

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

**First Baptist Church
Washington, MI**

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First Baptist Church exists to glorify God by making disciples who are growing together to become more like Christ. We minister to minors as an expression of this mission. As such, children of all ages are always welcome in our services. We also provide childcare and age-specific ministries for children and teens. We aim with these to help entire families “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, ESV).

I. DEFINITIONS

Minor: Any person between the ages of 0 and 18 participating in an event at First Baptist Church. A minor may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Child/Children: Any minor participating in our nursery or elementary classes. This is generally a minor from birth through 6th grade.

Youth/Teen: Any minor participating in our Youth Group. This is generally a minor from 7th through 12th grades.

Worker: Any authorized adult acting in an official supervisory role in a ministry to minors. This includes volunteers and employees.

Employee: A paid staff member of First Baptist Church.

Volunteer: A person performing services or donating time or effort without compensation who is authorized to work with minors at First Baptist Church.

Deacon: An elected officer of First Baptist Church who serves in accordance with Article 5, Section 3 of our Constitution and Bylaws.

Elder: An elected officer of First Baptist Church who serves in accordance with Article 5, Section 2 of our Constitution and Bylaws.

Children's Ministry Director: The Children's Ministry Director oversees all ministry to minors for First Baptist Church under the direction of the Elders of First Baptist Church. The Children's Ministry Director will assist in screening volunteers, leading Child Protection Training, scheduling volunteers, managing curriculum, and ensuring adherence to the Child Protection Policy. Other responsibilities in matters like these may be delegated to the Children's Ministry Director by the Elders.

Classroom: A room at First Baptist Church in which ministry to minors is occurring (including the nursery, any elementary classes, and the Youth Room).

Youth Group: Any age-specific ministry for youth organized by First Baptist Church.

Youth Room: The room on-site in which the Youth Group meets.

II. Screening and Training

To ensure safe care of all minors involved in our ministries, First Baptist Church requires all volunteers for ministry to minors, all employees, all Elders, and all Deacons to undergo a screening process and to attend childcare training.

All volunteers must be members in good standing of First Baptist Church for at least six months before they may serve in a ministry that involves working with minors.

The application process is as follows:

- A. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with minors must complete and return a written application which may be obtained from the church office. This application will include authorization for First Baptist Church to conduct a criminal background check through Safe Hiring Solutions.
- B. Either an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the position. All application materials—the application form, background checks, reference checks, notes from interviews, etc.—will be stored in a secure location on the church premises.
- C. If the candidate appears to be an appropriate match for the position, the person reviewing the application will contact the three references provided by the candidate on the written application. A criminal background check will also be conducted through an accredited background screening organization.
- D. The person reviewing the application will also schedule a personal interview with the candidate.
- E. Upon completion of the application, background check, and personal interview, the Elders, in discussion with the Children's Ministry Director, will decide to approve or to reject the volunteer candidate. First Baptist Church reserves the right to reject any volunteer candidate or to dismiss an existing volunteer who is deemed to be unsuitable for any reason, including, but not limited to, obtaining information from references or criminal background checks that suggests that the candidate is not suitable.
- F. This same procedure also applies to all potential Elders, Deacons, and employees, regardless of the position for which they are being considered.

Once approved, a volunteer must attend Child Protection Training at First Baptist Church prior to serving in any ministry position that involves working with minors. Employees, Elders, and Deacons must attend this training as soon as is feasible. Members of First Baptist Church who are parents of minors are welcome to attend these training sessions as desired. Volunteers, Elders, Deacons, and employees will be required to read and agree to the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.

All volunteers must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks and attend Child Protection Training refreshers every 3–5 years as deemed appropriate by our Elders and

Children's Ministry Director. The personal interview may be omitted from the repeated screening procedures as deemed appropriate by our Elders and Children's Ministry Director.

III. Discipline and Physical Touch

Discipline: All workers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in every ministry to minors. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing minors toward acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

All workers are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to minors.

Acceptable means of discipline may include verbal corrections, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a minor from the situation for a brief time. Correction should be discreet, while remaining in the classroom in view of another worker. As appropriate, workers should help the minor reconcile with others.

If a minor's behavior is uncontrollable, or if the minor does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, workers should contact/retrieve the minor's parent/guardian (the Check-In Coordinator may be asked to help) so that the minor may be removed from the classroom. If a minor's behavior physically endangers himself/herself or others, workers, Deacons, Elders, or employees are permitted to physically restrain the minor until he/she can be removed from the classroom. In either situation, the problem and the response taken to deal with the behavior should be reported using the Discipline Reporting Form.

