

Safe Kids

Volunteer Handbook



*Approved and Effective
June 1, 1996*

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Safe Kids

A Child Abuse Prevention Program at FBC

Introduction

The following Policy/Program has been instituted by the Board of Elders of our church to protect as best we can young people from birth through High School graduation entrusted to our care.

Child Abuse is “any serious non-accidental, physical or mental injury, sexual exploitation or serious physical neglect of a child under eighteen years of age¹.” Child sexual abuse is defined as “any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or psychological) between a child/adolescent and an adult when the child/adolescent is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or any other person².” Although statistics vary among sources, a conservative estimate would indicate that hundreds of thousands of children are sexually abused in the United States each year. Unfortunately child sexual abuse is most often committed by people whom children have come to know and trust (parents, teachers, lifeguards, scout leaders, and children’s workers³). Due to these alarming statistics, day-care centers and youth organizations across the country have implemented strict policies to prevent child abuse. Policies cover important issues such as the proper screening and training of children’s workers and guidelines for appropriate physical contact with children. Yet most churches have done nothing to protect the children and youth that God has entrusted to their care. Attorney Richard Hammer speaks of the church when he writes, “The child molester is moving toward the last institution of our society in which he is placed in immediate contact with potential victims with complete trust⁴.”

At First Baptist Church of Clayton, we believe that Christ has called us to reach out to children and youth with God’s love. We consider this ministry a high calling and a sacred trust. Therefore we are committed to doing everything within our power to protect these young people from the possibility of abuse or neglect. It is our hope and prayer that in the midst of a troubled world, FBC will always be a place where kids can be safe.

Goals of a Safe Kids Program

- 1) To provide for the long-term health of our youth programs so that the central goals of evangelism and building up believers would not be hindered.
- 2) To prevent child abuse by promoting the awareness of our Safe Kids Child Abuse Program at FBC.
- 3) To protect the children entrusted to our care from people who may seek to harm them.
- 4) To protect our volunteers and our church ministry from the possibility of false accusations and litigation.
- 5) To ensure proper reporting of suspected cases of child abuse.
- 6) To enhance our potential outreach and discipleship programs for children by ensuring that we implement this program in a Christ-honoring and church-strengthening way.

I. Child Abuse Awareness

Understanding the problem of child abuse is important. Therefore:

- A. We will provide helpful literature on child abuse prevention to our church membership, parents, and volunteers where needed.
- B. We will require those who wish to become volunteers in our ministries to children and youth to participate in a Safe Kids child abuse seminar prior to serving.
- C. We will endeavor to deal with reported cases of physical or sexual abuse with all diligence and godly propriety.

II. Screening and Training of Volunteers

Those who wish to serve in FBC's children's and youth ministries must meet the following requirements:

- A. Personal Qualifications

1. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ and compassion for children and youth.
 2. Minimum age requirements:
 - a. Children's ministries: Jr. High student
 - b. Jr./Sr. High ministries: 18 years old
 3. No criminal record or history of physically or sexually abusing children.
 4. Regular in attendance at First Baptist Church of Clayton, NJ for at least six (6) months, and a member.
- B. Training
1. **All** workers **must** participate in a Safe Kids seminar prior to serving in any capacity as a youth worker: effective October 1, 1996.
- C. Screening
1. All new workers must complete a written application with personal references.
 2. References will be contacted.
 3. A criminal background check will be performed.
- D. Eligibility for Service
1. Upon successful completion of the Safe Kids training and screening procedures, individuals will be accepted as volunteers and will be eligible to serve in any of our children's or youth ministries for which they are otherwise qualified.
 2. The Associate Pastor of Youth and Christian Education and the Christian Education committee will oversee the training and screening of volunteer applicants.

Notes

1. Cosner, Robert E., "A Guide to the Management or Child Abuse," (Doylestown, PA: Ducks County Children & Youth Services) p.3.
2. Allender, Dan, The Wounded Heart
3. Special Report Video, "Somebody Told," (Seattle, WA: VideoNet, 1987).
4. Hammer, Richard, National & International Religion Report. November 16, 1992, Vol. 6, No. 24, p.3.
5. New Jersey State Law

B. Procedures for reporting

1. Volunteers should discuss the matter with the pastoral staff member who supervises their ministry.
2. If suspicion seems warranted, volunteer & staff member should meet with Sr. Pastor to alert him of the situation and to make call to:

