



Child, Student, and Other Vulnerable Individuals Protection Plan

First Baptist Church Montgomery, Alabama

PURPOSE

This First Baptist Church (FBC) Child, Student, and Other Vulnerable Individuals Protection Plan (the Protection Plan) is designed to provide a safe environment for children, students, and other vulnerable individuals involved in FBC ministries and sanctioned activities.

SAFETY STEPS FOR STAFF

All staff members working with children, students, and other vulnerable individuals are required to complete all safety steps before they can begin work in these areas.

- 1. Sexual Abuse Awareness Training** – To equip staff members to recognize abuser characteristics, FBC requires all staff members to complete Ministry Safe's One-Hour Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online). Every three years, staff are required to renew their training.
- 2. Skillful Screening Training** – All staff members that work with children, students, and vulnerable individuals must also be certified in the two-hour Skillful Screening Training provided by Ministry Safe.
- 3. Screening Process** – Staff members must complete FBC's Screening Process, which requires a face-to-face interview, references to be checked, and an employment application.
- 4. Policies and Procedures** – Staff members are required to review the policies and sign **The Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**.
- 5. Background Check** – FBC requires all staff members to undergo a background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

SAFETY STEPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers working with children, students, and other vulnerable individuals are required to complete these safety steps before they can begin work in these areas.

- 1. Sexual Abuse Awareness Training** – To equip volunteers to recognize characteristics of abuse and abusers, FBC requires all volunteers to complete Ministry Safe's One-Hour Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online). Every three years volunteers are required to renew their training.

- 2. Background Check** – FBC requires all staff and volunteers working in areas covered by this **Protection Plan** to undergo a background check. Depending upon the position, differing levels or intensity of background checks may be required. These background checks are performed by Ministry Safe and are kept in extreme confidence.
- 3. Screening Process** – It is preferred that a volunteer be a member of FBC for at least six months before serving in a volunteer position that provides access to children, students, or vulnerable individuals. Staff members that have gone through Skillful Screening Training will assist in inviting volunteers to serve and may request references, if needed. All volunteers must read and sign acknowledgment of this Protection Plan before serving.

PROTECTION PLAN POLICY

Sanctioned Activity - This policy extends to any FBC-sanctioned activity. A sanctioned activity is defined as (1) any event, meeting, or gathering planned by FBC staff or lay leadership and approved by a member of the Ministerial Staff for the purpose of furthering FBC's mission and/or (2) transportation provided by an adult leader to and from a sanctioned activity where minors are supervised by an adult other than their parent or legal guardian.

Safety Council - Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, students, and vulnerable individuals; FBC's Senior Pastor will appoint and maintain a Safety Council comprised of at least three FBC members. The Safety Council will meet at least one time a year or as needed. The purpose of the Safety Council is to provide for the implementation and maintenance of the Protection Plan.

Abuse Tolerance – FBC has zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and sanctioned activities. Staff members and volunteers are required to avoid abusive behavior of any kind. It is the responsibility of every staff member to act in the best interest of all involved in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, verbal or sexual), it is their responsibility to immediately report their observation to the appropriate Program Minister or Senior Pastor and if necessitated, law enforcement or authorities.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors - FBC is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, youth, college students, and families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported in accordance with this policy and state law. The Safety Council will follow state law and report when necessary to DHR, the Police Department, or other appropriate agency.

Enforcement of Policies – FBC staff members who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with diligent enforcement of all FBC policies. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and The Finance Personnel Committee for staff.

Consequences of Violation - Any person accused of violating the Protection Plan or any act considered by the Safety Council to be harmful to a child or youth will be immediately suspended from participation in any ministry. The suspension will continue during any investigation by the church, law enforcement, or Child Protective agencies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal from volunteering, disciplinary action (staff), or termination (staff).

Failure to report a prohibited act to the proper person is a violation of the Protection Plan and grounds for disciplinary action (staff) and/or termination (staff).

CHILDREN'S AND STUDENT'S MINISTRY MONITORING PLAN

Building Safety – Every Program Minister is responsible for ensuring that ministry areas are monitored during sanctioned activities. This includes monitoring other staff members, volunteers, children, and youth. The program areas will be well-lit and located in corridors that are well-lit. Doors will be fitted with windows that allow an unobstructed view of a reasonable portion of the room. If the doors do not have a window, the Program Minister will ensure that doors are left open sufficiently to allow a visual inspection by adult leaders or monitors.

Supervision – Only parents (dropping off/picking up children), screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, the respective program minister or security team member should be notified.

