



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY/PROCEDURES

Fellowship Baptist Church

I. PURPOSE

- a. It shall be the goal of the Fellowship Baptist Church (herein referred to as “FBC” or as “church”) to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children attending FBC programs either on or away from FBC property and to inform workers and enforce such policies.

II. SCOPE

- a. This policy applies to all church-sponsored activities on church property or at church-sponsored events not on church property.

III. DEFINITIONS

a. Child or children

- i. The term “child” or “children” includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

b. Workers

- i. The term “workers” includes all who participate in any ministry that is involved directly or indirectly with children.

ii. Types of workers

1. Leaders and teachers

- a. The term “leader” or “teacher” includes all workers responsible for teaching and giving overall direction to each class or ministry.
- b. Leaders and teachers must be members of FBC.
- c. Leaders and teachers include all paid staff of FBC.
- d. Leaders and teachers must be eighteen (18) years old.



2. Volunteers

- a. The term “volunteer” includes those who assist the leaders and teachers of any specific class or ministry
 - b. “Volunteers” interact with children in the presence of an approved leader or teacher. This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities.
- c. Applicant
- i. The term “applicant” includes all persons who have expressed an interest in working with children but have not yet been approved to do so at FBC.
- d. Child Abuse/Neglect
- i. FBC recognizes the definitions of child abuse and neglect as defined by Michigan law. Obtain a copy of the Michigan Mandated Reporter’s Resource Guide or contact the Michigan Department of Human Services (www.michigan.gov/dhs) for more information.

POLICY REVIEW

- e. Federal and State laws shall supersede this policy in the event of contradiction between the law and this policy.
- f. It shall be the policy of FBC to apply future revisions of this policy with the authorization of Pastors/Elders/Deacons appointed to policy review
- g. It shall also be the policy of FBC to periodically review the definition of child abuse and neglect as defined by law and the church’s policy concerning these crimes.



- i. These reviews can be conducted either with the workers individually or in groups at least once a year and following each change in or addition to such policies. Each worker shall acknowledge receipt of a written copy of the policy prior to the time they commence working with children and after each change to such policy. Each worker shall acknowledge participating in the periodic review of the church's policies and procedures. The signed acknowledgements shall be retained in the church office.
- h. It shall be the policy of FBC to keep the information of this policy current, such as contact information and how changes in state and federal law may affect FBC's procedural steps.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- a. All applicants must acknowledge in writing that they understand the church's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them.
- b. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the *Acknowledgement of Receipt* form.

V. SELECTION OF WORKERS PROCESS

- a. Members and Non-members
 - i. Leaders and Teachers must be members of FBC.
 - ii. Volunteers may be non-members but must be regular attendees of FBC.
- b. Minimum age
 - i. All leaders and teachers must be eighteen (18) years of age or older.
 - ii. Volunteers must be at least thirteen (13) years of age and may only hold positions under the direct supervision of a leader or teacher. They may not take the place of an adult leader or teacher.



c. Six-month rule

- i. No individual will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been in attendance of the church for a minimum of six (6) months. The applicant must have been a regular attendee and involved in church activities for that period of time. This time of interaction between FBC leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

VI. SCREENING OF WORKERS PROCESS

- a. Applicants may express their interest in children's ministry by notifying a teacher, leader Pastor/Deacon, or office Staff.
- b. The church keeps confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. With access afforded only to appropriate Pastor/Elder/Deacon or office staff and on a need-to-know basis.
- c. If the church learns of false, misleading or amended information that could cause potential danger to children or liability to the church, on a *Background Check Form, Children's Ministry Reference Check* or as presented in an interview, that person will be immediately dismissed from their position.
- d. Confidential interviews
 - i. All applicants desiring to work with children must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do.
 - ii. Pastors/Elders/Deacons will be responsible for interviewing the applicant, or a duly appointed representative.
 1. The pastoral staff member may employ a team of interviewers to meet with the applicant, with the pastoral staff member or a duly appointed representative.
 - iii. The FBC Child Protection Policy and Incident Reporting Policy must be discussed during the interview.



