

Faith Independent Baptist Church
Child Protection Policy
Reviewed October 15, 2011

1. Purpose

Faith Independent Baptist Church recognizes that children are a precious heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3) and that children were held in a place of honor in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 18:1-6; 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 9:46-48; 18:15-17). As a result, the care and instruction of children is a very serious responsibility (cf. Matthew 18:6).

The children's and youth ministries of Faith Independent Baptist Church seek to complement the role of parents who are bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; cf. Deuteronomy 6:6-9) by providing care and biblical instruction (cf. 1 Timothy 3:15) in the context of a safe and friendly environment for children of all ages.

Faith Independent Baptist Church realizes that because of the sinfulness of the human heart various forms of abuse and neglect are a reality in a fallen world (cf. Matthew 15:19; Romans 3:9-18, 23). In light of this, the guidelines of this policy are intended to help the workers of Faith Independent Baptist Church remain blameless in their testimony (Philippians 2:15; James 1:27), exemplary in their conduct (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:1-8), and free from every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). To this end, the purpose of this policy is to set forth specific expectations and procedures related to the care of children who participate in the ministries of Faith Independent Baptist Church.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Child/youth.** For the purposes of this policy, a child/young person is any individual under the age of eighteen.
- 2.2. **Worker.** A worker is a representative of the church (cf. sec. 5) to whom parents entrust their children for care or instruction without the parent's direct supervision. This includes but is not limited to teachers, nursery workers, the Sunday School superintendent, and, in some cases, pastoral staff.
- 2.3. **Abuse.** Abuse involves any type of action that may have damaging effects upon another individual. Abuse may take several forms, including: physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
 - 2.3.1. **Physical abuse.** Physical abuse occurs when a worker intentionally, physically hurts or injures a child/young person. This may include striking the child, shaking the child, or knowingly exposing the child to harmful substances.

- 2.3.2. **Psychological abuse.** Psychological abuse occurs when a child/young person is threatened, bullied, taunted, or verbally demeaned by a worker.
- 2.3.3. **Sexual abuse.** Sexual abuse occurs when a child/young person is taken advantage of for the sexual gratification of a worker or authority figure. Sexual abuse may involve any type of sexual contact, inappropriate fondling, language of a sexual nature, exposure to pornography, or indecent exposure.
- 2.3.4. **Neglect.** Neglect occurs when a worker fails to care for the basic needs of a child/young person. This includes failure to provide essential sustenance, shelter, protection from danger, or medical care.

3. **Position**

Faith Independent Baptist Church is committed to making the children's and youth ministries safe and friendly, and the church opposes child abuse in all its forms. These actions are not only illegal, but the church believes that the various forms of child abuse are morally wrong and constitute sinful behavior.

4. **Reporting**

According to the legal code of the state of Texas, anyone who has reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred is required to report that belief to a local state law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. An oral report must be made within forty-eight hours. This is to be followed by a written report within five days to the same agency. There is no exemption for reporting child abuse in the state of Texas for clergy, physicians, mental health professionals, or teachers.

5. **Workers**

5.1. **Types**

- 5.1.1. **Primary worker.** Primary workers are the individuals who have the greatest degree of responsibility over a group of children. Primary workers are responsible to maintain a safe environment for the children under their supervision. Primary workers are subject to screening requirements (specified below) and must be approved by the pastor and deacons. Except in extenuating circumstances, all workers over eighteen years of age should be screened to be primary workers.
- 5.1.2. **Secondary workers.** Secondary workers serve under the direct observation of a primary worker. These workers have less responsibility and are present to serve as aids to primary workers. Secondary workers are subject to screening requirements

(specified below) and must be approved by the pastor and deacons. All workers under the age of eighteen will be considered secondary workers.