Once a minor has been removed from a classroom, he/she may be reinstated at the discretion of the Elders in discussion with the Children's Ministry Director. A minor may be reinstated only if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

Physical Touch: In this matter, as in all matters, workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety. Appropriate physical contact can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care. It can also, however, be misinterpreted. The following guidelines will help workers avoid any compromise or concerns in this area:

- Workers should only touch a minor if they and the minor are in full view of another worker.
- Workers should only touch a minor in "safe" areas and for a brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulder, upper back, or gentle pats on top of the head. Never touch a minor on or near any region that is private or personal (unless necessary when changing a diaper or helping with a restroom visit).
- Workers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a minor feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Workers should never touch a minor out of frustration or anger.

- Workers should only touch a minor for the benefit of the minor and never to meet their own emotional needs.
- Workers should recognize that appropriate physical touch will vary according to the age of the minor. What is appropriate for nursery children may not be appropriate for elementary children or for youth.
- Workers should recognize that men will generally need to limit physical contact more than women will in the same situation.

Workers must further adhere to the following outline of appropriate and inappropriate physical touch:

Inappropriate

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a minor for any reason (including games/playing).
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling minors over 5 years old.
- Allowing a minor over 5 years old to sit on one's lap.
- Touching a minor in the genital areas (the only exceptions are changing diapers/helping a child in the nursery with restroom use, and touch by medical personnel in cases of injury or suspected injury).
- Kissing a minor on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. Minors should never be allowed to kiss workers, staff, other minors, or anyone else on the lips, neck, or anywhere else.
- Slapping a minor on the behind, even when playing.
- Fondling a minor, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a minor on the back unless the minor is unable to walk.

Appropriate

- High-fives, handshakes, or fist-bumps are appropriate and recommended touch, especially with older children and youth.
- Holding hands is permitted with nursery children when initiated by the child, when playing a group game, or when helping the child walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a minor firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent the minor from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.
- A "side hug" may be given if initiated by the minor, but it should be very brief.
- A comforting pat on the shoulder or back for an emotionally distressed minor is appropriate.

- For nursery children, a back rub to help comfort or to put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.

IV. Children's Ministry Check-In/Out

Please note: sections IV–V apply to ministry to children only. Please see section VI for policies applicable for ministry to youth.

A Check-In Coordinator and two workers per classroom should be present and ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any service. This gives parents enough time to drop their children off and join the service on time.

Check-In Procedure:

- A. A parent or designated guardian must check each child with the Check-In Coordinator at the check-in station.
 - 1. First time guests must fill out the Children's Ministry Participation Form before their children may participate in any children's ministries at First Baptist Church. The Check-In Coordinator will register the child and the parent in Breeze using the data from the form.
 - 2. Members and regular attenders who have registered their children before may check-in via phone number or key card.
 - 3. The Check-In Coordinator has the right to refuse any child at check-in. Reasons for refusal might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the classroom being closed because the class is at maximum capacity, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.
- B. At check-in, the parent/guardian will receive a parent tag with a family-specific 4-digit identification code unique to that service. The child will receive a nametag with the same code. The code will be used to match a child with his/her family.
- C. A parent/guardian must remain in the church building at all times while their child is checked in to any ministry of First Baptist Church.

Check-Out Procedure:

- A. At the conclusion of the service, when a parent/guardian comes to pick up their child, a worker will bring the child to the entrance of the classroom. The worker will cross-check the child's nametag with the parent tag, looking for a matching identification code.
- B. If the child's nametag matches the parent tag:
 - a. The worker will remove the child's nametag and release the child to the parent.
 - b. The worker will destroy the child's nametag immediately.
- C. If the parent/guardian does not produce an appropriate parent tag:
 - a. For families known to the worker, both parents must be present to receive the child.
 - b. All other cases (including instances in which both parents of a known family cannot be present) require the decision of an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.
 - c. At no point should a child be released into the care of a solitary adult not in possession of the appropriate parent tag apart from the involvement of an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.

- D. Parents/Guardians are responsible to maintain possession of their parent tags for the duration of the service. People who are not listed on the parent tag may not be sent with the parent tag to pick up children (including older siblings and extended family) unless prior arrangements have been made with the Check-In Coordinator, who will communicate this to the workers as needed.
- E. Parents/Guardians should pick up their children promptly at the conclusion of the service. If a child is not picked up reasonably promptly, either a worker or the Check-In Coordinator will begin calling the parents at the phone number listed on the child's nametag.

