

**Child Protection and Security Policy**  
**Of the**  
**First Baptist Church of Dawson, Inc.**

**I. Policy**

**Introduction:** Because we believe that Jesus taught us to care for His children and youth, we commit our church to the practice of safe supervision. This policy will set standards for us for the supervision of the children and youth in our care. Our belief that a policy is needed is based on Jesus' priority in children (Luke 18), legal requirements (GA House Bill 1176, 2012, that expands the list of persons required by law to report child abuse now includes volunteers, workers and employees of churches) and insurance coverage restrictions.

This policy is designed to set forth procedures for the safety of the children of First Baptist Dawson. It is based on our understanding of the widespread problem of abuse throughout our country. Utilizing a common sense approach, First Baptist will promote a good faith effort to comply with the policy and will follow the practical policy of prevention.

**Purpose:** Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Child/Youth Protection Policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children. First Baptist of Dawson, Georgia seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our program and activities. Our goal, by implementing the practices listed below, is to protect the children of First Baptist from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

**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 direct volunteer persons who work with children.

## **II. Procedures**

### **Requirement of Staff and Volunteers**

#### **1. Background Check**

Employees: A background check and interview process are required for all employees when initially hired. If a background check has been completed within the last calendar year for current employees, an additional check will not be required. To comply with this policy, if current employees have not had a check within the last year, that will be accomplished as soon as practicable. Thereafter, every five years a background check will be conducted for all employees. Authorization forms shall be signed by all employees prior to completing the background check.

Categories of volunteers: Individuals to whom we are entrusting the care of the children including:

- Those who will be involved in any educational or other aspect of ministry involving children
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children
- Those counseling children
- Those involved in one-on-one contact with children

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened in accordance with the routine practices of the nominating committee. Additionally, a prospective worker will be asked to sign an authorization form, allowing the church to run a background check. A background check is initially required for any volunteer and every five years thereafter. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

Disqualifying offenses that will keep an individual from working with children include: 1) No one shall serve if he/she is known to have been previously convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty or no contest, to any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes but is not limited to crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults involving adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, domestic violence, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs. 2) No one, who has had a verdict of judgment rendered against him/her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult or child, shall work or serve as a care provider to children. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered. 3) Other disqualifying offenses that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastor and/or chairman of the deacons on a case-by case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.

## **2. Background Check Routing Process (Employees and/or Workers)**

Background check requests shall be requested only by a representative of the Nominating Committee, Personnel Committee, Pastor, Youth Minister and/or Chairman of the Deacons. Background checks may also be requested by these individuals designated by First Baptist to have oversight of First Baptist sponsored activities, which may require the solicitation of workers/volunteers and which involved children/youth (activities such as VBS, AWANA, Children/Youth Choir, etc.) All requests must have a signed authorization form, providing pertinent information for each individual for whom a background check is being requested. It shall be the responsibility of the committee member, pastor, youth minister, chairman of deacons or other designated individuals to securely transmit said form to the First Baptist Church.

Background checks shall be completed by the church secretary, who will be trained and certified to conduct such checks, via an "in-house", on-line computer search program. Note: If necessary, a national criminal background check may also be conducted through various law enforcement agencies. The church secretary shall provide the background checks to the Pastor and/or Chairman of the Deacons for review as per Child Protection Policy criteria. If qualified, the person's name will be placed on a Master List of Qualified Workers, generated by the church secretary. This Master List of Qualified Workers will be used by those listed above to make recommendations to the church regarding workers/volunteers. Note: Failure to return authorization form or disqualifications per policy will result in name being omitted from the Master List of Qualified Workers. For continuity purposes, all qualified employees will also be shown on the Master List of Qualified Workers.

If a background check comes back with a questionable status, the Pastor or Chairman of the Deacon will ask if the applicant would like to have a meeting to offer an explanation. After said meeting, the Pastor will make the final determination of status of applicant.

All worker authorization forms, background check documentation and any other related information shall be organized and maintained in a locked file cabinet/box and maintained in a secure location accessible only to the church secretary, Pastor, and/or Chairman of Deacons. Employee information as stated above shall be maintained in their individual personnel files accessible only to the Personnel Committee chairman, Chairman of Deacons, and/or Pastor. Background checks/Master List shall not be copied, released or viewed except as otherwise stated elsewhere in this policy.

Note: The Master List of Qualified Workers, which will list both the initial and recertification due dates, shall also serve as a suspense document, alerting appropriate individuals to update background checks as per policy.

First Baptist Church will appropriate funds for the costs of background checks.

### **3. Two Adult Rule**

First Baptist Church will observe the practice of the “two adult” rule which requires that no adult may be alone with preschoolers, children or youth unless there is an open door or transparent window. It is our expectations that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. The Director(s) of preschool, children, and youth will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes and events from time to time.

### **4. Training**

All paid employees and volunteers who work with children under the age of 18 will be given, in writing, the definition of child abuse as well as the church policy on reporting child abuse. New employees and volunteers will be required to read the written materials available on this subject to help them gain an appreciation for the reality and urgency of the concern. This will help them identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it.

### **5. Age Requirements**

No person shall have sole supervision of children’s activities unless he/she is at least five (5) years older than the children with whom he/she is working.

Teenage Workers: We recognize that there are times when it is necessary or desirable for baby sitters who are themselves under the age of 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. Teenage workers must be at least age 14 and must be under the supervision of an adult and never be left alone with children.

