

The Child Protection Policy Of First Baptist Church Monroe, GA

We believe that our children and youth are a gift from God – a gift that we are asked to steward while they are at our church or involved in our programming.

This document will outline the essential elements of the Child Protection Policy for FBC Monroe (FBCM) that applies to all minors under the age of 18 and those who work with them. Each ministry area – Weekday School, Preschool, Kids, and Youth will be responsible for developing a document outlining specific procedures that support this policy.

This policy is designed to:

- Safeguard children and youth from abuse occurring on church premises, during activities away from the church, and for our missions teams as they minister to youth around the city, state, nation, and world.
- Protect employees and volunteers from potential false allegations.
- To limit the extent of the church’s risk and liability.
- To affirm to the church and to the community our intent to have well-trained and equipped volunteers who can meet the needs of families and present a positive Christian witness wherever we serve.
- Establish appropriate methods of responding to alleged, reported, or suspected incidents of abuse that align with Christian principles and the laws of the State of Georgia.
- Prepare our employees and volunteers to be able to provide compassionate ministry for all those affected by abuse.

OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

First Baptist Church of Monroe, GA is committed to a zero-tolerance policy prohibiting any acts of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse of all children and youth under the age of 18. The policy includes the following elements:

1. Prior to serving with minors, all volunteers and all staff prior to employment must successfully complete:
 - a. A background check using the appropriate form submitted to the church office. This will NOT involve a financial background check. All results will be confidential and reviewed only by the Church Administrator, and the ministry area leader. This must be renewed every 2 years. Any person who is not approved or provides incorrect or incomplete information will not be allowed to volunteer in any church sponsored program or activity for minors.

- b. Successful completion of Ministry Safe training to assist in your awareness of the signs of abuse and how to report. This must be renewed every 2 years.
 - c. Prior to serving, all new volunteers (with the exception of the Weekday School which has their own procedure) must speak to a leader in the area where they will serve to determine their fitness to serve within these guidelines and to determine their best fit in the program. The leader should ask lots of questions regarding giftedness and what the volunteer would like to do. Give a list of needs in your ministry area. If the ministry leader or staff member is uncertain as to the person's fitness to serve, a request should be made for a minimum of two references. This item in the policy (1.c.) will serve as an "Application to Serve."
2. We will adhere to the "Two Adult Rule." This requires a minimum of two workers (who are unrelated) in each classroom or supervising each area. A married couple or two family members only count as "one" with this policy. This also applies to car/van/bus trips, sleeping accommodations, and any other occasion when a minor is present. Exceptions can be made in the event of hotel-type accommodations, for example, where an adult shares the room with two youth. Staff and volunteers are asked to extend the principle of this rule to texts, emails, Zoom or other social media contacts with a minor. Another adult must be included/copied in any communications. Exceptions can be made with texts if the staff member or volunteer obtains parental consent and maintains ALL text chains.
 3. Restrooms usage with kids must be supervised by an adult – preferably from the doorway to the restroom (if privacy can be secured) or with two adults in the restroom. No adult should ever be in the restroom with an individual child.
 4. Emergency conversations must be held in a remote section of a public area. When possible, two adults should be present. One on one interactions should be observable and interruptible such as meeting in rooms with windows or open doors. Make sure what information needs to be gathered and, if allegations or statements are made, it is enough to report.
 5. In non-emergency situations, one-on-one counseling should be held in a remote section of a public area. Men should counsel with young men. Women should counsel young girls. One on one interactions should be observable and interruptible such as meeting in rooms with windows or open doors.
 6. Volunteers under the age of 18 do not count as adults and will themselves need to be supervised as described above.
 7. Procedures for youth and kid's overnight activities/trips must take these items into consideration.
 8. Ministry leaders are to always supervise their ministry areas and may make unannounced visits to ministry areas/sites from time to time.

9. An identification system must be utilized during ministry events. The procedures will vary from age group to age group. However, no child will be released into the care of someone other than the one(s) who dropped them off or their designee.
10. Any abuse or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the staff member or volunteer who oversees that ministry (reporting guidelines to follow). This should include and adults with special needs or incidents of peer-to-peer abuse.
11. Items 2-8 apply to any outside organizations that use our facilities with minors.
12. Anyone who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving those groups.
13. The church staff will periodically (at least every 6 months) get updates from the Sex Offender Database for local zip codes and match those results to the church roles. Positive “hits” should be immediately reported to the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, or the Church Administrator.
 - a. Anyone listed on the Sex Offender Database will not be allowed to enter any area where minors are present at any time for any reason.
 - b. Convicted sex offenders are in need of God’s grace and forgiveness and we desire to assist in that process as follows:
 - i. He/She must inform the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Church Administrator of the desire to attend FBC and arrange a meeting where the church policies are explained. That staff member will also explain God’s plan for forgiveness and grace.
 - ii. He/She will have a designated friend or church member who accompanies him/her at all times on the church premises.
14. In the event a church member sees someone he/she knows to be a registered or convicted sex offender, the member should immediately pass along that information to the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, or the Church Administrator.

