For example a three-year old should not have to sit for a time out longer than 3 minutes.
- Remind the child/youth of the behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children/youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
- Have a parent/guardian or another Trained Volunteer Leader involved where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.

There are times when physical redirection/touch is necessary when directions are ignored, or when the child/youth is harming another child/youth or causing him/her discomfort. If after verbally directing the child/youth several times on what you would like him/her to do, the child/youth doesn't respond appropriately, you can gently direct the child/youth to sit where you ask. When nothing seems to be working – pass the child/youth on to another Trained Volunteer. Sometimes a different person can reach them.

If you have only one child/youth show up for your ministry (Discipleship group, Youth etc) you must recruit another Trained Volunteer or ask the parent/guardian for permission to teach/look after the child/youth alone. This permission must be recorded and signed in the logbook.

Volunteer Leader/ Helper/student ratios are found on each group's "Info and Procedure" page. To comply with insurance requirements and to provide adequate supervision for children/youth one of the following must be in place:

- A minimum of two unrelated ministry personnel who are unrelated to each other are present for supervision, except in the event of an emergency, or,
- One ministry personnel is present with windows having clear lines of visibility in place, or the door open with designated hall monitors circulating the area where children/youth are in groups.

It is very important that you put a stop to any behavior that is not normally acceptable (e.g. coloring on walls, horseplay in and around the building, fights, unwholesome language, bullying). Our children and youth have a right to a caring, respectful and safe environment where they encounter the love of God in action. Bullying will not be tolerated at any time and this policy will be clearly communicated and enforced among the children and youth. All Trained Volunteers will prevent bullying, teach against it and assist and support children and youth who are being bullied.

Each child/youth attending any ministry of First Baptist Church must have a signed Consent Form and Code of Conduct on file. (Exceptions are Sunday Discipleship group, Nursery and Children's Worship)

If you are leading a group and planning an event outside the church – you must always exercise caution and responsibility. Make every effort to ensure the safety of your group. Announcement sheets must give all details of departure and return times, where you are going, risks involved in your event, etc. Answer the what, where, when, why and how's. Drivers must complete and sign the Volunteer Driver's Form before leaving on a trip. Friends going on outings must have a signed Code of Conduct & Consent Form. There are template forms available for your use. It is recommended that there be no overnight activities or trips for Children ministry groups Grade 6 and under.

It is important for you to be aware of the locations of the first aid kits. Please keep children/youth away from any material/chemicals/situations that could cause injury, harm or endanger their lives. We have a Health and Safety Guideline policy for all our Children's and Youth Ministries in case of illness, injury, dealing with cuts, blood or other bodily fluids. It will be placed in all our policy binders and log books.

Ministry personnel are not to give or apply any medication except for bandages for minor cuts/abrasions or ice packs for bumps. If a child/youth needs medication, the parents/caregivers must administer it. No medication will be left with Volunteer Leaders, with the following exceptions: Youth retreats and overnights. The Administration of Medication Form must be completed by parent/guardian and kept on file.

In Case of Fire

Be aware of the fire escape doors, the fire alarms and pull stations. All exits are marked with signs. There are no alarms on the doors. Doors must be kept clear at all times. If you see something blocking the exits, remove the obstruction. In case of a fire – pull the nearest fire alarm. In an emergency situation, please listen for instructions and proceed to the nearest exit. Do not stop to retrieve articles, such as coats or boots. If your children are in the Nursery, Children's Worship, Discipleship group etc., the Volunteer Leaders/Helpers will make sure all of their charges are cleared out of the building. If possible, grab your logbooks or attendance records to help account for those in your group. We ask that you exit the building and **everyone** meet his or her family members at the **back of the parking lot at the "Meeting Place sign"**. All Volunteer Leaders/Helpers should be prepared to direct the children to this area and stay with them until they are reunited with their family. This will leave the building clear for emergency vehicles to do their job. **Please make sure that your entire family is aware of this as a meeting place.** We want to reduce confusion at a time like this. No one re-enters the building except trained emergency personnel. Please leave your vehicles where parked until directed to move or the all clear has sounded.

All Trained Volunteers who are not feeling well should not lead a group of children/youth. If you are arranging a person to fill your spot – that person must be from the approved Trained Volunteer list of First Baptist Church volunteers. The coordinators of the ministry will have that list.

There are more safety precautions and guidelines sheets that pertain only to a group or area you are wishing to volunteer. These sheets will be given to you at training and will be reviewed with you before being allowed to serve.

In Case of Tornado

If within the church building and a tornado is imminent – lead your group to an interior room near the center of the building, away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls. Eg. washrooms, lounge. Shield head with arms

Stay away from places like the gym, and other rooms with wide, unsupported roofs. Large buildings with wide-span roofs may collapse if a tornado hits. If you are in the gym, sanctuary, or on the second floor when a tornado hits, position your group against an interior wall. Take cover under a sturdy structure such as a table or desk.