



P A N A M A C I T Y , F L

A House of Hope for all generations ... a place to connect

CHILD / YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City (FBCPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children of First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations. The First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City Child Protection Policy is effective September 1, 2020, supersedes all previous policies, and will remain in effect indefinitely or until modified.

I. GENERAL POLICIES

Abuse Tolerance

FBCPC has zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at FBCPC to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

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 volunteer persons who work with children.

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) **Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **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, previous First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions.

The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City.

c) **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.

d) **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 First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City.

e) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our school/preschool/daycare center;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as, church sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers).

To accomplish the background check, a secure link to *Protect My Ministry* will be provided through email to each individual. Completing the form and submitting it indicates your authorization for a conducting a background check.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by Business Administrator in consult with the age group minister and Senior Executive Pastor 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, 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 authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two (preferably 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 Inc. of Panama City becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the age group minister, Senior Executive Pastor or Business Administrator for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. If reported to the age group minister, that minister will immediately report the incident to the Senior Executive Pastor or Business Administrator for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. 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 and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and the First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Senior Pastor, Senior Executive Pastor or Business Administrator will be our designated spokesperson(s) to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

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.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, Director, a Pastor or the Administrator.

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.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Training

First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City will provide periodic training on this child protection policy to all new volunteers 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.

Accidental Injuries

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.
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 in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the attendees at First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City. 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
- 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 Inc. of Panama City 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 Minister of Education or Age Group Minister to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of First Baptist Church Inc. of Panama City 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 their Age Group Minister if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Parental Involvement

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any FBCPC Church program or activity.

Tobacco Use

FBCPC Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during FBCPC Church activities or programs. FBCPC Church is a tobacco-free facility.

II. SPECIFIC CHILDREN'S POLICIES

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For Children 3rd grade and below, a security check in/ check out system will be followed. The parent or guardian must present the child check-in receipt in order to pick up the child. In the event that the parent or guardian is unable to present the sign, the floor coordinator will be contacted and make the decision to contact the Director or release the child.

Children in 4th and 5th grade will be responsible for checking in at the computer desk on 4th Floor with the floor coordinator. A parent must pick them up from the 4th Floor. If a child's parent is a teacher on another floor in the same building, that parent can sign a release allowing their 4th or 5th grader to walk down to them after activities.

Restroom Guidelines

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

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. The Floor Coordinator will check the bathrooms upon arrival.

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, the teacher will let the Floor Coordinator know. The Floor Coordinator will walk the child to the bathroom and access the bathroom (knocking and verbal inquiry). The Floor Coordinator will remain outside the door and escort the child 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. Offer verbal assistance first. If physical assistance is needed, request the presence of another adult.

Again, 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.

For diaper changing and toilet training, see Appendix B.

III. SPECIFIC YOUTH POLICIES

One-to-One Interactions

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Sexually Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers serving in Children's Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Education Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

APPENDIX A: Physical Contact

FBCPC Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, FBCPC Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Children's Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor or pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Ministry staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the administrator, or a pastor.

APPENDIX B: Diapering And Toilet Training

A) Diapering

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Diaper rash cream will only be used upon request by the parent or legal guardian.
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations.

B) Toilet training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members.
- 5) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
- 6) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children's area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

I have received and read a copy of the First Baptist Church Inc of Panama City Child / Youth Protection Policy and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the document. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at FBCPC.

I understand that this policy may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by First Baptist Church Inc of Panama City.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and I am able to fulfill the requirements listed in the document.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as policy guidelines that are changed or deleted.

Name: Please Print

Signed

Date