V. Children's Ministry Supervision

Two Adult Rule: At least two screened, unrelated workers must be present at all times in every classroom or other enclosed area in use for children's ministry. Workers shall be considered unrelated if they are not in the same immediate family (i.e., not spouses, parent/child, or siblings).

Only those workers who are scheduled to serve in a particular classroom may be present in that classroom. Exceptions must be approved by an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.

If children are being kept in a classroom across both Sunday School and the Sunday Morning Worship Service, the Two Adult Rule must be maintained. Workers may transition out of the classroom one-by-one as the new workers arrive. Any unique issues of the day should be communicated to the arriving workers.

Male and Female Workers: Two male workers may not serve together in the same classroom without a female worker also being present. Only females may serve in our nursery.

One-on-One Meetings: Neither employees nor volunteers should have private one-on-one meetings with children. When a meeting with an individual child is necessary, it should occur 1) on the church premises in a public location; 2) with at least one other screened adult present; 3) with prior written consent from a parent/guardian (an Elder should be given a copy of the consent given). These meetings should be limited to a few sessions of 30–45 minutes each.

Visibility: Workers should do their best to remain visible from the entrance of the classroom or from an interior window. Children should not be allowed to remain in areas that are not visible from the entrance of the classroom or from an interior window.

Adult/Child Ratio: In addition to the Two Adult Rule, the following adult/child ratios must be maintained:

- Nursery (age 0–4): One adult for every three children.
- Elementary (age 5+): One adult for every ten children.

When the maximum adult/child ratio is reached for a particular classroom in a particular service, no more children will be admitted into that classroom for that service. Classrooms will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Whenever age groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

Personal Device Use: Workers should not use personal electronic devices (e.g., phones, tablets, etc.) for personal use while working with children. Scrolling through social media, personal texting, personal calls, games, watching videos, etc. are inappropriate uses of personal devices while responsible for the care and safety of children.

Workers should never give a personal device to a child to use/play with.

Workers are prohibited from taking pictures or video of children involved in the children's ministries of First Baptist Church.

Workers may use personal devices to contact a parent/guardian if needed.

Restroom Procedures

- A. Changing Diapers: Parents of children with dirty diapers should change their children prior to check-in. Workers in the nursery will change diapers as needed during the service. Only female workers may change diapers, and diapers must be changed in view of another worker. Workers should wear disposable gloves when changing diapers and should wash their hands with soap and water before handling anything/anyone else.
- B. Children Being Potty Trained:
 - 1. Parents should take them to the restroom prior to checking in.
 - 2. At check-in, parents should inform the nursery workers that their child is potty training.
 - 3. In the event that the child needs to use the restroom during a service, a female nursery worker will accompany them to the restroom in the nursery. The worker will adopt a "one foot in, one foot out" position in the restroom doorway. Potty-training children should never be left unattended in the restroom.
 - 4. The worker may assist the child as needed. The worker should assist verbally as much as possible before assisting physically. If the worker enters the restroom, one door must be left partially open. If helping a child with wiping, disposable gloves should be worn.
 - 5. Both the child and the worker should wash their hands with soap and water before returning to the main area.
 - 6. In the event of an accident, a worker will ask the Check-In Coordinator to retrieve a parent/guardian to care for their child. A child may not be left in the nursery wearing wet/soiled clothing.
- C. Potty-Trained Children in the Nursery:
 - 1. Parents should take them to the restroom prior to checking in.
 - 2. In the event that the child needs to use the restroom during a service, a female nursery worker will accompany them to the restroom in the nursery. The worker should stand outside the closed door while the child uses the restroom.
 - 3. If the child requires assistance, the worker should open the door slightly and seek to assist the child as much as possible verbally before assisting physically. If the worker enters the restroom, one door should be left partially open. If this makes the child uncomfortable, a parent should be called.
 - 4. The child should wash his/her hands with soap and water before returning to the main area. If a worker has assisted, she should also wash her hands with soap and water before returning to the main area.
- D. Elementary Children:
 - 1. Only children who are potty-trained may be checked into a classroom other than the nursery. Children who age out of the nursery and are not potty trained should stay with their parents/guardians until they are trained.

