

# **SafeChurch Policy for Youth and Children's Ministry Workers**



## **First Baptist Church**

M a n n i n g t o n , W . V a .

## General Purpose Statement

First Baptist Church of Mannington seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of First Baptist Church of Mannington from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

## Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in a day care or school, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

## Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

### a) **Accountability**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Baptist Church of Mannington for a minimum of six (6) months, or else listed as an active member. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

### b) **Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a “Children's Worker Application Form” to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant as well as a disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the First Baptist Church.

### c) **Criminal Background Check**

Included on the Application Form is a consent for criminal background check. Versions of this form are available without a background check if certain requirements are met, but all volunteers working with minors at First Baptist Church must have undergone a Criminal background check, or otherwise consent to one before serving in the children's ministry.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by church leadership on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, sexual misconduct or assault, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the First Baptist Church.

### d) **Policy Acknowledgement**

All volunteers must sign the acknowledgement at the end of this document to confirm that they have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions of this policy. This ensures that all workers are adequately trained and unified under the same procedures and vision for our children and youth ministry.

## Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’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 child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, 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 child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Baptist Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to Church Leadership 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 on First Baptist Church facilities or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified. Emergency services will be called as needed.
2. An incident report will be filled out and signed by a volunteer, a witness, and the parent of the child. A copy will be made. The parents will receive one copy and the church staff will receive another.
3. Any worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
4. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
5. The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing

information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

## **Permission Forms**

Children under the age of 16 must have a Participation and Medical Release Form signed by a parent before they are allowed to participate in any activity where the parents are not also present. This includes Sunday School and VBS (if parents are not staying) and any event outside of church property. This form will provide permission to participate, a limited waiver of responsibility, and release for emergency medical treatment.

## **Teenage Workers**

Teenagers are welcome to volunteer to serve with the children's ministry. The following guidelines apply to teenage volunteers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above, but are exempt from background checks.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

## **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For children under the age of 10 years, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the “child check,” The Children’s Ministry Coordinator will be contacted. This person will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Check-in/Check-out procedures will be followed anytime children are being left in the care of ministry volunteers without parents present, such as during Sunday School and at Vacation Bible School.

Children 10 years and older may check themselves in and out of activities at the welcome desk. If parents are not present, they will need a permission form.

## **Safe Zone Policy**

During designated children’s ministry activities, including any situation where the Check-In procedure will be followed, no adults will be allowed in designated safe zones without a name tag lanyard provided by the church. Parents may be present in this area only if they have a lanyard or a claim check from the welcome desk. Any adult found in the Safe Area without a claim check or name tag lanyard will be asked to leave.

Safe areas will be determined by the event organizers. Generally, the entire downstairs of the church will be considered a safe zone during Sunday School. During VBS, efforts will be made to maintain a safe-zone throughout FBC Mannington’s facilities.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First Baptist Church of Mannington. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children 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; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of First Baptist Church of Mannington not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Child's Teacher to develop a plan of action. Exceptions to this policy may be made if the Medical Release form on file for the child includes permission to administer emergency medications such as inhalers or Epi-Pens.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of First Baptist Church of Mannington 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 Children's Ministry Coordinator if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

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

## **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care. An incident report must also be filled out and signed by the volunteer and parent.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed and signed by the volunteer, a witness, and the parents. A copy will be made for the parents, and the church will keep the original.

## **Training**

First Baptist Church of Mannington will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

## Acknowledgment of Procedures

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having read the attached *SafeChurch Policy for Youth and Children's Ministry Workers*, hereby submit this application for the review of the Children's Ministry coordinators and staff of First Baptist Church of Mannington. I affirm that I have read and understand the attached policy, and hereby agree to follow the requirements of the policy so long as I am serving as a worker in the ministry of First Baptist Church of Mannington.

I also understand that any behavior contrary to these procedures, the Law of West Virginia, or Federal Law will disqualify me from service. I understand that failure to complete this form or the Volunteer Application Form will also result in my disqualification. I also understand that any perceived violation of aforementioned procedures by me, other volunteers, or parents must be reported immediately to church staff. I understand that a disqualification means that I will be unable to serve in or around the children's ministry of this church in any capacity.

I hereby also covenant with this church body to maintain Christian character in my adherence to and execution of this policy. I understand that I will be representing Christ and His Church in my work, and promise to maintain a ministry marked by Christian love and integrity.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_