

SEVENTH & JAMES BAPTIST CHURCH

Child Protection Policy

Seventh and James Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our children. The problem of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. Churches, which have children's programs, are not insulated from this problem. Therefore, we believe that it is vitally important to take decisive steps to ensure that the Church is a safe and happy place for children. The following policy reflects our commitment to provide protective care of all children, including preschoolers (birth-k), children (grades 1-6) and youth (grades 7-12), when they are attending any Church-sponsored programs or activities.

Enlistment and Training

Qualifications of Volunteers and Paid Child-Care Workers

- Our programs for children could not succeed without the commitment of dedicated and caring volunteers and paid child-care workers. To ensure continued success, volunteers for service in programs for children and paid child-care workers should be adults (persons at least 18 years old) and should be committed to the spiritual development of our preschoolers, children and youth.
- Volunteers in all children's programs are required to be a member and have regularly attended Seventh & James Baptist Church for a minimum of six months prior to supervising children's programs.
- Persons who have been convicted of any offense involving sexual or physical abuse may not serve as volunteers in programs for children nor as paid child care workers.

Approval of Volunteers

- Prior to being considered, volunteers for service in programs for children are required to complete a Preschool/Children/Youth Worker Profile in the form attached as Appendix A. Completed profiles will be turned in to the ministerial staff person(s) designated by the Youth and Children's Ministry Council (the "designated staff person(s)"). The designated staff person(s) will review the completed profile and may check references and conduct a personal interview as appropriate. The designated staff person(s) will recommend volunteers for approval to the Youth and Children's Ministry Council. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep completed profiles and related information confidential. Only the designated staff person(s) will ordinarily have access to such information, which shall be maintained in a locked file cabinet in the Church vault. In the event that the designated staff person(s) concludes that a volunteer should not be approved, the staff person(s) will inform only the volunteer of that decision. The volunteer may appeal this decision to the Youth and Children's Ministry Council by making a written request that members of the Council review the conclusion. By making such a request, the volunteer consents to review of the

profile and related information by members of the Youth and Children's Ministry Council. Members of the Youth and Children's Ministry Council will make reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the fact that a volunteer has not been approved, the fact that a review has been requested, and the contents of the profile and related information. Once a final decision has been made that a volunteer will not be approved, the complete profile will be returned to that volunteer and any related information will be confidentially destroyed.

- To honor our commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for our children, the Church must reserve the right to conduct criminal background checks on any person seeking to volunteer for service in programs for children. Prior to conducting such a criminal background check, the volunteer will be asked to authorize the check by completing the authorization form attached as Appendix B.
- To ensure continued success in these programs, all persons volunteering to work with preschoolers, children and youth are required to study this policy and to acknowledge in writing that they will comply with the policy.
- The Church Office will maintain a list of all volunteers who have been approved for service in programs for children.

Approval of Paid Child-Care Workers

- Applicants for positions as paid child-care workers will complete the Preschool/Children/Youth Worker Profile in the form attached as Appendix A. Applicants for such positions shall also be required to authorize a criminal background check by completing the authorization form attached as Appendix B. Before a person is hired as a paid child-care worker, personal references should be contacted, prior employment and church service references should be contacted in writing, a personal interview should take place, and a criminal background investigation should be conducted.
- All paid child-care workers are required to study this policy and to acknowledge in writing that they will comply with the policy.
- The Church Office will maintain a list of all paid child-care workers who have been approved.

Training

- All Church staff members, paid child-care workers, and volunteers in programs involving children are required to study this policy. Particular attention should be paid to the definition of inappropriate behavior and the reporting requirements that apply when there is a suspicion of inappropriate behavior, child abuse or neglect.
- If you were personally a victim of child abuse and believe it would benefit you in working with children to receive counseling or other assistance, please notify a minister on the Church staff. As a family of faith, we want to offer support and opportunities for counseling and assistance to victims of child abuse.

- The designated staff person(s) and Youth and Children's Ministry Council will periodically initiate programs for Church staff members, paid child-care workers and volunteers in programs involving children. The programs should help workers identify child abuse and enhance their appreciation for the problem of child abuse.

Supervision and Monitoring

- A reasonable ratio of adult volunteers will be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children, with a minimum of two adults, paid or volunteer, present. Activities may be canceled if two adults are not available.
- Church staff members will make visits to classes or other program sites from time to time.
- Prior to a minister or other adult meeting privately with a minor, the minister or other adult should obtain parental permission or should use the two-adult rule.
- Meeting rooms for children will either have windows in the doors or walls to aid in monitoring, or the doors will be kept open.
- The Youth and Children's Ministry Council will periodically review the specific needs of each age group to resolve issues such as how to ensure that children are released only to proper persons and what rules should apply to overnight trips and activities.

Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

Supervision of preschoolers, children and youth includes the responsibility to report inappropriate behavior to a designated staff person (or another ministerial staff person if a designated staff person is unavailable). Inappropriate behavior includes any sexual activity with a child-whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential situation, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim. Types of abuse that involve touching include fondling, oral, genital and anal penetration, intercourse and forcible rape. Types of abuse that do not involve touching include verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Moreover, state law requires that persons report any suspected child abuse or neglect. Any person working with preschoolers, children and youth who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Reports should be made to one of the following agencies:

- Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 1-800-252-5400 (24-Hour Hotline).
- Waco Police Department, 750-7500
- McLennan County Sheriff's Department, 757-5000.

An oral report must be made immediately on learning of the abuse or neglect. In addition, a written report must be made within five days to the same agencies or departments. Reports must contain the name and address of the child, the name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, and any other pertinent information. State law protects you from liability when you report actual or suspected abuse, as long as you do not act maliciously.

Church staff members, volunteers and paid child-care workers must also immediately advise a designated staff person (or other ministerial staff person if a designated staff person is unavailable) of the same information they are required to report to government authorities. This is to ensure that the Church takes appropriate action. Depending on the circumstances, appropriate action may include reporting the occurrence to the Church's insurance company and legal counsel.

Responding to Reports of Child Abuse

Upon the first suspicion that a child has been abused in connection with Church-sponsored programs or activities, the Church will conduct an immediate investigation. Reasonable efforts should be made to keep confidential the fact of the investigation, the identity of the alleged victim, and the identity of any accused. Any person accused of abusing a child must be suspended from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation is completed. When child abuse by a staff member, paid child-care worker, or volunteer is confirmed, the Church will immediately dismiss the person who abused the child from his or her position. When the evidence is inconclusive, the Church may nonetheless take whatever remedial measures the Church deems appropriate. Depending on the strength of the evidence and other relevant considerations, these measures may include dismissing the accused from his or her position.

Liability Insurance

Reasonable Efforts should be made to ensure that the Church carries insurance coverage for child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. Our present insurance has general coverage for sexual misconduct and molestation. There is also counseling and professional liability coverage. This insurance should be reviewed periodically to ensure that appropriate coverage is maintained.

Designated Staff Person(s) as of July 19, 2000: _____