- 5.1.3. **Pastoral staff.** Members of the pastoral staff will be held to the highest degree of accountability in their work with children and youth. They shall meet all the requirements of a primary worker.
- 5.1.4. **Deacons.** Deacons may be asked to help in classrooms or youth ministries; thus, all deacons shall be screened and qualified to serve as primary workers.
- 5.1.5. **Nursery coordinator.** The pastor and deacons should appoint a nursery coordinator. The nursery coordinator should prepare a schedule for nursery workers, relate the needs of the nursery to the pastor and deacons, and may be asked to be involved in the interviewing/screening of nursery workers.

5.2. Requirements

- 5.2.1. **Membership.** All children's/youth workers, paid or volunteer, should be members of Faith Independent Baptist Church (cf. sec 7.20).
- 5.2.2. **Six month rule.** Individuals desiring to work with children should be active, regularly attending members of Faith Independent Baptist Church for at least six months. An exception to this rule is made in the case of paid staff members. Other exceptions may be made at the discretion of the pastor and deacons, but these individuals will be subject to thorough screening requirements.
- 5.2.3. **Age.** The primary worker in any group of children should be at least eighteen years of age.
- 5.2.4. **Gender.** An adult woman, who is an approved primary worker, must be present in the infant nurseries as a primary worker at all times. A married man may serve together with his wife in the nurseries, but a man should not be the only worker present in either the infant or toddler nurseries with children other than his own. Men will not be allowed to change diapers, except in the case of his own children. Teenage boys will not be allowed to serve as primary or secondary workers in the nurseries.
- 5.2.5. **Consent to background checks.** All workers, paid or volunteer, shall consent to a background check and provide the church with at least two references who are not family members. Preferably these references will have knowledge of the individual's work with children in previous churches.
- 5.2.6. **Agreement with the policy.** All workers must understand the applicable policies that relate to their service with children. After reading this child protection policy the worker must acknowledge in writing that they have read, understand, and

agree to abide by this policy. The individual must review the policy and give written agreement annually.

- 5.2.7. **Automatic disqualifiers.** Under no circumstance will an individual who has been convicted of any type of child abuse or sexual misconduct be allowed to work with children/young people under the auspices of Faith Independent Baptist Church. Under no circumstance will an individual who advocates or participates in questionable moral conduct (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11) be allowed to work with children/young people under the auspices of Faith Independent Baptist Church.

5.3. Screening

- 5.3.1. **Application.** The screening process begins with an application to participate in a ministry involving children/youth. This form shall include basic facts about the individual, their previous work with children, contact information for at least two references, and consent to perform a background check. The applicant must also indicate in writing that they have not ever been convicted of a crime involving any type of abuse, neglect, or misconduct involving a child. The application and statement concerning misconduct should be submitted to the nursery coordinator or the pastor. At this time the individual will be provided with a copy of this child protection policy for their review, if they do not already possess a copy of it.
- 5.3.2. **Reference check.** For those desiring to be workers with children, the pastor or nursery coordinator should contact the references the individual has provided on the application for work with children.
- 5.3.3. **Background check.** For those desiring to be workers with children, a background check should be performed related to convictions of crimes involving children. The background check consent form shall be returned to the applicant after the background check is run.
- 5.3.4. **Interview.** For those desiring to be a worker with children or youth, an interview with the pastor and deacons is necessary. The pastor and deacons should make sure that the applicant understands the child protection policy and the important responsibility that comes with working with children. At this time the applicant must indicate in writing that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by the child protection policy.

6. Procedures

- 6.1. **Training.** Faith Independent Baptist Church desires to provide appropriate training so that those who work with children/youth understand and are reminded about the child care policies of the church and the great responsibility it is to work with children.

