

Because We Care

Protection Policies

Child, Youth and Adults with Special Needs

First Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana

September 2002

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT
Child, Youth and Adults with Special Needs Protection Policies

I. Introduction.

First Baptist Church of Shreveport, is a "family of faith" that cares for people of all ages. This sense of care extends especially to the youngest members of the congregation - the children. In a world where child abuse and neglect has become increasingly common, the church should strive to provide a place where children and teenagers can experience first hand God's loving care in a safe environment.

The purpose of the Child Protection Policies is to reduce the risk to the children, youth and adults with special needs who are involved in church activities, as well as their parents and the dedicated volunteers and staff who work with them.

II. Worker Screening and Training.

In order to educate and assist our workers in implementing these policies, each new worker prior to being assigned duties involving children, youth and adults with special needs shall complete forms applicable to that worker, provide a current photograph, successfully complete the screening process by the applicable church staff and have received a copy and explanation of these Child Protection Policies.

No volunteer worker should be assigned duties with children, youth or adults with special needs at First Baptist Church of Shreveport until the new worker has been a member of the church for a period of at least six months prior to the date of the first assignment.

All workers are required to affirmatively state in writing on an annual basis that they have not engaged in any activity which is defined as abuse or neglect, that they have not been investigated, accused, arrested or convicted of abuse or neglect and that they have been furnished a copy of these policies, amendments thereto and that they understand them. First Baptist Church of Shreveport will provide from time to time as the need arises training for its workers in the application of these policies and procedures, recognition of possible abuse and neglect and appropriate reporting of possible abuse and neglect.

III. Procedures for the Supervision of Children, Youth and Adults with Special Needs.

A. At no time shall any worker or persons in their care abuse or neglect any child, youth or adult with special needs.

B. At least two adult workers not related to each other should be with the persons entrusted to their supervision during the event unless an unavoidable emergency occurs.

C. Persons under the age of 18 with permission from the appropriate adult coordinator or minister may assist adult workers but may not be substituted for an adult unless an unavoidable emergency occurs.

D. Parents and/or guardians are responsible for the supervision of their children, youth, and/or adults with special needs before and after the times scheduled for events involving those persons. If the parent or guardian does not want the child released from the event on his/her own but released only to another person, that parent or guardian must designate in writing who can receive the child, youth or adult with special needs.

E. Children in the three-year-old department and younger will only be released by a worker to a person designated in writing in advance by the parent or guardian or such person in possession of the appropriate security card.

F. For those persons needing worker assistance in the restroom or other places outside of the classroom should position himself/herself in such a manner as to allow the assisted person privacy but is still able to determine that the child is safe; e.g. leaving a door partially open.

G. Room interiors used for events for children, youth and adults with special needs should be visible to persons from outside the room. Doors should have unobstructed windows or remain open while in use, unless more than one adult supervisor is in the room at all times.

H. A worker, coordinator or minister should be available during events involving children, youth and/or adults with special needs for the purpose of conducting random, unannounced

classroom visits.

I. Any activity involving children, youth and/or adults with special needs which involves an overnight activity or stay requires adequate adult supervision, which as a minimum, the rule stated in paragraph III. B. above should be followed at all times, including sleeping arrangements. Appropriate gender separation should be observed. Immediate family members are exempted from this rule where one adult parent may sleep with his/her child without other additional supervision.

J. Any worker before he/she is allowed to transport a child, youth or adult with special needs shall have their motor vehicle driving record screened for the previous three years by the church. The driving record of each worker shall be updated on an annual basis. Each worker will have the appropriate license to drive the vehicle he/she is to drive.

K. No worker should drive any child, youth or adult with special needs, whether one or more in number, without the presence of another adult worker, unless there is/are other adult worker(s) in other vehicles traveling together. This rule may be waived where a child, youth or adult with special needs is in a situation where his/her health, safety or well being is threatened and there is no timely viable alternative to violating this rule. The worker who violates this rule due to an emergency should immediately report the facts and circumstance to the worker's supervisor as soon as practical.

L. Multiple counseling sessions outside church events with children, youth or adults with special needs involving more than usual and customary teaching and behavioral correction for order in the classroom may occur with permission of the parents on a one-on-one basis with the worker and child, youth or adult with special needs as long as the worker and counselee are accessible to be viewed by at least one other worker during the counseling session.

IV. Reporting and Responding to Suspected Violations of these Policies, Abuse and Neglect.

A. All reports of policy violations, abuse and neglect are taken seriously and will be acted upon in an appropriate manner.

B. Any worker, parent, guardian, child, youth, adult with special needs or other person who has good cause to suspect a violation of a policy, abuse or neglect has occurred shall immediately report the facts as they are known to the appropriate supervisor, coordinator or minister.

