

Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) Child/Youth Protection Policy

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General Purpose Statement

The members and staff of Fellowship Bible Church of Dalton are committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, FBC affirms our goal to protect the children (birth-5th grade) and youth (6th-12th grade) of FBC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Policy Implementation Responsibility

Unless otherwise specified, the Director of Youth & Family Ministry or his delegate will be responsible for the implementation and adherence to this policy and the directives contained herein.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of 18 years.

I. Selection of Workers

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

A. Six-Month Rule

Volunteers will not be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he or she has been consistently and actively involved with FBC for a minimum of six (6) months and has become a member (excluding those under 18 years of age) of FBC. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for a better evaluation of the applicant's suitability for working with children.

In certain situations persons may be considered for being allowed to serve as a volunteer who have not yet become a member. These exceptions must be approved by a pastor and elder board. Background checks and reference checks will be performed as described below. If approved, they must work under the direct supervision of an FBC member volunteer at all times. The FBC member volunteer, which the non-member will be working under, will be made aware of this requirement. The special approval and supervision requirements communication will be documented in writing.

Any person who is working in a position involving conduct with minors who changes their membership from the church or has not attended the church for a period of six (6) months or longer and returns seeking to work with minors will be required to complete the volunteer application process again.

B. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application using a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The Volunteer Application Form (See Attachment 1) will not be as extensive as the Application for Employment form but will be resubmitted every five years. The application forms will be maintained in confidence on file at FBC.

C. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references will be checked thoroughly. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past – even if applicant states that they have not worked with children before, churches will be contacted to confirm this. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at FBC.

D. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- those who will be involved in serving children as volunteers participating in all children and youth programs of FBC including but not limited to: Sunday School, Choirs, VBS, Nursery and Childcare, Missions programs, Church sponsored retreats, mission trips, etc., Outreach and community service.
- those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors
- those counseling minors
- those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors
- those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (such as church-sponsored vehicle drivers)

Background checks will not be run on middle school volunteers.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check (See Attachment 2). If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he or she will be unable to work with children. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Director of Family & Youth Ministry on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances and should be determined in consultation with one or more elders. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at FBC. Pending criminal charges and arrests not resulting in convictions may also be considered when approving a person to work with children at FBC. Background checks shall be re-run on each volunteer no less than every five years.

E. Monitoring of Volunteer Selection Process

As steps in the volunteer selection process are completed, they shall be documented on the New Children's Ministry Volunteer Check Sheet (Attachment 3). The Director of Family and Youth Ministries shall be responsible to assure all steps are completed satisfactorily prior to the individual being allowed to serve. The volunteer's Check Sheet shall be maintained in their personnel file.

II. Pending Criminal Charges

Any person who while working with children at FBC is arrested for an offense which would constitute a disqualifying offense as described in the "Criminal Background Check" section of this policy, as determined by the Director of Family & Youth Ministry on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances, and in consultation with one or more elders, shall immediately be removed from any position working directly with children.

Such a person will not be reinstated to work with children unless and until they are approved by the elders and the Director of Family & Youth Ministry and have completed a restoration plan developed by the elders and Director of Family & Youth Ministry.

Whether or not a person should be considered for reinstatement should be determined on a case by case basis examining all factors surrounding the offense at issue.

III. Offenders of crimes involving child victims and sexual offenses

Should leadership be made aware of any individual attending FBC who has previously been convicted of any crime involving a child victim or a sexual offense the following protocol should be followed as soon as possible:

A. Verification - Two or more elders should determine the name of the individual in question and the accuracy of any report concerning such offense. This verification should not be done solely by communication with the individual in question but by obtaining independent verification of the exact nature of the offense at issue, the nature of any legal action involved, the final disposition of the offense, whether the person is currently under a sentence and whether the person is or has been a registered sex offender under the laws of any state.

B. Accountability Plan – Upon verification that the person in question is convicted of such an offense the elders should inform him/her that an accountability plan will be followed based on the nature of his/her prior criminal offense. The accountability plan regarding the individual will be reduced to writing and should outline what is expected of the individual and church and ministry leaders. The accountability plan should reference any legal restrictions placed on the individual and should involve making sure the individual and all church, including the Security Team, and ministry leaders are aware of those legal restrictions as well as include a statement of understanding that possible violations of those restrictions will be reported to the church pastor or Director of Family & Youth Ministry. In addition to any legal restriction that may be applicable, the accountability plan should also involve instruction to the individual and church and ministry leaders as to how to ensure the individual is not placed in a compromising position. The plan should also include a written acknowledgement signed by the individual of their willingness to abide by the terms contained in the accountability plan and the signature of an elder, the pastor or Director of Family & Youth Ministry. The plan should be kept on record with church administration. Failure of the individual to agree to or comply with the accountability plan should result in the individual being informed not to return to the church property.

C. Notification - In a manner deemed appropriate by the elders, members of FBC will be made aware of the individual, his prior offense and the accountability plan in place to insure the safety of children at FBC and the individual's ability to worship and participate in activities, subject to any legal or church initiated restrictions placed on the individual. A picture of the individual will be made available to the Security Team and, as deemed appropriate, other FBC members.