## **III. Procedures for Preschoolers/Children/Youth**

### **1. Check in/Checkout**

At the present time, a formal security check in/checkout process for preschoolers is not needed. However, to ensure our preschoolers’ safety, First Baptist will exercise reasonable precautions. Workers may ask visitors or members if there are extenuating circumstances that would require special care in the releasing of the child to the care of individuals. After the Children’s Director discusses the surrounding circumstances with a parent or guardian, if needed, safeguards will be developed on an individual basis.

## **2. Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First Baptist. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of others when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be present:

- Fever, diarrhea or vomiting within the last 48 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 the other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be taken home.

## **3. Medications Policy**

It is the policy of First Baptist not to administer any medications to the children under our care. 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 the Children's Director and/or workers to develop a plan of action. Notification of all such conditions shall be appropriately posted.

## **4. Discipline**

It is the policy of First Baptist not to administer corporal punishment. There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting or other physical discipline of children. Workers shall consult with the child's parent or guardian if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **5. Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while in our care, the following steps should be followed: For minor injuries, such as 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. First Baptist will provide and maintain First Aid Kits at accessible locations throughout the church. The initial installation and quarterly inspections of the First Aid Kits will be the responsibility of the Building and Grounds Committee.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will be immediately summoned. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. Incident reports will be completed for compliance with insurance requirements.

## **6. Transportation/Overnight Policy**

### **a. Children Ministry (PreK - Grade 5)**

- i. Each off-site activity will require a parental permission slip and other appropriate paperwork.
- ii. A minimum of two adults must be present regardless of how few students are in attendance.

### **b. Student Ministry (6<sup>th</sup> Grade through Age 18):**

- i. A minimum of two adults must be present regardless of how few students are in attendance.
- ii. Organized events on or off the church campus will be staffed ideally with a 1:5 adult to student ratio with a minimum of 1:10.
- iii. The Associate Pastor for Student Ministry will be informed in advance of all activities held on or off the church campus. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities for students, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar by contacting the church office.
- iv. Overnight events that are attended by students of both genders must also be chaperoned by adults of both genders. At least one adult will be present in each sleeping area.
- v. Any overnight traveling will require separate transportation for males and females.
- vi. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. Corporal punishment is never allowed.
- vii. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adults and that the general guidelines for supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary.
- viii. All vehicles owned by First Baptist shall be operated only by licensed, church approved drivers whose names are on file per bus/van committee procedures.

## **IV. Outside Agencies**

Outside groups who come into our church and have not been screened by First Baptist, will be asked to sign a user agreement with a contractual provision ensuring compliance the Child Protection policy.

## **V. Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

The above policy and procedure have been developed to attempt to protect children and youth in our care. There may be instances when we have reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth is abused or neglected. In those instances, we will follow Georgia mandated reporting requirements.

### **1. 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 – acts or behavior which involve any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

### **2. Reporting**

#### **A. Suspected Abuse or Neglect occurring Within the Church Setting -**

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

1. The pastor and/or the chairman of the deacons will be notified of the incident;
2. The pastor and/or the chairman of deacon will comply with the follow reporting process:  
(**Note:** If there is reasonable cause to believe that the Pastor is involved in the abuse or neglect, the report shall be made exclusively to the Chairman of Deacons)
  - a. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified;
  - b. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to stay away from the premises during the investigation;

- c. Civil authorities will be notified, and the First Baptist will comply with state law requiring mandatory reporting, and fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- d. Our insurance company will be notified and the church will complete an incident report. Any documents received related to the incident and/or allegations will be immediately forwarded to the insurance company.

## **B. Suspected Abuse or Neglect occurring Outside the Church Setting**

With regard to any child who participates in any First Baptist programs or activities, and for whom there is reasonable cause to believe said child has been the victim of abuse or neglect, the employee or volunteer having suspicion of the same shall report that to the pastor or chairman of deacons, who will follow the law in reporting the same.

It is important to know when the pastor or chairman of deacons is required to report child abuse. Georgia law states that a person who is required to make a report when such person has “reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.” A determination that “reasonable cause” exists should be based on all available information. “Reasonable cause” can be said to mean a suspicion founded upon circumstances sufficiently strong to warrant a reasonable person to believe that something is true. A report of suspected child abuse is a request for an investigation and not an accusation. The person reporting does not have to be absolutely certain of their suspicion. When a person does not have “reasonable cause” to believe that a child has been abused, a report is not required by law.

The decisions regarding further assessment of any danger or any further necessary services will be based on the decision of the pastor and/or chairman of the deacons, who will have final authority over the situation. The Pastor or Chairman of the Deacons will maintain appropriate documentation.

## **VI. Church Education**

During the initial implementation of the First Baptist Child Protection and Security Policy, all church members shall have the opportunity to receive full information thereof.

All paid employees and volunteers who work with children will be trained on this policy and will be given a copy of it.

## **VII. Media Communication**

The pastor or chairman of deacons will handle all press communication related to this policy. All questions and inquiries should be referred to these individuals. No one else should address the media about these subjects.

## **VIII. Facility Security**

Facility security shall be conducted in accordance with the existing Deacon policy. (Instruction for Church Closure) and certain other security provisions identified in First Baptist Church Committee Job Descriptions/Handbook, Building and Grounds Committee Section.