

**First Baptist Church
Festus/Crystal City
Child/Student Protection Policy**

General Purpose Statement

First Baptist Church of Festus-Crystal City (FBC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the minors who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below policies, our goal is to protect the minors of FBC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations. This policy is subject to change by FBC and any changes are effective immediately upon notice.

1. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “minor” or “minors” include all persons under eighteen (18) years of age, except workers who are not less than 16 years of age and have been approved in accordance with these policies.

2. Selection of Workers

Any persons, not less than 16 years of age, who desire to work with the minors participating in our programs and activities, must be paid staff or be a FBC member and all persons must undergo a screening process. Exceptions will be made in rare circumstances (ie. evangelists, pastoral staff approved outside ministry teams, etc.), will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. Six-Month Rule

Unless there has been a recent six-month active ministry involvement in another church, no volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he/she has been involved with FBC for a minimum of six (6) months.

b. Ministry Application/Criminal Background Check

All persons seeking to work with minors must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by FBC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with minors, previous church affiliation, reference information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. A criminal background check is required for all workers.

- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in mentorship of minors; and
- Those having occasional contact with minors (including, but not limited to, church-sponsored athletic team coaches, vehicle drivers, camps, VBS, etc.)

Prior to running a background check, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing FBC to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, his or her application will not be accepted and he or she shall be unable

to work with minors at FBC. A review of the application will be completed by the ministry team leader and a delegated member of the pastoral staff. The application form and background information results will be maintained in confidence on file in the church office.

c. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled between the applicant and applicable ministry leader to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d. Reference Checks

Before anyone is permitted to work with minors, at least two (2) references (if available, from an organization where the applicant has worked with minors in the past and/or previous church, as opposed to personal or family references) are requested. Documentation of all reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file in the church office.

3. Two-Worker Rule

Two workers, with a minimum of one (1) female, will be present at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities, unless it is an all-male program or activity. Some student classes (grades 6th - 12th) may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open, unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it and there should be no fewer than two (2) students with the adult teacher.

Counseling of a child should be conducted in rooms with windows and with the minor seated closer to the door than the adult. The second adult may be appropriately nearby able to observe any activity, without being able to hear any confidential statements.

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters who are themselves under age 16 to assist in caring for minors during programs or activities. Helpers must be under the supervision of two (2) workers.

4. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For the purpose of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a minor’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burning, 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.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between a minor and another minor in accordance with Missouri statutes, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a minor of his/her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the minors under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of minors at FBC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a minor under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, a

ministry team leader, or a member of the pastoral staff for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at FBC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be implemented:

1. An incident report will be prepared as soon as possible and given to an immediate supervisor, the ministry team leader, or to any member of the pastoral staff for further investigation.
2. The parent or guardian of the minor will be notified.
3. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with minors pending an investigation.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, but only after consultation with the church attorney.
5. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
6. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with the church attorney.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position with minors.
8. Public statements to the media, if any, will be directed and made by the most senior member of the pastoral staff available, after consultation with the church's attorney or by the church's attorney. Workers, their supervisors, ministry team leaders and others should refrain from speaking to the media.

5. Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For minors below grade 6, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. In the event an individual is unable to present the "child check," the applicable ministry team leader will be contacted and will be responsible for releasing the minor to the care of the individual, after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

6. Sick-Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the minors at FBC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other minors when deciding whether to place a minor under our care. In general, minors with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off.

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Minors who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other minors, and the parent or guardian will be contacted by the ministry team leader to request that the minor be picked up for the day.

7. Medications Policy

It is the policy of FBC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent. Parents should be reminded of our sick-child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of minors with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such minors should address each situation with the applicable ministry team leader to develop a plan of action. Parents should sign a written authorization with the instructions of the plan of action, which was agreed upon with the ministry team leader.

8. Discipline Policy

It is the policy of FBC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the applicable ministry team leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

9. Restroom Guidelines

Minors, five (5) years of age and younger and others who need assistance, should be escorted by a worker to the hallway bathroom. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the minor(s) inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the minor(s) back to the classroom. If a minor is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the minor's name. If a minor requires assistance, the worker should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the minor.

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

10. Accidental Injuries to Minors

In the event that a minor sustains injuries while under our care, the following steps should be taken:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide first aid (bandages, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the minor's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the minor 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 ministry team leader. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the minor has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed and kept on file in the church office.