



Policies and Procedures

PURPOSE: The following policies and procedures are given to ensure that Faith Baptist Church, Winter Haven, Florida (hereafter FBC) provides a safe environment for all persons at FBC.

DEFINITIONS: For the purpose of this document the following definitions shall apply:

1. **“Adult”** shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
2. **“Child Abuse”** shall be defined as verbal, physical, or sexual abuse of a minor.
3. **“Church-Sponsored Activity”** shall be defined as any activity initiated, planned, overseen, and approved by FBC.
4. **“Criminal Background Check”** shall be defined as the procedure used by qualified agencies to check the background of adult workers.
5. **“Driver”** shall be defined as a worker who drives any vehicle, whether a privately owned or church owned, for any ministry or church-sponsored activity.
6. **“Minor”** shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18).
7. **“Ministry”** shall be defined as a regularly scheduled program established by the deacons for the purpose of ministering to others.
8. **“Safe Environment”** shall be defined as secure conditions within the bounds of all ministries.
9. **“Transportation Ministry”** shall be defined as the ministry whereby individuals are transported to and/or from church sponsored activities using church approved vehicles.
10. **“Vehicle”** shall be defined as any vehicle used in any ministry or church-sponsored activity of FBC; both church owned vehicles and privately owned vehicles.
11. **“Worker”** shall be defined as any person, compensated and/or uncompensated, minor or adult, who works in any ministry or church-sponsored activity involving minors or who is a driver.
12. **“Approved Worker”** shall be defined as any worker who has undergone the screening process outlined below.

APPROVED WORKER REQUIREMENTS

1. Every person desiring to become an approved worker at FBC must be a member for at least 6 months and submit a completed Worker Enlistment Form to the Risk Management Committee for review.
2. Once the Worker Enlistment Form has been submitted, references will be verified, a Criminal Background Check will be performed and reviewed, and a recommendation will be made by the Risk Management Committee to the Deacons.
3. The deacons will ultimately make the final decision concerning who can and who cannot work with minors.
4. At the applicant’s request, FBC will provide contact information so that the applicant can review their CBC. Upon review, the applicant may challenge their CBC by contacting the appropriate party.
5. A separate secured file will be maintained on each applicant that includes their Worker Enlistment Form as well as any other relevant information. This information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

WORKER TRAINING

Every worker will be required to complete training that is relevant to the ministry in which they have been approved to work. This will include training concerning the identification, prevention, and reporting of child abuse.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND/OR OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE POLICY

The following acts or omissions are violations of this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any church-sponsored activity or ministry and are to be immediately reported to any Pastoral Staff member or any member of the Risk Management Committee after the safety of any minors involved has been assured.

1. Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
2. Any evidence or demonstration of sexual activity or abuse towards a minor.
3. Physically abusive behavior or intentional bodily injury to a minor.
4. Intentional or careless physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of FBC.
5. The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any ministry of FBC.
6. The presence, possession, consumption, distribution, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products while leading or participating in a function for FBC.

