

# **Child/Youth Protection Policy**

## **First Baptist Madison**

### **General Purpose Statement:**

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

### **Definitions:**

For purposes of this policy:

- The terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years, or still in High School, or whose mental capacity is that of a minor;
- The term “youth” includes all children over the age of twelve;
- The term “adult” shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age;
- The term “worker” shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for children.

### **Selection of Workers:**

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

- **One Year Rule**

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until he/she has been an active participant of FBC Madison for a minimum of one year. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, reference, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence in a locked file at First Baptist Madison.
- **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

- **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at FBC Madison.

- **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees and all volunteers involved in our on-going programs and ministries.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastor and program minister on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding offenses involving, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, 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 results will be maintained in confidence in a locked file at First Baptist Madison.

### **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. When two unrelated adults cannot be present the following conditions must be met:

- The meeting must take place during regular program hours of FBC Madison
- The meeting must take place in a public area or in a room with the door open or a room with the door closed providing there is a window into the room in or beside the door and a program supervisor in the area.

### **The Five Year Rule**

All workers must be a minimum of five years older than the children in the class or activity.

### **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse:**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical Abuse – any physical injury to a child which 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, ignoring, and persistent teasing.
- Sexual Abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least three years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, medical care, and nurturing attention.

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 here at FBC Madison becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the pastor, the Minister of Pastoral Care, or other ministers 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 Madison or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be implemented:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
- Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
- We will comply with the states' requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
- 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 our insurance company and/or attorney.
- Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position.
- Cathy Williams will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
- Counseling will be arranged for those who desire it.

### **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

## **Pastoral Counseling**

Pastoral counseling done by a member of the clergy or a professional counselor may require more privacy than provided in the open door policy but must:

- Take place during operating hours of the church
- Take place with parental knowledge
- Take place in an unlocked room with immediate access to public areas.

## **Youth Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth who themselves are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers.

- Youth workers will be screened as specified above except they are exempt from the background check.
- Youth workers must always be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

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

For Sunday Morning nursery childcare of preschoolers, 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,” Children’s Minister will be contacted. The Children’s Minister 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.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at FBC Madison.

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 brought:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours.
- Green or yellow runny nose.
- Eye or skin infections.
- 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.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of FBC Madison not to administer either prescription or nonprescription 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 <Insert Title of Ministry Leader> to develop a plan of action. For trips, parents may make arrangements with leaders for medication to be administered during the trip.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of FBC Madison not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, hand slapping, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with Children's Minister or Youth Minister if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Physical Contact Policy**

It is our desire that all physical contact among children or with children be of a kind, considerate, nurturing, and non-threatening manner. Workers and children are not to engage in any physical contact not characterized by the above.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

If a child five years of age or younger should need to go to the restroom a worker is to be able to see the restroom door the entire time the child is there. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

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 is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parents or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to a minister or program director. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

**Training**

FBC Madison will provide training on this child protection policy to all new children's 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.