2. Parents should take their child to the restroom prior to checking in.
 3. If a child needs to use the restroom while the class is in the Fellowship Hall, a worker will direct the child to use one of the two single-use restrooms in the Fellowship Hall. Children must wash their hands with soap and water after using the restroom and rejoin the class immediately.
 4. While a child is in the restroom, a worker should be near enough to the restroom to hear if a child calls out for assistance. If a child needs assistance, the worker should ask the Check-In Coordinator to retrieve a parent from the service to assist their child. The worker should remain at the door of the restroom until the parent arrives to monitor the child and to speak comfortingly as needed.
 5. Only one child may be in a restroom at a time.
- E. Gymnasium Policy:
1. The gymnasium presents a unique opportunity to allow children to run and burn energy. It also presents a unique challenge for maintaining appropriate supervision when a child needs to use the restroom.
 2. To facilitate proper supervision, workers who plan to use the gym for elementary classes may request a third worker to be scheduled. If a child needs to use the restroom while the class is in the gymnasium, at least two workers must stay with the class in the gymnasium, and one worker will accompany the child to the single-use restroom near the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. The worker will stand in full view of the Check-In Coordinator to maintain the Two Adult Rule.
 3. If a third worker has not been scheduled, then the entire class must leave the gymnasium under the supervision of both scheduled workers and return to the classroom, where a child may use the restroom as described above.

Parents in the Classroom: Parents must stay outside of their child's classroom during check-in and check-out. In the nursery, parents must stay outside the child-safe doors built into the counter. If a child cannot remain without the parents, the parents should check their child out of the classroom and rejoin the service with their child (a cry room is available at the back of the auditorium if needed).

Food in the Classroom: One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in the classrooms. Workers may not bring any personal food with them into the classroom. Workers may only bring water to drink from a closeable container (i.e., no exposed straws).

We will provide nut-free snacks and water that may be distributed to older nursery children under the close supervision of our nursery workers. Nut-free snacks and water will also be provided for elementary classes and will be distributed at the discretion of the workers. If a child has significant food allergies, or if a parent desires that their children not be given snacks, they should inform the Check-In Coordinator, who will ensure that a note is added to the child's nametag. Parents should also inform the workers in their child's classroom.

If a worker desires to bring in a snack for the class, they may do so, but they must inform the Children's Ministry Director in advance. The snack must not have nuts, and care should be taken to avoid any cross-contamination. Parents should be informed of the snack at check-in.

If a nursing infant needs to be fed during the service, nursing mothers may use the nursing room located in the nursery (a parent tag must be produced for entry into the nursery). Parents may ask a nursery worker to feed their infant child a bottle brought from home. The bottle must be stored in a diaper bag clearly labeled with the child's name, and the bottle itself must also be clearly labeled with the child's name. Diaper bags must be stored on the counter, out of the reach of children.

Children may not bring their own food or drink into the classroom. Workers will not feed a child any food brought from home (except for bottles for infants in the nursery as outlined above).

VI. Youth Ministry Policies

Please note: section VI applies to ministry to youth only. Please see sections IV–V for policies applicable for ministry to children.

Participants: As a general rule, the Youth Group is available to students in 7th–12th grades. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Elders in discussion with the workers assigned to the Youth Group.

Workers: Any adult wishing to work with the Youth Group must submit to all screening and training procedures outlined in Section II above. In addition to the requirements listed there, any volunteer wishing to work with the Youth Group must be at least 22 years old. The Elders may assign a younger employee (such as an intern or a Pastoral Assistant) to work with the Youth Group under the direct supervision of an Elder or the Children’s Ministry Director.

Only those workers who are scheduled to serve with the Youth Group may be present with the youth. Exceptions must be approved by an Elder or the Children’s Ministry Director.

Two Adult Rule: At least two screened, unrelated workers must be present at all times in every classroom or other enclosed area in use for youth ministry. Workers shall be considered unrelated if they are not in the same immediate family (i.e., not spouses, parent/child, or siblings).

Male and Female Workers: If a female youth is present at Youth Group, then a female worker is required in addition to the Two Adult Rule.

Adult/Youth Ratio: In addition to the Two Adult Rule, there must always be at least one worker for every 15 youth.

Restroom Policy: Youth may be sent to the restroom on their own. A worker should never be alone in a restroom with a youth. Youth must use the restroom corresponding to their biological sex assigned at birth. When the Youth Group is meeting in the Youth Room, female youth may use the women’s restroom located next to the Piecemaker’s Room or the single-use restroom in the office area, and male youth may use the single-use restroom in the office area.

Personal Device Use: Workers should not use personal electronic devices (e.g., phones, tablets, etc.) for personal use while working with the youth. Scrolling through social media, personal texting, personal calls, games, watching videos, etc. are inappropriate uses of personal devices while responsible for the care and safety of youth.

Workers should never give a personal device to a youth to use for any reason other than contacting a parent/guardian.

Workers are prohibited from taking pictures or video of youth in the context of Youth Group.