C. Any worker who has good cause to believe that a child, youth or adult with special needs has been abused or neglected shall report the facts to the appropriate law enforcement agency or child protection agency as required by law.

D. Workers and other persons who are reporting facts of abuse or neglect should avoid giving opinions or drawing conclusions as to facts or persons involved without having personal knowledge of those facts or conclusions.

V. Worker Policy Violations, Abuse or Neglect.

A. All worker candidates and workers shall cooperate in filling out forms and fully cooperate with all other required screening procedures before and after their hiring.

B. All workers shall abide by the policies and procedures and any changes thereto subsequent to their hiring.

C. Any violation of a policy, failure to comply with screening requests or untruthful or incomplete information given by the worker shall subject the worker to appropriate discipline, refusal to hire or termination as determined by First Baptist Church of Shreveport.

D. A worker who is accused of abuse or neglect shall be suspended until such time as he/she is terminated or the allegations are proven false.

E. Nothing contained in the policies of First Baptist Church of Shreveport shall be construed as waiving the right to terminate employment of a worker by that worker or First Baptist Church of Shreveport in their sole and uncontrolled discretion.

VI. Publication of Policies.

A. All workers, parents or guardians should be furnished a copy of these policies and any subsequent amendments thereto.

B. All workers parents or guardians are responsible for asking for clarification of any policy or procedure from the appropriate supervisor, coordinator or minister.

C. These policies apply to all locations for which First Baptist Church conducts, sponsors or produces programs or events including but not limited to its Ockley Drive and Highland Center locations.

D. These policies do not apply to workers or chaperones at First Baptist Church School, which has its own specific policies. All workers when dealing with students and activities at the First Baptist Church School should comply with the school's policies.

VII. Definition of Terms.

A. Abuse is the infliction or, through inadequate supervision, allowing the infliction of physical or mental injury to a child, youth or adult with special needs or the performance of a sexual act on the child, youth or adult with special needs, involving the child, youth or adult with special needs in a pornographic display or other sexual activity which seriously endangers their physical, mental or emotional health.

B. Neglect is the failure by a parent or caretaker to supply the child, youth or adult with special needs who is charged with that responsibility to furnish the child, youth or adult with special needs with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment or counseling for any injury, illness or condition of the child, youth or adult with special needs, which is appropriate and with consent and results in the impairment of their physical, mental or emotional health.

C. Worker is defined as any adult person who is hired as a paid employee or used as an unpaid volunteer by First Baptist Church of Shreveport for any staff position or other position for any program, event or activity sponsored by or on the premises of First Baptist Church with the exception of any program, event or activity on its premises for which the church has loaned or rented its facility to another person or entity and is not involved in producing or executing the program, event or activity.

D. Adult with special needs is defined as adults who because of an infirmity are unable to consistently make reasoned decisions regarding care of his/her person and/or property.

E. Child is defined as a person between the ages of birth and age twelve.

F. Youth is defined as a person age twelve through age seventeen.

G. Event is defined as any program, Sunday School class, mission program, Worship Care, worship service, retreat, music program, education or amusement activity, child care activity, fellowship, prayer meeting or other activity of any kind or character conducted by workers of First Baptist Church of Shreveport.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT Worker Screening Policies and Abuse or Neglect Reporting Procedures

I. Introduction.

A. These policies and procedures are suggested guidelines and are not to be substituted for good judgment, which circumstances may dictate because not all contingencies can be anticipated

B. Individual judgment in evaluating a prospective worker as an employee or volunteer is encouraged to identify good workers with whom children, youth and adults with special needs may be entrusted:

C. No person should be hired or enlisted as a worker who in the reasonable judgment of the supervisor could pose 'a 'risk to children, youth or adults with special needs.

II. Screening Policies and Procedures for Workers.

A. All workers should go through a screening process applicable to the type of worker candidate being screened.

B. All state and federal laws and regulations will be complied with in screening worker candidates.

C. Workers should provide a current photograph to be placed in their permanent folder.

D. Each applicant should complete the appropriate application form for workers who are employed or workers who are volunteers.