ADDENDUM TO THE POLICY

Definitions of Child Abuse from MinistrySafe – Please also review the full Georgia Legal Code at the end of this section.

1. Sexual Abuse – involves direct or indirect sexual acts or behavior.
 - a. Any sexual activity with a minor whether in the home by a caregiver, in a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult or another minor. The abuser may be known or unknown to the minor.
 - b. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action. This can include the use of inappropriate language, jokes, printed material, or visual material.
 - c. Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves/includes children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, or developmentally ready.
 - d. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that may involve touching as well as non-touching elements.
2. Emotional Abuse – Occurs when a child’s emotional and mental health needs are not being met.
3. Physical Abuse – Occurs when someone inflicts visible or invisible bodily harm.
4. Neglect – Occurs when a child’s needs for food, shelter, clothing, or supervision are not being met. Important distinction – neglect is different than poverty.

Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Abuse or Neglect

Note: These indicators are not exhaustive and are not always signs of abuse. If observed, they may warrant further investigation and some questions with the minor involved.

Also Note: Any and every child will give evidence of one or more of these behaviors from time to time depending on their developmental age, personality, etc. Workers should pay particular attention when one or more, especially more, of these are shown.

1. Wary of others
2. Clingy (clinging) to others
3. Uncomfortable with emotions – overly emotional
4. Emotionally detached – under emotional
5. Extreme changes in behavior when not around parents
6. Manipulative or controlling – poor self-image
7. Delinquent behavior
8. Self-mutilation, drug, or alcohol abuse
9. Bruises, welts, burns, bite marks, bed wetting (advanced ages), fractures
10. Reluctant to change clothes in front of others
11. Questionable sexual behavior; knowledge beyond what would be considered normal for that particular developmental age; problematic sexual behaviors

12. Promiscuous
13. Overly withdrawn or distant
14. Overly self-conscious
15. Obsessively clean
16. Extreme compliance or defiance
17. Overly anxious
18. Overly fearful
19. Pain or itching in the genital area
20. Injury to the genital area.

Reporting Child Abuse

Staff and volunteers should make every effort to be aware of the potential of child abuse and make every effort to correct comments or behaviors when the potential for suspicious activities is observed. Removing minors from a potentially abusive situation is always preferred.

1. All reasonable allegations of child abuse will be handled quickly and with respect for the privacy and confidentiality of each person involved.
2. Volunteers who become aware of abuse or suspected abuse must immediately report the circumstances to the ministry leader or, preferably, to any staff members who are present.
3. The leader involved should promptly talk with the minor involved to initially assess the situation. This is NOT to be an investigation – merely a conversation giving the staff member/lead volunteer a clear understanding of what is being reported.
4. Every effort should be made at this point to make aware the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, or the Church Administrator in the process.
5. Georgia law states that ministers as well as church volunteers are “mandatory reporters” regarding suspected abuse. There are a number of potential reporting avenues to choose from based on the circumstances – including the local police or sheriff’s office or the nearest Department of Family and Children’s Services. The staff member will make the report to the appropriate agency.
 - a. Emergency – Dial 911
 - b. Walton Co. DFCS – Call Centralized intake line 1-855-GA-CHILD
 - c. Walton Co Sheriff’s Office – Non-emergency # - 850-892-8111
 - d. City of Monroe Police Dept – Non-Emergency # - 770-464-0310
6. Every person involved, at every point in the process, is encouraged to take contemporaneous notes regarding what is said and done. Memories can fade over time and you may be called upon to give a report or to testify.
7. In most, but not all circumstances, the parents will also need to be notified. The appropriate staff member should make that notification at the appropriate time.
8. The report should include the following information:
 - a. Name and address of the child and the child’s parents or guardians
 - b. Child’s age

- c. Nature and extent of the child’s injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries
 - d. As much identifying information of the accused as possible
 - e. Any other information that the reporting individual believes might be helpful in establishing the disclosure or the cause of the injuries.
 - f. **Do NOT** take photos – only Law Enforcement, DFCS, or medical personnel can do this.
9. Georgia law indicates that any person who, in good faith, makes a report to the proper authorities shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability. Georgia law also provides a penalty for anyone who willingly and knowingly fails to report suspected child abuse if he/she is a mandatory reporter.
 10. All the steps above are to be considered highly confidential – only to be discussed by those primarily involved as well as church leaders – and only with each other and the appropriate reporting agency.
 11. If a volunteer doesn’t feel like proper steps were taken, they can make a report themselves.