Workers may use personal devices to contact a parent/guardian if needed.

Digital Communication: Digital communication has become the primary means of communication among teenagers. Effective ministry through digital communication can have great spiritual benefit, but a misuse of these means can also lead to serious problems. Workers involved in the Youth Group should model responsible use of digital communication and take extra precautions for the safety of the youth they lead. To that end, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with youth.
- Workers must use their real name on all digital platforms used to connect with youth (e.g., social media, online or mobile gaming, etc.).
- Workers may not text, email, or message a youth of the opposite sex unless another worker or a parent is also included in the conversation. The only exception is in the case of an emergency.
- Workers should be aware of the time of day in which they communicate with youth. As a general rule, workers should only communicate digitally with youth during times they would be likely to communicate in person (between 8:00 AM and 9:00 PM). If a youth initiates contact outside of these hours, the worker should wait to respond until the morning unless the situation is an emergency.
- Workers may not share a youth's contact information, except in an emergency situation.
- A worker who has questions or concerns about the content of digital communication received from a youth should show the communication to an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director and seek counsel for how to proceed.
- The same reporting procedures and guidelines outlined in Section X apply to times when a worker becomes aware of possible abuse through digital communication. All reporting laws are to be obeyed immediately.

One-on-One Interactions: As minors get closer to adulthood, one-on-one interactions can become more valuable for their spiritual growth and development. Our Youth Room is large enough that a reasonable degree of privacy can be achieved with a conversation in full view of the other people in the Youth Room during Youth Group.

If an employee or a volunteer wants to connect with a youth one-on-one outside of Youth Group, he/she may do so within the following guidelines:

- The meeting must either occur on the church premises in a public location (with an Elder or an employee present at the church) or in the youth's home with a parent present in the home.
- Prior written consent must be obtained from a parent/guardian (a copy should be shared with an Elder).
- Physical separation must be observed in the meeting via a table, desk, observable distance, etc.
- These meetings should be limited to a few sessions of 30–60 minutes each.

If an employee or a volunteer wants to connect with a small group of youth in an informal setting outside of youth group, he/she may do so within the following guidelines:

- The meeting must take place in a public area during that location's open hours. Also acceptable are Elder-approved visits to the home of a member.
- Prior written consent (physical or electronic) must be obtained from a parent/guardian of each youth involved (a copy should be shared with an Elder).
- Any travel arrangements should adhere to the travel policies outlined in Section VII below.

VII. Travel Policies and Off-Site Activities

All transportation of minors requires approval from a parent/guardian.

If transportation is included as a part of an activity, a Transportation Waiver & Medical Release for that activity must be signed by a parent/guardian for every minor being transported.

General Supervision: In all transportation of minors, whether using a church vehicle or a personal vehicle, the following supervision guidelines must be observed:

- No employee or volunteer may be alone in a vehicle with a minor.
- If transporting minors below 7th grade, the Two Adult Rule must be observed. If transporting minors in 7th grade or above, two screened adults must be present.¹
- Adults should sit in the front; minors should sit in the back.
- Physical contact with minors must be avoided.

Driving: When transporting minors in a church vehicle or a personal vehicle, employees and volunteers must abide by all traffic laws. All occupants of the vehicle must wear a seat belt, and car seats must be used when required by the State of Michigan. Drivers may not use a cell phone while transporting minors.

Use of Church Vehicles: Only members of First Baptist Church over age 21 may drive a church vehicle. Drivers must be approved by an Elder before transporting any minors in a church vehicle.

Planning an Off-Site Activity: When planning an activity for minors away from the church building, it is important to have a clear plan that is communicated appropriately. The following guidelines should be followed to that end:

- An Elder must approve the planned activity before parents or minors are informed.
- Parents/Guardians must have at least two weeks' notice of a planned activity.
- The worker(s) planning the activity are responsible to ensure that all necessary waivers are signed before a minor may participate in the activity.

Severe Weather: In the event of severe weather that warrants the cancellation of an activity away from the church building, the worker(s) who planned the activity should communicate this cancellation to parents/guardians. The decision should be made no less than 1 hour before the activity was supposed to begin (or transportation was supposed to leave). The decision should also be communicated to an Elder.

¹The Two Adult Rule states, "At least two screened, *unrelated* workers must be present at all times in every classroom or other enclosed area in use for children's/youth ministry." For transporting minors in 7th grade or above, we are modifying the Two Adult Rule to allow for two screened, yet *related* workers to satisfy our supervision requirements (e.g., a married couple, both of whom have been screened and approved to work with minors).

VIII. Security and Emergency Response

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help.