- E.** No volunteer worker should be enlisted nor approved until he/she has been a member of First Baptist Church of Shreveport for a period of six months prior to beginning to serve as a worker.
- F.** All references given by a worker candidate and past employers or entities for which the candidate volunteered, if available, should be contacted for evaluation of the candidate's prior performance. Refusal or inability of a reference to give information or evaluations should only be considered as one factor in the overall evaluation of the candidate's fitness to serve.
- G.** A criminal background check by the Louisiana State Police should be requested on all employees of First Baptist Church of Shreveport. A criminal background check may be performed on volunteer workers if the supervisor deems that circumstances warrant further inquiry.
- H.** The supervisor should consider the totality of all information received on the fitness of the worker candidate to serve in the capacity applied for and only recommend him/her for service if the information demonstrates that the worker candidate is a qualified person who presents no apparent risk of harm to children, youth, adults with special needs, employees, staff, members and First Baptist Church of Shreveport.
- I.** Worker candidates should acknowledge on the application form that they waive any right to view the material and references obtained in the screening process. The material produced by the screening process should be kept confidential even if the candidate is not hired or enlisted.
- J.** A folder should be created in the name of the candidate and all applications, interviews, background check and other information obtained in the screening process and employment documents completed after the worker is hired or enlisted should be kept in that folder. The folder should be kept in a secure place with access limited to only those persons who are authorized and have need to review information contained therein.
- K.** If a candidate is determined not to be a person who should be hired or enlisted as a worker, he/she should be notified of that decision but no information concerning the reasons for rejection should be given or discussed with the applicant and all information concerning the rejection should be kept confidential.
- L.** All workers who are used to transport persons for the church should have their motor vehicle driving record and license checked to determine their safe driving record and suitability to drive the vehicle they will operate.
- M.** All workers after their initial screening prior to being hired or enlisted should have their background reviewed annually to determine if there has been any change in their fitness to continue serving as a worker or a driver. Annual criminal background checks are not necessary unless there is reason to believe that the worker is withholding information. Each worker should certify annually that they have not been accused, arrested, charged or convicted of a crime of any type. Any positive statement of an accusation, arrest, charge or conviction of a crime should be investigated to determine the worker's continued fitness to serve.
- N.** A volunteer worker candidate should complete the following forms: Confidential Volunteer & Employee Information Form & State Police Authorization to Disclose Criminal History Records.
- O.** A candidate to be an employed worker should complete the following forms: Volunteer & Employee Information Form & State Police Authorization to Disclose Criminal History Records.
- P.** The screening supervisor should record all reference contacts and information on the Confidential Reference Contact form.

III. Procedures for Responding to Accusations or Observations of Abuse or Neglect.

- A.** In order for an accusation or observation of suspected abuse or neglect to be considered and acted upon, it is necessary that the person making the accusation or observation have good cause to make the accusation or to describe the observation.
- B.** Once information giving rise to good cause to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred has been received by a worker, supervisor, coordinator, minister or pastor, the following actions should be taken:
 - 1.** The immediate personal safety of the child, youth or adult with special needs should be determined if possible.
 - 2.** The person making the accusation or observation should be required to complete a

Confidential Abuse/Neglect Incident or Observation Report.

3. If the accusation or observation involves a parent or guardian, then the local office of child protection should be immediately notified. If the accusation or observation involves anyone else, then the local law enforcement agency should be notified immediately.

4. If the accusation involves potential liability to the church or its worker, then the church's liability insurer should be notified immediately.

5. No investigation should be conducted by the church while any government agency and/or the church's insurance company is conducting their investigation unless otherwise directed by the church's attorney.

6. The church's attorney should be notified of the situation and allow him/her to instruct personnel on how to proceed.

7. If the allegations are based on good cause and are against a church worker, that worker should be suspended until all investigations are complete and are found to be groundless. Even if an accusation is not sufficiently substantiated after the appropriate investigation, the appropriate administrators should determine whether it serves the best interest of all concerned to reinstate the worker or to terminate his/her services. If the worker is terminated, no reason should be given to anyone including the worker.

8. The Pastor or his designee in consultation with the church's attorney shall determine what information and to whom it will be given concerning any incident of alleged abuse or neglect. No other person or worker should communicate any information concerning any accusations or observations to anyone other than representatives of law enforcement, child protection, the church's insurer's representatives, appropriate church supervisory personnel and the church's attorney, unless and until properly authorized to do so.

IV. Training of Workers, Children, Youth, Adults with Special Needs, Parents and Guardians.

A. Except for those children, youth and adults with special needs who are not competent to comprehend the subject, information should be provided to workers, children, youth, adults with special needs, parents and guardians on the policies and procedures of the church concerning abuse and neglect. Amendments to policies and procedures should be communicated immediately to the affected groups.

B. A copy of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport Child, Youth and Adult with Special Needs Protection Policy should be furnished to each worker parent or guardian.

C. The church staff should include in a training session for workers an explanation of the church's policies and procedures, indications of abuse and neglect to look for and the requirements for reporting any good cause allegations or observations of abuse or neglect. Each worker should certify in writing that he/she has received the policies, the training and agrees to abide thereby. Any changes in policies and procedures should be communicated to workers immediately upon their adoption.