- e. Criminal background check
 - i. The applicant must complete an *FBC Background Check*.
 1. A criminal background check is required for all teachers, leaders, employee and volunteer workers. Performing a child abuse registry check is included.
 2. The Office staff will conduct criminal background checks notifying the Pastors/Elders/deacons if a negative report is received.
 3. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children.
- f. Children's Ministry Reference Checks
 - i. The Office staff will perform *Children's Ministry Reference Checks*.
 - ii. The Office staff must check and document at least two (2) references for each new applicant, making reasonable inquiry into the character of the applicant. References may be checked by phone or in person.
 - iii. Whenever possible, the two references should include: a person who has known the applicant for an extended period and a former supervisor.
 - iv. References must be non-related individuals.
 - v. Information gained in these checks should be noted directly on the *Children's Ministry Reference Check Form*.
- g. Survivors of child abuse
 - i. Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the church family. Their experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their work with children. Survivors of abuse may, if they choose, request confidential counseling from the Pastor, Elders or from a professional counselor. It will not disqualify them from service.



VII. VEHICLE SAFETY

- a. Persons who drive FBC owned or privately-owned vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must:
 - i. Maintain a current valid Michigan driver's license
 - ii. Comply with all other church transportation policies.

VIII. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROCEDURES

a. Safety of children

- i. It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.

b. Two-adult rule

- i. A minimum of two workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a non-classroom setting activity regardless of the number of participants or location. At least one of these must be a leader or teacher. These two adults cannot be husband and wife.
- ii. Classroom setting activities may have one teacher or leader in attendance while the class is in session. In these instances, doors to the classrooms will remain open. Windows may be installed between these classrooms for full visibility. At no time should an adult ever be in a room or an enclosed area alone with a child.



- c. Observation of children
 - i. Church activities for children should be scheduled in areas with visibility maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and by leaving the door to the room open, wherever possible or in the case of one classroom teacher.
 - ii. At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen. A clear glass window will be installed in the doors of all rooms typically occupied by children and into the door of all offices in the church. At no time shall the windows be obstructed.
- d. Ratio of workers to children
 - i. It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is always maintained involving the supervision of children. The Leader/Pastor responsible for the division shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.
- e. Leader/Pastor responsible for division and worker oversight
 - i. The leader/Pastor responsible for each division shall coordinate with the respective ministry coordinators to ensure ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.
- f. Permission Slips
 - i. Prior to any activity away from the church, a *Permission Slip* must be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the youth leader, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.



IX. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

- a. All mandated reporters are to follow the guidelines as specified by Michigan state law. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.
- b. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous. Any worker of the church who has cause to believe that a child's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedure:
 - i. If the worker is a mandated reporter, he/she shall contact Child Protective Services (CPS) by calling the hotline (800) 942-4357 or www.michigan.gov/dhs and follow the mandated reporter guidelines as specified by state law.
 - ii. If the worker is not a mandated reporter, the worker shall report to an Elder/Pastor or to Child Protective Services by calling the hotline (800) 942-4357 or www.michigan.gov/dhs.
- c. No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in an official capacity.
- d. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.
- e. The Elder/Pastor will suspend the accused person from the performance of all duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- f. The reporting worker will complete a written report of the incident by using an FBC Incident Report. The Incident Reporting Policy must be followed.
 - i. The report must also be submitted to CPS.



- g. The Elder/Pastor in consultation with the head deacon will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- h. The office staff will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed.
- i. The Elders/Deacons, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation.
- j. In the instance where child abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- k. In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the church should take action with the advice of legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.

X. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation.
- b. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the church shall be cause for immediate dismissal.
- c. The Elders/Pastors, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

XI. PASTOR/ELDER CARE

- a. The Elders/ Deacons shall encourage and assist the child and the parents/guardians in securing counseling, care and support.



- b. If the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest.
- c. All parties involved (child, parent/guardian, accused, etc.) shall be treated with love and respect as in accordance with the principles of Christianity.

XII. COMMUNITY LIAISON

- a. The Elders/Deacons, or Their appointed agent, will serve as the church's sole access to the media.
- b. At no time shall there be a breach of confidentiality or opposition to state and federal law when liaising with the media or community.
- c. The church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I have read and I understand the Fellowship Baptist Church Child Protection Policy. I understand and support the church's position regarding child abuse and neglect. I acknowledge that I know how to contact the Michigan Child Protective Services and access information regarding the same. I understand that if permitted to serve, any misrepresentation made by me or inability to adhere to the FBC policies shall be considered sufficient cause for my dismissal without advance notice.

Name (please print)

Date

Signature