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. In the event of a life-threatening injury or illness, workers should first call 911, then inform the parents/guardians as soon as possible. Workers should complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor, prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

Evacuation Procedures:

Nursery: Workers should gather all children and exit the building using the exterior door at the back of the nursery. If the fire alarm is not yet sounding, the last worker out should pull the fire alarm located next to the exterior door. Workers should take the children to the far east end of the parking lot behind the church and await further instructions from an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.

Elementary: Workers should gather all children and exit the building using either of the exterior doors in the Fellowship Hall. If the fire alarm is not yet sounding, the last worker out should pull the fire alarm located next to the exterior door. Workers should take the children to the far east end of the parking lot behind the church and await further instructions from an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.

Youth Group: Workers should gather all youth and exit the building through the exterior door leading into the parsonage driveway. If the fire alarm is not yet sounding, the last worker out should pull the fire alarm located next to the exterior door. Workers should take the youth to the far southwest corner of the front parking lot and await further instructions from an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director.

Fire: In the event of a fire, the first priority of the workers is the evacuation of their class. The evacuation procedures listed above should be followed.

Active Shooter: In the event of an active shooter, the following procedures should be followed:

- **Run:** Evacuate the building quickly and cautiously in a direction away from the attacker. Go until you are sure you are out of danger. As soon as it is safe to do so, a worker should call 911.
- **Hide:** If running is not an option, ensure the attacker cannot get to you or see you.
 - Look for a place with lockable doors and no (or coverable) windows.
 - Close the door, lock it, barricade it.
 - Silence all cell phones and remain quiet.
 - Workers should make a plan for defending themselves and the minors.
- **Fight:** As a last resort, workers should be willing to fight if confronted by the shooter. Workers should use aggressive force and the items in their environment as weapons to incapacitate the shooter.

Missing Child / Kidnapping: In the event of a missing child, workers should contact the Check-In Coordinator immediately. The Check-In Coordinator will get either an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director, and they will conduct a thorough search of the building together. If the child is still not found, assistance will be secured from the Deacons and/or Elders to conduct a search of the church property. If the child is still not found, an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director will call 911, and the parents will be alerted.

In the event of a kidnapping, a worker should call 911 and ask the Check-In Coordinator to retrieve and inform an Elder. The Elder will alert the parents immediately.

IX. Healthy Child Policy

Minors with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a minor exhibits any of the following symptoms, the parent should keep the minor home:

- Fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Any symptoms of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow, or constant nasal discharge
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Lice
- Croup
- Any other communicable disease

The Check-In Coordinator has the right to refuse any child exhibiting symptoms of illness at check-in. Those working with the Youth Group have the right to refuse any youth exhibiting symptoms of illness.

Workers for any ministry to minors who exhibit symptoms of illness should stay home.

If a minor seems to have contracted an illness at church, parents should notify the Children's Ministry Director so that other parents may be notified if necessary.

No workers may give any medication to a minor.

General Precautions: These basic guidelines should be followed to prevent the spread of disease:

- Workers should use disposable gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, handle blood spills, clean vomit, or interact with any other bodily fluids. Workers should wash their hands after interacting with bodily fluids.
- Workers should wash their hands before handling food being given to a minor.
- Minors and workers should wash their hands after every visit to the toilet and at all other necessary times.

Cleaning: Nursery workers should remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area and place them in the bin labeled "Dirty." At the conclusion of the Morning Worship Service, the Sunday Afternoon Service, and the Wednesday Evening Service, the toys in this bin should be disinfected with the provided disinfectant spray and placed in the bin labeled "Clean." Nursery workers should check the "Clean" bin upon arrival and return any toys in it to the general play area.

For all classrooms, workers should ensure that surfaces are appropriately disinfected with the provided disinfectant spray and/or wipes prior to leaving at the conclusion of the service. In the event of a large mess in need of additional cleaning, workers should do their best to clean with

the supplies available in the janitorial closet. If help is needed, workers should contact a Deacon or the Children's Ministry Director.

X. Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting, and Response

Definition of Child Abuse: Any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare. Child abuse can generally be subdivided into five categories.