All reasonable efforts should be made for two trained, screened adults to supervise children at all times. If one supervising adult must leave the room, another adult or employee must be notified so that two adults will be in the room. If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. If you need to talk to a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area.

No child will be left unattended in a ministry area or on a playground during sanctioned activities, classes, or while attending a sanctioned event held offsite of the FBC campus.

No child will be left unattended while attending a sanctioned ministry event or function held offsite of the FBC campus.

After every ministry event, ministry staff and volunteers need to check every room, area, restroom, and vehicle for an unattended child.

Playground Safety - Volunteers or staff need to remember to circulate as they watch children during play periods and pay particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Examples: under slides, in corners, behind structures). Any child found in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to an open area of the playground.

CHILDREN AND STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES

Worker to Child or Student Ratios

FBC is committed to providing adequate supervision in the Children's and Student Ministries. Accordingly, the following worker-to-child/student ratios should be observed with all reasonable efforts:

| Program | Workers | Children/Students |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Nursery | 2 | 8 |
| Preschool, 2 & 3 years old | 2 | 12 |
| Preschool, 4 & 5 years old | 2 | 18 |
| Elementary + VBS | 2 | 20 |
| 1-29 students (post-elementary) | 2 | |
| 30+ students (post-elementary) | 3 minimum | |

Check-in and Release of Children – Volunteers will adhere to the current policies implemented by the Minister to Preschool and Minister to Children to ensure that children are released to the proper parents, grandparents, or legal guardians.

DISCIPLINARY POLICIES

Adult Conduct – All adult leaders should conduct themselves in a way that reflects appropriate physical, emotional, and spiritual care and concern for children, students, and vulnerable individuals. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, and verbal abuse is strictly prohibited.

1. Sexual abuse is defined as violent or non-violent act(s) that involves an individual in sexual behavior including but not limited to sexual intercourse or regardless of consent, touching of sexual or other intimate parts for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of either party, exposure of sexual parts, sexually provocative verbal or scripted communication, exposure to pornographic material, or allowing an individual to witness sexual activity.

2. Physical Abuse includes but is not limited to hitting, kicking, or striking another. FBC adult leaders will not use physical discipline. In emergency circumstances, reasonable physical intervention may be used by an adult leader where physical force is necessary to prevent injury in emergency situations; or appropriate physical force consistent with training and experience is used within the Special Needs ministry to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals served by that ministry.
3. Verbal abuse is language directed toward an individual that is unwelcome, threatening, offensive, embarrassing, degrading, diminishing, or hostile. Adult leaders should use clear instruction and positive reinforcement when engaging with children and students.

Responsibility to Act – Adult leaders will make reasonable attempts to stop abuse they witness at FBC activities.

Peer-to-Peer – All FBC Leadership should be aware that abuse can and does occur at a peer-to-peer level. Volunteers and FBC Leadership are required to help stop and report peer-to-peer abuse to the appropriate program Minister or the Senior Pastor.

Two Adult Rule – All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that during ministry activities, one adult is not left alone with a child, children, student, students, or vulnerable individual. During ministry activities, two adult volunteers should be present when one or more children, students, or vulnerable individuals are present.

Transportation - When staff members or volunteers provide transportation for children or students, there must be at least two children or students in the vehicle or arrangements communicated prior to the transportation. All safety precautions should be taken while transporting children or students, including, one safety belt per individual, obeying all traffic laws, and no talking or texting on cell phones while driving and transporting the children or students directly to their destination.

Electronic Communication – All communications with children and students must be above reproach and indicative of healthy boundaries. As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with each Program Minister or a parent. When ministry staff, interns, or volunteers are using electronic devices to communicate with children or students, group messaging is preferred. Group messaging should include one other adult. Should adult leaders deem it necessary to communicate with a child or student, they should communicate via text message. All FBC ministry social media accounts should have a minimum of two leaders with access to the account.

**Child, Student, and Other Vulnerable Individuals Protection Plan
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the appropriate Minister.

I have received and read a copy of First Baptist Church's Child, Student, and Other Vulnerable Individuals Protection Plan and understand the importance of the Protection Plan. I agree to abide by these guidelines while a member of First Baptist Church staff or as a volunteer at First Baptist Church Montgomery.

I understand that the Protection Plan may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by First Baptist Church.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of the First Baptist Church Protection Plan.

Staff or Volunteer Name (please print)

Staff or Volunteer Signature

Date: _____