

## **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON PROTECTION POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND STUDENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution in June 2007 titled "On Protecting Children from Abuse," which seeks to prevent child abuse in the church. That resolution calls Southern Baptist churches and entities to do several things in an attempt to prevent any and all forms of child abuse, including the following: (1) to utilize available materials and research to establish relevant policies and procedures (2) to respond to any suspicions or allegations of child abuse in a timely and forthright manner and (3) to observe responsible employment practices, including performing criminal background checks on all pastors, employees, and volunteers. In recognition of the need for such a policy to exist and in an effort to exercise responsible oversight and supervision of the children and students under our care, we establish the following Protection Policy for Children and Students.

### **PURPOSE**

First Baptist Church's purpose for establishing this Protection Policy for Children and Students and its accompanying procedures is threefold: (1) to affirm the value and sanctity of all human life, especially children and students (2) to demonstrate our recognition of the moral stewardship we have to protect the children and students of our church and (3) to express our unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and students.

### **STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ that is committed in our ministry to children and students, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that seeks to assure the safety of all those entrusted to us. We will follow responsible measures in the recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers. We will also provide training opportunities, so that all involved will be able and equipped to minister to our children and students faithfully in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and is demanded by our own moral conscience. In addition, we will make every effort to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

### **PROCEDURES**

We adopt these minimum standard procedures for our ministries to children and students:

- 1) Recruiting and Screening
  - a) All paid workers will complete an application listing standard contact information and three references, only one of which may be related to the applicant.
  - b) All paid workers and volunteers will be interviewed by a pastor before they begin serving. References will be contacted. The minimum age one can volunteer in a classroom setting is 16.
  - c) All volunteers will be regular attenders of First Baptist Church for at least three months before they begin serving with children and students. Six months of

active membership will be required before a member will be given lead-teaching responsibilities in any of our ministry areas.

- d) All paid workers and volunteers will be required to complete a "Disclosure and Authorization to Release Information Form" for Criminal Background Check & Child Abuse History Clearance once every five years.
- e) All forms and reference reports will be kept confidential.

## 2) Supervision

- a) We will follow the Two-Adult Rule. Reasonable effort will be made to have at least two adults in each classroom. Reasonable effort will also be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with one minor. For the purposes of this policy two related individuals are considered as one person, therefore requiring a third, unrelated person in the room.
- b) No person under 18 shall be considered as one of the two adults.
- c) No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years old.
- d) Each classroom will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
- e) Teachers and volunteers will be trained to recognize signs of abuse.
- f) For security purposes, we will follow a check-in/check-out system with our preschool children. Parents and/or guardians must bring their child to the room, sign him/her in, and then sign him/her out before the child is able to leave the room. Duplicate numbered sticker labels will also be used for children and parents and/or guardians to further enhance security.

## 3) Reporting and Responding

- a) A person who observes or suspects abuse should report the incident immediately to the pastor overseeing that ministry or to any one of the pastoral staff. If an employee is implicated, the chairman of the Personnel Committee should be immediately notified.
- b) The proper civil authorities should be immediately notified as well. By law, abuse must be reported (pastors and church members are mandatory reporters). The TN Department of Children Services should be called at 877-237-0004 to report the abuse or suspected abuse.
- c) Confrontation of the accused will take place once the safety of the child or students is secured.
- d) If the accused is an employee, that person will be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is completed.
- e) Outside professional assistance may be requested to help handle the situation (such as someone from the Tennessee Baptist Missionary Board).
- f) All efforts at handling the situation will be documented.
- g) As indicated, pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.