IV. Two-Adult Rule

It is our goal to have a minimum of two adult workers in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Adults should remain in sight of one another at all times except in emergency situations. The presence of two or more adults prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline.

Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing. When one on one interactions between children/youth and employee/ volunteers are necessary (i.e. in emergency situations or occasions of pastoral care), care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the employee/volunteer's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.

V. Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch

Contact with children by workers is in any given situation essential, unavoidable and appropriate. Workers should only physically contact children at appropriate times and in an appropriate manner. (See Attachment 4: Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch)

VI. 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:

- A. Physical abuse**—any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- B. 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.
- C. Sexual abuse**—any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- D. Neglect**—depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Child care workers may become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at FBC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his or her care, the individual should report the suspected abuse or neglect immediately to the Director of Family & Youth Ministry, for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. Additionally a Child/Youth Incident Report (See Attachment 5). should be written to document the allegation or incident and given to the Director of Family & Youth Ministry or ministry leader if the Director is not available.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will be treated with respect and support but will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete a Child/Youth Incident Report.
4. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his or her position with children or youth.
7. The chairman of the Elders will be our representative to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

VII. Open-Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. Employees and volunteers are expected to avoid any situation in which they could be alone with children and youth or out of sight of others except in emergency situations. This is to protect children against situations in which abuse might occur and adults against false accusations of child abuse.

VIII. Workers/Volunteers Under the Age of 18

We recognize that there are times when it is necessary or desirable for baby sitters (paid or volunteer), who themselves are under the age of 18, to assist in caring for children during programs or activities and volunteers under the age of 18 to also assist with various children's ministries at FBC. Examples would include middle schoolers assisting with Kids Worship Time (ages 3 years old through third grade) and high schoolers assisting in the nursery (babies to two years old). These workers/volunteers must be under the supervision of an adult FBC member volunteer and be screened as specified above.

IX. Check-In/Checkout Procedure

For children 5th grade and below, a security check-in/checkout procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must be present in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to be present the program coordinator will be contacted. The program coordinator will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

X. Sick Child Policy

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

- fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 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 other children, and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

XI. Medications Policy

It is the policy of FBC not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care without written consent of the parent. Medications should be administered by a parent at home when appropriate. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. 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 Director of Youth & Family Ministry, to develop a plan of action.

XII. Discipline Policy

It is the policy of FBC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested it or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. The Four-Step Discipline Process (See Attachment 6) should be followed. Workers should consult with the Director of Youth & Family Ministry, if additional assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

XIII. Restroom Guidelines

Children 5 years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers are encouraged to escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. The worker should never take a child into the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he or she assists the child. For children over the age of 5, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom, and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

XIV. Accidental Injuries to Children

All children participating in any and all FBC activities must complete a Permission Form (See Attachment 7) releasing FBC from any responsibility of accidental injury. In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, these steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide first aid (for example, applying adhesive bandages) 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.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the volunteer's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. A Child / Youth Incident Report (See Attachment 5) shall be completed and given to the Director of Family & Youth Ministry or the ministry leader in the Directors absence.

XV. Transportation Policies

Any time that a preschool, children, preteen or youth ministry activity involves transporting participants in vehicles, the following will apply:

- Any volunteer who drives their own vehicle to transport participants during an FBC sponsored activity must have appropriate insurance and a valid driver's license. Children 7 years and younger must travel in a car seat or booster seat.

- All persons participating in a sponsored activity will wear seatbelts whenever they are in a vehicle
- A Permission Form is needed before the child can participate and those forms must be carried in the vehicle during the activity.

XVI. Internet Communication

We recognize the importance of utilizing modern methods of communication in interacting with students. However, we also realize the great risks of private online communications. For this reason, we encourage our volunteers to interact with students publicly on Facebook and Instagram. We do not allow our volunteers to interact with minors on Snapchat and others like it, because of the privacy and secrecy built around it. We also do not condone the underage use of Facebook. Therefore, any child under 13 who obtains a Facebook page by lying about their age should not be interacted with by church staff or volunteers.

We also require our volunteers to be willing at any time to reveal any private conversations with a minor via text messaging or Facebook messaging to a staff member. We recognize that often our volunteers serve as confidants for our young people, yet there is great risk in secret conversations. Overall, we encourage the willingness of any conversation to be brought into the light and not shadowed in secrecy.

XVII. Kids Ministry Area Safety and Security Procedures

See Attachment 8 for specific active shooter lockdown, hazardous weather and fire procedures.

XVIII. Training

FBC will require initial and biennial training on this Child Protection Policy to all child care workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events. The training will include the following:

- The need for the Child Protection Policy
- Definition of Child Abuse
- Physical and behavioral indicators of abuse
- Appropriate and inappropriate touch
- Church policies governing working with children and youth
- Two adult policy
- Open door policy
- Procedures for reporting observed or suspected misconduct
- Procedures for responding to allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection policies
- Discipline procedures

Following training, a Child Protection Policy Acceptance Form (See Attachment 9) must be signed by each worker / volunteer in order to begin work with children or youth.