- 6.1.1.1. **Initial.** The initial training of workers shall consist of providing the individual with a copy of the church's child protection policy and any other material that are deemed appropriate. The worker must indicate in writing that they have read (with the exception of the forms section), understand, and agree to abide by the church's child protection policy.
 - 6.1.1.2. **Recurring.** Workers will be asked to review their copy of the church's child protection policy (with the exception of the forms section) yearly during the month of January. As deemed appropriate by the pastor and deacons, workers will be asked to participate in seminars, read literature, or view videos related to child safety.
 - 6.2. **Enforcement.** The implementation of this child protection policy is the responsibility of the pastor and deacons in conjunction with appropriate department leaders (i.e., the nursery coordinator). They are to see that the policy is followed consistently and that appropriate measures are taken to keep the children of the church safe. At any time the pastor and deacons with the appropriate department leader may address any areas of concern regarding the implementation of this policy on an individual basis.
 - 6.3. **Review.** The pastor and deacons shall review this policy at least once every five years to evaluate its effectiveness and appropriateness, calculated from the review date at the beginning of this document.
 - 6.4. **Allegations.** Faith Independent Baptist Church will take all allegations of misconduct very seriously. All reports of believed child abuse or neglect will be held in absolute confidence. In the event of an accusation, the appropriate law enforcement agencies will be contacted, and the church will cooperate with these government agencies. The accused individual will be suspended from their place of service with children/youth until the issue is resolved. The parents of the child will be informed of the situation and will be notified of the church's plan of action to resolve the matter (unless a parent is the one involved in the accusation). All investigations of the situation shall be conducted by the appropriate law enforcement agencies. In the event that an allegation of child abuse or neglect is proven to be true, the individual will be permanently removed from their place of ministry with children, and if necessary, church discipline will be enacted.
 - 6.5. **Media inquiries.** In the event of an allegation of misconduct involving a child, the pastor of the church will serve as the spokesperson for the church. He will determine the amount of information that is appropriate to share with the media. In the event that the accusation involves the pastor, the board of deacons shall appoint a spokesperson to handle all media inquiries.

7. Additional Specific Guidelines

- 7.1. **Preservation of records.** The church shall maintain a secure (locked) file cabinet for all records pertinent to the administration of this child protection policy. In this file cabinet shall be kept (1) records on each individual who applies to work with children at Faith Independent Baptist Church (including application, a notice of approval, and initial and recurring statements of agreement with this policy), (2) documents related to any injury or incident involving children, (3) release of claim forms related to activities within the past twelve months (at a minimum), and (4) records of any incident of suspected abuse or neglect. For the sake of confidentiality, the records in the church's safe child file cabinet shall be managed by the current pastor and deacons. No other individuals shall be granted access to the documents in this file. All results of background checks shall be kept in a bank safe deposit box held by the church.
- 7.2. **The necessity of an approved worker.** A worker, approved by the pastor and deacons, must be present in all nurseries and classes before children are to be left in the classroom by their parents.
- 7.3. **Infant Nursery Care Sign-In.** In order to properly identify parents and their children, visitors will be asked to register their infants with the nursery workers. A sign-in log shall be maintained for the infant nursery, which shall include at least the name of the parent, the time the child was dropped off and picked up, and any special instructions from the parent.
- 7.4. **Supervision of babies and preschoolers.** Under no circumstance is a baby or preschooler to be left in a classroom alone or allowed to leave the nursery unaccompanied.
- 7.5. **The return of children to parents.** It is the responsibility of the worker to return the child to the individual who dropped the child off at the nursery, or another responsible individual if previous arrangements have been made. After the child is returned to a responsible party it is that individual's responsibility to supervise the child.
- 7.6. **Preference for two workers.** It is preferred that two workers are present in classrooms and nursery rooms, especially for nurseries and classes with younger children. When applicable a hall monitor may be appointed to aid workers.
- 7.7. **Small Classes.** In the case that there is only one child in a class or nursery the parent should be informed and must give their consent (verbal or written) of their approval for their child to be left with that particular worker(s) (cf. sec. 7.4).
- 7.8. **Visibility in counseling.** At no time shall an adult meet alone with a child or youth in a closed room or in a place where they cannot be seen. While privacy should be respected, in any such counseling session the door should be left ajar and/or the individuals should be in plain view of others.

