



fellowship

BAPTIST CHURCH

Protection Policy

Children's Ministry

1st Edition

(Nursery – 5th Grade)

Policies and Procedures Manual

We exist to make disciples of every generation will make disciples in every nation.

Dear Children's Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Fellowship Baptist Church (hereafter "Fellowship") is committed to providing a safe and secure environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. At this time, the disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. Churches that have children's programs are not insulated from this trend.

What We Believe

We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Children and parents need to know that we have taken every reasonable step to ensure the children's safety in our ministry. We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of physical or sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers.

Clarifying Responsibility

Staff and volunteers represent Fellowship and are therefore under the guidelines of our Child Protection Policy while participating in any church-related event, function, or meeting, whether on or off church premises.

Personal Summary

Staff is defined as all paid employees of the church. All staff members are required to go through child protection training and background screening procedures, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children or students.

Volunteers include children and student ministry workers, child-care workers, teachers, media personnel, safety team members, and anyone else who serves the children or students of the church and is not church staff.

Disclaimer

This policy will cover a variety of scenarios, some of which will be considered an abuse or a policy violation. It is not possible to cover unforeseen occurrences.

*This Policies and Procedures Manual has been developed
and adopted by Fellowship Baptist Church in September 2019*

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WHAT WE REQUIRE

- **Volunteer Application:** We require a Volunteer Service Application before approving an individual for service in our children’s ministry to help us screen volunteers.
- **Reference Check:** We conduct reference checks. Applicants should list two character references as well as a previous ministry or service reference.
- **Background Checks:** We conduct criminal records checks for all staff, pastors, and volunteers who will have access to children.
- **Training:** We require all staff and volunteers to successfully complete our online child protection training. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understand of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’¹ a child for **sexual abuse**.²
- **Six-Month Leader Rule:** Volunteers are required to be members of Fellowship for a minimum of **six months** before serving as a *leader* or *teacher* in a ministry role. The church leadership (pastors and deacons) may approve exceptions in unusual and appropriate circumstances.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this packet and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

¹**Grooming** – the process used by an abuser to select a child, to win the child’s trust, and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeepers’, in order to manipulate the child into sexual activity and to keep the children from disclosing the abuse.

²**Child Sexual Abuse** – “any sexual activity with a child—whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim” (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992). See also Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code.

Sexual activity – may be violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching, and is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness. It involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Sexual Misconduct – inappropriate behavior relating to or involving a sexual nature.

REPORTING ABUSE AND/OR POLICY VIOLATION

Abuse Toleration

Our church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at this church to act in the best interest of children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate ministry leaders, the Children's Pastor, the Senior Pastor, or one of the deacons of Fellowship.

Reporting Suspicious Abuse or Policy Violation

Our church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to our pastors and the appropriate law enforcement agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a ministry leader or one of the pastors of Fellowship. 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, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a ministry leader or a pastor.

It is the responsibility of every pastor, staff member, and volunteer to be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies, or worse, actual abuse. All questions should be directed to the Children's Pastor or Senior Pastor.

Reporting Suspicions of Abuse to Law Enforcement Agencies

Texas law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency within 48 hours of discovery pursuant to Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code. If the staff member or volunteer prefers, the staff member or volunteer may request reporting assistance from the Children's Pastor or another pastor; together they will make a report to the appropriate authorities. If the staff member or volunteer makes a report regarding a suspicion of abuse or neglect without assistance, the staff member or volunteer will immediately notify the Children's Pastor **and** Senior Pastor. In no way does any provision in this

policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Texas authorities.

Response to a Report of Abuse

The pastors and deacons of FBC will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE AND/OR POLICY VIOLATION

Consequences of Abuse

Per Fellowship's zero tolerance for abuse (detailed on page 5), any person accused of committing abuse will be prohibited from participation in any area of ministry involving children. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement of Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed abuse, along with any legal steps that will take place, will also be prohibited from any future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, teenagers, or vulnerable populations at our church, and may also be subject to church discipline. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct will result in termination of employment from Fellowship.

Consequences of Policy Violation

While abuse always correlates to policy violation, policy violation does not always correlate to abuse. Example: a volunteer or staff member inappropriately touching a child is abuse and is clearly a Children's Ministry Policy Violation; however, a staff member or volunteer giving a child a full-frontal hug may not constitute abuse. Therefore, policy violations should be reported to the Children's Pastor or another pastor and each policy violation will be taken on a case-by-case basis. Repeat offenders will be temporarily suspended or indefinitely prohibited from participation in activities and programming involving children, teenagers, or vulnerable populations at Fellowship.

SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ABUSE AND/OR POLICY VIOLATIONS

Physical Contact

No child should ever feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. Physical contact, such as hugs or pats on the back, should be for the benefit of the child, and never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.

Appropriate touching means offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back. Inappropriate touching would include kissing anywhere, demanding kisses and hugs, touching or tickling of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, or any physical contact that feels uncomfortable or violating. Older children (elementary & up) should never be allowed to sit in your lap. Instead, have a child sit beside you.

Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection should immediately be reported to the Children's Pastor or another pastor. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

Two-Person Rule

One worker must never be alone with children, 5th grade and under. No child will ever be left unattended in the children's classrooms, nursery area, or fellowship hall. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds him or herself alone with a single child, that adult will immediately take the child to a room occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

After every event, Children Ministry staff and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving. On the playground, staff and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not as easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under the slide, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another more open, easily viewed area. Our motto as staff and volunteers should be to, "Be seen seeing." These rules are for the protection of our children, as well as for protecting our workers from false accusations.

Worker to Child Ratio

Fellowship is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children Ministry programs. Accordingly, we will strive to observe the following worker to child ratios:

| Age of Children | Number of Children per Worker |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Infants (0-6 months) | 2 |
| Nursery (6 months - 3 years) | 3 |
| Pre-K (3-5 years) | 5-6 |
| K (5-6 years) | 7-8 |
| Grades 1 st – 5 th | 9-10 |

If a worker is “out of ratio” it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the ministry leader or Children’s Pastor. Ministry leaders will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring child to worker ratios into compliance with church policy.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Fellowship 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 their children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any 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.

Discipline

It is our church’s policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavior management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. The prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- Before beginning class, or your planned activity, clearly explain your behavior expectations to the children. Let them know what will happen if they choose not to follow the behavior guidelines.
- Warn the child of his/her specific misbehavior that will not be tolerated and verbally redirect the child.

- If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the location of the misbehavior, usually to a corner of the same classroom for a time-out. (Remember: avoid being alone with one child).
- Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with a clear explanation of your expectations. (“Billy, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for five minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
- Provide the child with a chair or a “spot” to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child’s life (3 year old, 3 minutes). As a last resort, a worker may physically remove a child from a setting where the unruly child may be harming or potentially harm another person.
- Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs, give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep him on track. (“Billy you’re doing a great job or sitting quietly – just two more minutes.”)
- Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and reward him/her with being able to rejoin the group. Remind the child that repeating the initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.
- Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the child’s parents and to the Children’s Pastor or a pastor. The parents may be asked to pick up the child until the behavior issue is resolved.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to non-public places are never allowed. It is recommended, but not required, that there be two adults in every car. **A child should never be alone with a staff member or volunteer in a vehicle.**
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phone may be utilized by the driver while driving children in any circumstance.

4. Any person driving children to or from a Children's Ministry event on behalf of the church must complete our volunteer application and screening process. Staff and volunteers under 21 are discouraged from driving children.

Parental Contact

Parents who leave a child in the care of our staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children Ministry activities.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Fellowship. Parents have an open invitation to observe all activities in which their child is involved. If the activity has a cost, the parent will be responsible to pay for their own way as well. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous ongoing contact with Children Ministry activities will be required to complete our volunteer application and screening process.

Release of Children

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child. All children (nursery – 5th) will only be released to the parent or guardian presenting the appropriate claim tag that they received when they checked their child in.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate ministry leader or the Children's Pastor before releasing the child.

Intoxicants

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or an illegal drug while in any of our church facilities, or while working with or supervising children.

Tobacco: Fellowship requires staff and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility and while in the presence of children or their parents. Our church is a tobacco-free facility.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members or volunteers are prohibited from engaging in 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. Staff members and volunteers are also prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, images, cards, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in Fellowship's Children Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

Medication

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Children's Ministry.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

Nursery Children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom needs, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies.

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. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
5. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet Training:

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only female nursery workers or the child's parent/guardian will participate in toilet training of children of either sex.
3. When children are taken into bathrooms the doors will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
5. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.

School Age Children

Workers may not enter restrooms with children. They shall check restrooms prior to children's use to confirm that they are empty and wait outside until all children leave the restroom. Children needing assistance should be cared for by a female worker with another worker accompanying her.

Special Needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Fellowship’s Children’s Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Fellowship.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Fellowship.

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

I hereby acknowledge receipt of Fellowship policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached to Fellowship’s Children’s Ministry Policies.]

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Date: _____

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to the Children’s Pastor]