1. Neglect: Failure (whether intentional or not) of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as food, weather-appropriate clothing, medical care, supervision, or education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.
2. Emotional Abuse: Communicating that the child does not deserve love and care. This would include such things as name-calling, threats, or deprivation of affection. This may be spoken or unspoken.
3. Physical Abuse: Intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm to a child. This includes all non-accidental physical injuries.
4. Sexual Abuse: Any form of sexual contact between a child and an adult or an older youth. This would include showing/talking about sexually explicit material.
5. Spiritual Abuse: The use of spiritual authority (e.g., the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

Prevention: The following measures are taken by First Baptist Church to prevent any form of child abuse (see Section II above for more specifics):

- Educating our staff, Elders, Deacons, and volunteers about neglect and abuse.
- Adhering to the procedures and guidelines as set forth in this policy.
- Training and screening all workers prior to ministry to minors.
- Requiring a criminal background check for all candidates for employment.
- Repeating the screening procedures, including background checks, for all staff and volunteers regularly.
- Requiring workers to be members for at least six months before serving in any ministry to minors.

Reporting to Civil Authorities: Anyone who believes that a minor is in imminent danger should call the police immediately.

All those considered to be a **mandated reporter** by the State of Michigan are expected to comply fully with the appropriate legal guidelines and to report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or signs of neglect to local authorities. All Elders of First Baptist Church are mandated reporters.

Mandated reporters should immediately report to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). This report may be made verbally over the phone by calling 855-444-3911. This report may also be submitted online by going to https://newmibridges.michigan.gov/s/isd-partnershiplanding?language=en_US and following the prompts for mandated reporters. If the report is made verbally over the phone, then the reporter must also file a written report (DHS-3200) within 72 hours. If the report is made online, then no additional written report is required.

All who are not mandated reporters are considered **permissive reporters**. Permissive reporters who suspect any form of child abuse or neglect may call MDHHS at 855-444-3911. Michigan law offers legal protections for a person acting in good faith who makes a report or cooperates in an investigation.

At no point will First Baptist Church prohibit either a mandated or a permissive reporter from reporting to MDHHS.

Reporting to Church Authorities:

Step #1: Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a minor has been or is likely to be neglected, abused, or threatened with abuse in any form should immediately inform an Elder of First Baptist Church or the Children's Ministry Director. This includes reporting any questionable behavior (e.g., overly flirtatious behavior, inappropriate touching, etc.) and/or possible offenses (observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, such as bruising, cuts, etc.). This should be documented using the Abuse Reporting Form, which should be filled out by the person making the report.

Note: Mandated reporters must fulfill their legal responsibilities prior to informing an Elder. Permissive reporters are *asked* (but not required) to report to an Elder prior to reporting to MDHHS, especially if they are unsure if abuse has actually occurred. This allows those who may not have sufficient training in recognizing abuse to get guidance on how best to proceed. At no point will any Elder hinder or prohibit a report being filed with MDHHS, even if there is disagreement as to whether or not abuse actually occurred.

Step #2: The Elder or Children's Ministry Director who receives the report is required to share the report directly and immediately with the lead pastor. The lead pastor shall coordinate an Elders' meeting (which should include the Children's Ministry Director if not already involved) to occur within 24 hours, at which the Elder or Children's Ministry Director who received the report initially shall share the report with the rest of the Elders.

Note: If an Elder, lead pastor, or Children's Ministry Director is being accused of abuse, then he should be excluded from this process. If the lead pastor is being accused, any other Elder may stand in his place throughout this process.

Step #3: If a report has not yet been filed with MDHHS and the allegations or eyewitness accounts are deemed credible, then the Elder or Children's Ministry Director who received the report initially shall file the necessary report with MDHHS within 24 hours. The original reporter shall be informed that a report has been filed with MDHHS. If the Elders are considering not filing a report with MDHHS, then the lead pastor shall interact with Brotherhood Mutual (our insurance company) and follow their counsel immediately.

Step #4: Once a report has been filed with MDHHS, the Elders shall do the following:

- Notify Brotherhood Mutual if not already done.

- Designate an Elder to be the liaison between the church and the civil authorities.
- Designate an Elder to be the liaison between the church and the media.
- Inform the parent/guardian of the alleged victim immediately. If the parent/guardian is the alleged perpetrator, then the Elders shall defer to the local authorities on this matter.