- 7.9. **Visibility of classrooms.** Rooms that are used for classrooms should be equipped with a door with a window or a window opening to the interior hallway for clear visibility of the proceedings of the class.
- 7.10. **Open classrooms.** Parents have the privilege of visiting the classroom of their child at any time. While the parents should not be a disruption to the class, they may observe the proceedings of the class.
- 7.11. **Identification.** As the situation merits, workers with youth or children may be asked to wear a name tag provided by the church.
- 7.12. **First aid.** Workers are encouraged, but not required, to get basic first aid training. Workers who direct a recreational activity involving children/youth may be asked to acquire such training, at the church's expense.
- 7.13. **Health guidelines.** It is the desire of Faith Independent Baptist church to maintain high standards of health and sanitation for the well-being of all children and workers. Specific guidelines will be outlined by individual departments.
- 7.14. **Vehicle safety.** All persons who transport children for church purposes are required to hold a valid driver's license and follow all traffic laws. All vehicles are required to be compliant with all state and local vehicle laws. A worker must not transport a child/youth in a vehicle alone, unless a parent/guardian of the child grants authorization.
- 7.15. **Release of claims.** Prior to any activity away from the church property or any activity in which the church is involved in the transportation of young people, a release of claims will need to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without such consent, the child will not be permitted to participate in the activity. The church may also require a release of claims for activities on the church property in which parents are not physically present on the church premises.
- 7.16. **Dismissal.** If an individual is considered to pose any risk to the safety or well-being of children/youth, that individual may be removed from the list of approved workers. Removal from the list of approved workers will be left to the discretion of the pastor and deacons in conjunction with relevant department leaders.
- 7.17. **Disruptive Children/Discipline.** In the event that a child becomes unruly or disruptive, the worker should try to remove the child from the situation that provoked the problematic behavior. If the child refuses to cooperate or continues to be disruptive, the worker shall notify the parent/guardian of the child.
- 7.18. **Accidents and Injuries.** In the event that a child or youth is accidentally injured, the worker shall administer appropriate first aid and/or contact appropriate help. In the event that there is any bleeding, bruising, swelling, or sustained discomfort, the primary

worker should fill out an accident/injury report to be kept in the church's secure child protection file.

- 7.19. **Illness.** Parents with children with obvious signs of illness should not leave their child/youth under the care of church workers. Workers may ask parents not to leave their children if the child has a contagious condition that compromises the health of other children/youth or workers in the nursery or classroom.
- 7.20. **Medications.** Workers shall not be allowed to administer medications to children. Such medications shall be administered by the child's parent/guardian. A parents/guardian should notify workers about children/youth with special medical conditions and of the appropriate action that should be followed in the case of an emergency.
- 7.21. **Emergency Plan.** Workers should be trained in what to do in the event of emergencies such as fires or tornados. Evacuation routes and shelter areas should be designated for individual nurseries or classrooms.
- 7.22. **Non-Member Helpers.** Under special circumstances helpers/workers from outside Faith Independent Baptist Church may work with children for a specific event (e.g., Vacation Bible School), but all cases must be approved by the pastor and deacons prior to the event. The responsibility of this helper will be defined by the pastor and deacons and this individual may be subject to screening requirements depending on the sphere of this individual's responsibility. All workers from outside the church are held to the same code of conduct as those within the church.

8. Sample Forms.

- 8.1.1. Child/Youth Worker's Application Form.
- 8.1.2. Background Check Consent Form.
- 8.1.3. Statement on Sexual Misconduct.
- 8.1.4. Acknowledgment of FIBC's Child Protection Policy.
- 8.1.5. Reference Check Record.
- 8.1.6. Application Approval Form.
- 8.1.7. Accident/Injury Report Form.
- 8.1.8. Release of Claims.
- 8.1.9. Simplified Release of Claims.

8.1.10. Photograph Use Consent Form.

8.1.11. Suspected Abuse Report Form.

8.1.12. Suspected Abuse Follow-Up Report.