Should a misconduct claim or allegation be made against a volunteer or church leader:

1. After the process above – the parent or guardian of the child will be notified by a minister.
2. The volunteer/leader/staff member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from his/her responsibilities pending a criminal investigation and instructed to remain off the church property during the investigation.
3. If found guilty of the criminal charges, the person will be removed from his/her position working with children or youth.
4. The church’s insurance company will be notified by the Church Administrator.
5. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to ANY media inquiries or releasing any information to the congregation. Anyone other than the Sr Pastor, the Associate Pastor, or the Church Administrator should refrain from any comment about the matter to anyone.
6. Pastoral visits will be arranged for all who desire one.
7. Every effort should be made by the staff to ensure support for the victim(s) and their families. They should be encouraged to have no contact with the alleged offender.
8. Every attempt should be made to assist the offender in finding spiritual direction and counseling. While guilty of sin, he/she should have every opportunity to repent and find redemption following the offense. This person however will not be allowed to serve in a volunteer role with minors again.

Georgia Mandated Reporter Law - O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (2016)

(a) The purpose of this Code section is to provide for the protection of children. It is intended that mandatory reporting will cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear on the situation in an effort to prevent abuses, to protect and enhance the welfare of children, and to preserve family life wherever possible. This Code section shall be liberally construed so as to carry out the purposes thereof.

(b) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) "Abortion" shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code Section 15-11-681.

(2) "Abused" means subjected to child abuse.

(3) "Child" means any person under 18 years of age.

(4) "Child abuse" means:

(A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; provided, however, that physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child;

(B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;

(C) Endangering a child;

(D) Sexual abuse of a child; or

(E) Sexual exploitation of a child.

However, no child who in good faith is being treated solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be an abused child.

(5) "Child service organization personnel" means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.

(6) "Clergy" means ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, or similar functionaries, by whatever name called, of a bona fide religious organization.

(6.1) "Endangering a child" means:

(A) Any act described by subsection (d) of Code Section 16-5-70;

(B) Any act described by Code Section 16-5-73;

(C) Any act described by subsection (l) of Code Section 40-6-391; or

(D) Prenatal abuse, as such term is defined in Code Section 15-11-2.

(7) "Pregnancy resource center" means an organization or facility that:

(A) Provides pregnancy counseling or information as its primary purpose, either for a fee or as a free service;

(B) Does not provide or refer for abortions;

(C) Does not provide or refer for FDA approved contraceptive drugs or devices; and

(D) Is not licensed or certified by the state or federal government to provide medical or health care services and is not otherwise bound to follow the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, P.L. 104-191, or other state or federal laws relating to patient confidentiality.

(8) "Reproductive health care facility" means any office, clinic, or any other physical location that provides abortions, abortion counseling, abortion referrals, or gynecological care and services.

(9) "School" means any public or private pre-kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school, technical school, vocational school, college, university, or institution of postsecondary education.

(10) "Sexual abuse" means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not such person's spouse to engage in any act which involves:

(A) Sexual intercourse, including genital-genital, oral-genital, anal-genital, or oral-anal, whether between persons of the same or opposite sex;

(B) Bestiality;

(C) Masturbation;

(D) Lewd exhibition of the genitals or pubic area of any person;

(E) Flagellation or torture by or upon a person who is nude;

(F) Condition of being fettered, bound, or otherwise physically restrained on the part of a person who is nude;

(G) Physical contact in an act of apparent sexual stimulation or gratification with any person's clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, or buttocks or with a female's clothed or unclothed breasts;

(H) Defecation or urination for the purpose of sexual stimulation; or

(I) Penetration of the vagina or rectum by any object except when done as part of a recognized medical procedure.

Sexual abuse shall include consensual sex acts when the sex acts are between minors if any individual is less than 14 years of age; provided, however, that it shall not include consensual sex acts when the sex acts are between a minor and an adult who is not more than four years older than the minor. This provision shall not be deemed or construed to repeal any law concerning the age or capacity to consent.

(11) "Sexual exploitation" means conduct by any person who allows, permits, encourages, or requires a child to engage in:

(A) Prostitution, as defined in Code Section 16-6-9; or

(B) Sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual or print medium depicting such conduct, as defined in Code Section 16-12-100.