Approved 4.4.16; 3.19.18; 2.17.20

FBC Child/Youth Protection Policy Attachment 4:

Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch:

Role of Physical Contact

Touch is a powerful and important tool in working with children. It has the power to communicate warmth, concern, and care to a child. When used with common sense and concern for the child's benefit, it enhances trust and safety in a relationship while affirming and reciprocating the child's worth as a person. Healthy touch needs to be a conscious choice.

When touch is misused, it can become destructive to the child. The most common form of misuse is touching a child for your benefit rather than the child's. All of us remember hiding from "Aunt Mary" at family reunions lest we be smothered with hugs that we did not want. Certainly, "Aunt Mary" meant no harm, but her action made us want to avoid her. This creates confusion in the child and a subtle sense of violation. It will also tend to make you an "unsafe" person in the child's eyes. The misuse of touch is usually random and haphazard, with little thought given to the action. The exposure you have to the children in this program is limited. You should not attempt to be a surrogate parent for the children. Simply provide a warm, caring environment in which they can learn and grow. And pray that the children will learn to trust and depend on Christ.

Every child is different and comes from a variety of backgrounds. There is no way to know in the brief time you are with them what is happening at home. Therefore, the principles mentioned here should be modified for each child. Some may want and need more touch, while others will appear visibly afraid of any potential touching. Respect the children's boundaries and focus on what they are telling you through their actions.

Appropriate touch is:

- non-demanding, gentle, aware.
- shoulders, hands, arms, head, back.
- sitting a young child on leg or lap in a lighted room with one or more adults present.

Inappropriate touch includes:

- kissing a child.
- demanding or initiating hugs.
- touching chest, genital region, upper legs, buttocks.
- sitting child in center of your lap, in a darkened room or when no other workers are present.
- "piggyback" rides.

FBC Child/Youth Protection Policy Attachment 6:

Four-Step Discipline Process:

- 1. EXPLAIN:** Workers should explain to the child what the unacceptable behavior was and then help them determine a better way to respond or behave next time.
- 2. REDIRECT:** If the child continues to disobey or disrupt the activity, redirect the behavior.
- 3. CONTACT DIRECTOR OF FAMILY & YOUTH MINISTRY:** If the child continues to misbehave, involve Director of Family & Youth Ministry.
- 4. INVOLVE THE PARENT:** If the child continues to be a major disruption to the class or activity, the parent will be asked to join the class and control the child or the parent will be asked to remove the child for the rest of the class time. This step is the final step and all attempts will be made before involving the parent. The safety and well being of all of the children in the classroom is our top priority. This does not mean the child cannot return to the class or activity on another date. Some children act out because they are over-stimulated, tired, or simply having a bad day.

FBC Child/Youth Protection Policy Attachment 8:

Kids Ministry Area Safety and Security Procedure

1. Lock Down Active Shooter

- A. Lead Security Team member will:
 - a. Use intercom to alert children's ministry workers of the situation. First press and release the "Call" button, then press and hold the "Talk" button and state "Lock down" three times.
 - b. Inform security team member to lock the west stairwell door.
- B. Nursery workers will move the babies to the restroom in their area and lock the door, remaining as quiet as possible.
- C. Workers in the two large classrooms (doors marked 205 A & B and 206) will move kids to hallway restroom and lock the door, remaining as quiet as possible.
- D. Workers in the classrooms (doors marked 207, 209 & 210) will move kids to restroom in their area and lock the door, remaining as quiet as possible.
- E. When threat is over the Lead Security Team member will announce "All is clear" three times using procedure listed in "A" above.

2. Hazardous Weather

- A. Severe Thunderstorm Watch or Warning – Security Team will notify children workers of the alert.
- B. Tornado Watch or Warning – Move all children to the Youth Room in the Family Life Center. If Security feels there is not enough time to move to the FLC, children will be moved to the lower west stairwell.
- C. Off duty Security Team Members may need to be recruited to help with moving babies. This will be determined and coordinated by the lead Security Team member.
- D. The Security Team will place signage on west stairwell door informing parents that kids are moved to youth room due to weather safety. Sign will be maintained in the security office.
- E. If above occurs during the worship service, the Senior Pastor will inform the congregation that the children are being moved and that parents not attempt to get their children as this will impede relocation of the children.
- F. An emergency supply of diapers are located in the Pantry in the Youth Room
- G. Parent will be required to turn in their sticker to retrieve their child. Computer check-out may not be available.

3. Fire

- A. Lead Security Team member will notify children's ministry workers, by intercom as above, of the fire, it's location and if they should use the east or west emergency exit.
- B. Children's workers should relocate the kids to the following based on which exit is used:
 - East exit – Front Lawn
 - West exit – Quad Pod
- C. Off duty Security Team members may need to be recruited to help with moving babies. This will be determined and coordinated by the lead Security Team member.
- D. Senior Pastor will inform the congregation the children are being evacuated and that parents not attempt to get their children as this will impede evacuation.
- E. Parent will be required to turn in their sticker to retrieve their child. Computer check-out may not be available.