Step #5: The church shall cooperate fully with any investigation by the civil authorities. If the civil authorities decline to investigate, or if more information is needed to respond appropriately after the conclusion of a civil investigation, then the Elders may conduct an internal investigation. No internal investigation shall in any way interfere with or take the place of a civil investigation. Any internal investigation shall be conducted with appropriate assistance from legal counsel. Until all investigations are completed, the following precautions shall be taken:

- If the alleged perpetrator is an employee of the church, they shall immediately be removed from their position until all investigations are concluded.
- If the alleged perpetrator is an elected officer of the church (i.e., Elder, Deacon, treasurer, clerk), they shall be immediately removed from their position until all investigations are concluded.
- All alleged perpetrators shall be prohibited from any ministry involving minors, both as a supervisor and as a participant. This prohibition shall last until the Elders remove it.
- Further action may be taken as deemed necessary by the Elders, which may include such things as:
 - Contacting the police.
 - Notifying staff, Deacons, and any volunteers.
 - Designating an assigned chaperone to accompany the alleged perpetrator at all times on church property (the alleged perpetrator must be informed of this decision).
 - Barring the alleged perpetrator from any and all church property.
 - Reporting allegations to the congregation during a public service or at a Members' Meeting.
 - Recommending the removal of the alleged perpetrator from church membership via church discipline.
 - Suspension or termination of a staff member or volunteer position.
 - Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, an Elder, a Deacon, a volunteer, or any member of First Baptist Church for misconduct or abuse against children.

Step #6: If the alleged perpetrator is found to be guilty of abuse through the civil courts, the church's own internal investigation, or an admission of guilt, the following actions shall be taken immediately:

- If the perpetrator is an employee of the church, their employment shall immediately be terminated. Appropriate legal counsel should be sought for proper procedures of termination.
- The Elders shall arrange for a Members' Meeting to occur as soon as possible, at which the congregation will be informed to an appropriate degree.
- The Elders shall recommend the removal of the perpetrator from church membership via church discipline.
- The perpetrator shall be barred from all church property until otherwise notified.

- The Elders shall take any other action deemed necessary and beneficial to the overall health and safety of the congregation.

Confidentiality: The church, as well as any permissive or mandated reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent it deems appropriate for the care of its members while remaining consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicions should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy.

Response to Child Pornography: If any employee, Elder, Deacon, or member of First Baptist Church is suspected of or admits to viewing, producing, or distributing child pornography, the following actions must be taken:

- Suspicions or admissions of guilt must immediately be reported to the police.
- After informing the police, an Elder or the Children's Ministry Director should be informed.
- Upon receiving this information, the Elder or Children's Ministry Director should inform the lead pastor, who will coordinate an Elders' meeting to occur within 24 hours.
- The Elders will take action steps in basic agreement with Steps 4, 5, and 6 in the section above entitled "Reporting to Church Authorities."

Sex Offenders Attending Services: The Elders of First Baptist Church have the right to determine whether or not to admit any alleged sexual offender to any service or activity of First Baptist Church. If the Elders decide to allow an alleged sexual offender to attend, then the Elders shall designate a chaperone who will accompany the alleged offender at all times while on church property for a church event. The alleged offender will only be allowed in the auditorium, the main lobby, and the single-use restroom in the office area. The designated chaperone will ensure that the restroom is empty before the alleged offender is allowed to enter and will wait outside the door until the alleged offender is finished. These expectations shall be communicated to the alleged offender in advance of his/her attendance. Any violation of these expectations will result in the alleged offender's permission to attend any services or activities of First Baptist Church being immediately revoked.

In the case of a convicted sexual offender who desires to attend, the following guidelines will govern the church's response:

- First Baptist Church will comply with the law. The Elders will interact with the offender's probation officer to learn if he/she is legally allowed to attend services where children are present and any other legal restrictions. The church will not allow the offender to violate the terms of his/her probation.
- The Elders will seek to understand the offender's situation and history. This includes a thorough review of any court and investigative records available. If the offender is in sex offender treatment, the offender will be required to sign a release allowing the Elders to interact with his/her treatment provider to determine the level of threat the offender poses and the best way to meet his/her spiritual needs.

- If an offender's victim is a member or regular attender of First Baptist Church, the offender will not be allowed to attend. The Elders will offer help in finding a suitable church for the offender to attend, and they will inform the other church of the situation.
- Though the final decision on whether or not an offender is allowed to attend will ultimately rest with the Elders, they should address the matter with the congregation in the context of a Members' Meeting. The Elders will work to shepherd the congregation to a wise end that both prioritizes the safety of the innocent and embraces the power of the gospel to change lives.
- If the offender is considered low-risk, and if the Elders decide to allow the offender to attend, then the Elders shall designate a chaperone who will accompany the offender at all times while on church property for a church event. The offender will only be allowed in the auditorium, the main lobby, and the single-use restroom in the office area. The designate chaperone will ensure that the restroom is empty before the offender is allowed to enter and will wait outside the door until the alleged offender is finished. These expectations shall be communicated to the offender in advance of his/her attendance. Any violation of these expectations will result in the offender's permission to attend any services or activities of First Baptist Church being immediately revoked.