MINISTRY OVERSIGHT

1. Before a minor participates in any church-sponsored activity of FBC, they must complete a Medical and Liability Release Form. This form will contain emergency contact information as well as any relevant medical information concerning that minor. A parent or guardian of the minor must sign this form authorizing the church to act on their behalf in case of an emergency and releasing the church from all liability.
2. In the event of a first-time visitor showing up unannounced for an activity, an adult worker must make an attempt to contact that visitor's parent to obtain permission before that visitor will be allowed to participate in the activity. Also, that visitor will be given the Medical and Liability Release Form which must be completed before they can go on any other activity. For all activities, there will be no exceptions for teens that have not previously completed the Medical and Liability Release Form as well as the specific Liability Release Form for that activity. They cannot participate in that activity if they do not have both forms completed.
3. FBC has a "two worker" rule, which means that no worker shall be left alone with a minor. At least two workers must be present. One of the two workers must be an adult.
4. FBC will regularly review the levels of supervision needed for each particular ministry to determine whether or not adequate supervision is being provided.
5. Church staff and volunteer directors will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time.
6. A "check-in/check-out" procedure for all minors 4 yrs. old and younger will be used.
7. A classroom door without windows shall remain open at all times.
8. For each church-sponsored activity, an "Activity Request Form" must be completed and submitted to the Risk Management Committee at least 30 days prior to the activity. This form should be completed by the activity director. Upon the completion of the church-sponsored activity, an "Activity Summary Form" must be completed and submitted to the Risk Management Committee.
9. We recognize that parents may desire to stay with their children at a church-sponsored activity and may end up assisting at that activity. Even though these individuals may not be approved workers, this will be allowable at the discretion of the activity director provided that adequate supervision by approved workers is available.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Usage
 - a. FBC owned vehicles will be used primarily for church-sponsored activities. Outside organizations can submit written requests for bus usage to the RMC. Usage by outside organizations requires advance approval by the Risk Management Committee before scheduling.
2. Drivers
 - a. All drivers of any vehicle used in any church-sponsored activity must have a completed Worker Enlistment Form on file along with a copy of their driver's license and a copy of their current automobile insurance declarations page.
 - b. FBC will obtain a Criminal Background Check and a Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) on each person desiring to drive any vehicle for a church-sponsored activity. Drivers with poor driving records will not be allowed to drive for church-sponsored activities.
 - c. All drivers must have the appropriate driver's license for the vehicle they drive.
 - d. All drivers will have their MVR reviewed every 3 years. Additionally, each driver must submit a Driver Questionnaire each year to the Risk Management Committee.
 - e. For all church-sponsored activities, all teenagers are expected to ride in the Church-provided transportation. At the Family Ministries Pastor's discretion, he may allow individual teenagers to drive their personal vehicles to an activity. If this is allowed, the teenager may transport no other teenager in their car with them except for their own siblings.
3. Vehicles
 - a. For each church sponsored activity, the supervisor of that activity is responsible for making sure that all vehicles used during that activity are insured and safe. The supervisor must visually inspect each vehicle.
 - b. No vehicle shall transport more passengers than the number of working seatbelts in that vehicle. The only exception to this rule is the church bus, since it does not have seatbelts.
 - c. To ensure safety, when the bus is utilized, a pre-trip inspection shall be performed, but not limited to, the following conditions:
 - i. Whenever the bus has been left unattended since the last pre-trip inspection.
 - ii. Whenever there is a change of driver.
 - iii. While on longer trips, whenever the gas tank is filled.
4. Passengers
 - a. All passengers regardless of age must wear their seatbelts at all times while they are in any vehicle used for a church-sponsored activity. It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all passengers are wearing their seatbelts. Passengers choosing not to wear their seatbelts will not be allowed to ride in any vehicle used on church-sponsored activities.
 - b. All passengers must follow all rules and instructions given by the driver. Failure to follow any rules and/or instructions may result in the passenger losing their right to church-provided transportation. Church-provided transportation is a privilege and not a right.
 - c. No minor is allowed to ride in any vehicle used on a church-sponsored activity unless permission has been obtained by their parent and/or guardian through a completed Medical and Liability Release Form.
 - d. In accordance with Florida State Statutes, every child 3 years old and younger that is transported in any vehicle shall be restrained in the appropriate child seat. FBC's policy is that child car seats are not able to be safely used in our bus. Therefore, children 3 years old and younger cannot be transported in our church bus.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Non-accusatory reports (reports that identify the victim of abuse or neglect whether or not the person responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) shall be made to the Florida Department of Children and Families by calling their Hotline # 1-800-962-2873.

1. Fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute.
2. The church may also immediately contact its insurance company as well as its attorney to report the occurrence.
3. In instances where child abuse is confirmed and a member of the ministerial staff is the perpetrator, the immediate supervisor shall be contacted and advised.
4. This procedure is not only required as a condition of your job or volunteer position, but is also required by Florida State Statutes.
5. Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps should be taken immediately:
 - a. Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.
 - b. Commence the investigation immediately, and conclude it as soon as possible.
 - i. If a sponsor or volunteer of minor suspects a case of child abuse, he or she is required by law to report his/her suspicions to the Florida Department of Children and Families at 1-800-962-2873 within 24 hours. It is the policy of FBC that it also be reported immediately to one of the paid staff minister(s) of the church.
 - ii. The paid staff minister(s) receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the fact reported and condition of the child, on the same day on which the first report was made.
 - iii. Data concerning the child, name, address and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available will be obtained.
 - iv. After the information is secured, the minister(s) will contact the Florida Department of Children and Families at 1-800-962-2873.
 - c. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
 - i. On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to the Florida Department of Children and Families, the report will be documented on a Child Abuse Report Form.
 - d. Cooperate fully with the law enforcement officials.
 - e. Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed.
 - f. Inform the victim and the victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigations.
 - g. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the worker from that position. Consideration of church discipline will also be considered, as appropriate in the circumstances.
 - h. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church will take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim's family's request.
6. Promptly take steps to plan for a response to the media and attempt to speak to the media only through one contact person so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public, the church's position on child abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

CONCLUSION

Faith Baptist Church, Winter Haven, Florida needs to be prepared! There are legal reasons for creating safety policies, but there is also a deeper, more significant reason – to protect our church family, especially our children. Policies are only printed expressions of the value placed on children. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, then FBC has failed to recognize the high value that God has placed on His children.

Some people may think that our church “knows” everyone and therefore it is unnecessary for us to worry about these safety issues. However, we must remember that it is much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention, rather than wait until they are needed as a reaction to an accusation.

Some churches tend to misinterpret the biblical concept of trusting God. They think that nothing bad can happen to Christians. We must not be unwise regarding the safety of our church family. There is no automatic protection from evil for the faithful. We are to watch and be ready. Accidents will always happen. There will always be unforeseen circumstances that need to be handled. But FBC must build sturdy safety-policy fire blocks into the walls of its ministry to protect our church family.

Faith Baptist Church, Winter Haven, Florida desires to be a church that cares through the implementation of the above policies and procedures. These provisions will enable FBC to provide a safe and secure environment for each and every individual associated with FBC.