DYFS
Division of Youth & Family Services
Phone # (609) 530-8770

3. All cases should be handled in a quiet and confidential manner.

III. Ministry Guidelines

All staff members and volunteers should use common sense and must adhere to the following Safe Kids guidelines when ministering to children and youth:

- A. Open Door Policy: If you are the only adult in a classroom with a group of children, please leave curtains, blinds, and classroom door without glass open. If you are the only adult and there is only one child in attendance, please join in with a neighboring class.
- B. Infant Care: Parental instructions for feeding and care should be followed. If baby is sick, injured, or is crying for more than 10 minutes, parents should be notified immediately.
- C. Diaper Changes: Diapers should be checked at least once each hour and changed as needed. A wise infection control policy should be followed. Changing should be done in room with another nursery worker present.
- D. Infant /Toddler Pickup: An infant or toddler should never be released to any adult without following the required procedures. **Never** release a child into the care of anyone without insuring that this child is authorized by the person who left the child in our care.
- E. Bathroom Procedures: Whenever possible take children to the bathroom as a class with two or more workers present. If you must take a child to the bathroom alone, be sure to prop the outside door open and do not enter the stall.
- F. Display of Physical Affection: Good touches are an important means of demonstrating our love and concern for the children and youth in our ministries, yet the following limits must be followed. Hugging or cuddling should only be done in a public area with other adults present. Touching or tickling children under their clothing is prohibited. Jr./Sr. High youth leaders should focus on ministering to students of the same sex whenever possible. No youth **leader** is permitted to **date** a student in our youth ministry at any time.

- G. Classroom Management/Discipline: Never strike a child or physically force children to behave. All children should be handled in a quiet and gentle manner. Screaming or using harsh language is unacceptable. If a child's behavior is totally out of control, get another teacher to help you or ask someone to find his/her parents. Always attempt to have a third responsible person present when correcting a young person away from the sight of the group.
- H. Participation: A child should never be forced to participate in a game or activity in which he/she does not feel comfortable. Allow him/her to sit on the sidelines and watch. If and when the child is ready, allow him/her to join in.
- I. Special Activities: All activities or outings outside the normal ministry calendar must be approved by the Board of Elders or Pastoral staff.
- J. Rough Housing: Extreme caution should be taken when rough housing with children or youth. Be sure you are in a public area with other adults present. The giving of "wedgies", "pink bellies", or other activities that might be misconstrued as sexual abuse are strictly prohibited.
- K. The Buddy System: When FBC ministry leaders wish to contact students outside the church building for discipleship or outreach, it is best to use the buddy system (two or more adult leaders contacting students together).
- L. Driving Students in Your Car: If a student or group of students needs a ride to or from a church meeting or activity, two adults should be present in the vehicle. If a leader needs to drive a student or group of students without another adult person present, parental permission must be obtained prior to the trip.
- M. Retreats and Overnight Activities: Written parental permission must be obtained for each student prior to the trip. A minimum of two adults must be present at any overnight activity. Separate sleeping and changing areas must be designated for girls and boys and off limits to members of the opposite sex. No socializing, raiding, or peeping in windows will be permitted in these areas. Each sleeping area must have a minimum of one adult leader and two or more students.

IV. Reporting Child Abuse

Reporting suspected cases of child abuse is an important part of our prevention program. Anyone who sees a child being abused or suspects that a child has been abused should report it immediately.

"Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse shall report the same immediately to the Division of Youth and Family Services by telephone or otherwise. Such reports where possible, shall contain the names and addresses of the child and his parent, guardian, or other person having custody and control of the child and, if known, the child's age, the nature and possible extent of the child's injuries, abuse or maltreatment, including any evidence of previous injuries, abuse or maltreatment, and any other information that the person believes may be helpful with respect to the child abuse and identity of the perpetrator.

"Anyone acting pursuant to this act in the making of a report under this act shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Any such person shall have the same immunity with respect to testimony given in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report."

"Any person knowingly violating the provisions of this act including the failure to report an act of child abuse having reasonable cause to believe that an act of child abuse has been committed, is an disorderly person." (New Jersey State Law)⁵

A. What types of things should be reported?

1. If you witness someone abusing a child.
2. If a child tells to you that he/she has been abused.
3. If you see physical evidence that a child has been abused (for example: any unusual pattern or location of bruises, cuts, bumps, or scars on a child, missing hair, injuries or unusual redness around the genitals, conflicting stories about injuries, a medical condition that hasn't been properly treated, etc....)