



First West's Child Protection Policy seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who are under our care and participate in our programs and activities. By implementing these practices, our goal is to protect the children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" means anyone involved in First West's Weekday Ministry, childcare for regular and/or special events programming, regular Sunday morning and Wednesday ministry programming, overnight activities involving minors, counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Screening Prospective Workers and Volunteers

Selection of Workers:

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- a) Six-Month Rule: No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been actively involved in the Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- b) Church Membership: Sunday morning and Wednesday ministry programming must be confirmed members of the First West.
- c) Written Application: All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file in the Children's Ministry office.
- d) Personal Interview: Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.
- e) Reference Checks: Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references can come from First West leadership,

professional relationships, or personal relationships (non-family member). Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file in the Children's Ministry office.

e) Minors Serving with Kids: First West students, age 11–17, who seek to work with Children's & Preschool Ministries must:

1. Fill out a Minor Application which is reviewed by the ministry leader.
2. Minors must have approval from the Ministry Leader of the ministry they are currently in

f) Criminal /Sex Offender Registry Background Check: A national criminal/sex offender background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above. Prospective staff / volunteers will either receive a link via email to the background check agency or, if preferred, a prospective worker can complete a signed authorization form allowing the Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form or respond to the electronic submission of data, she/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Ministry Leader and/or Executive Pastor on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence in the Executive Office.

Code of Conduct:

Two-Adult Rule:

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers (age 18 and up) will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation, which occurs in an open area. Doors shall always remain unlocked.

Private Activities:

We will ensure that private activities are only performed by approved workers and that they do not violate the two-adult rule. This includes activities such as diaper-changing, using the restroom, dressing, and bathing, etc.

Healthy Touch:

We will not engage in spanking, hitting, or threatening any minor. Nor will any workers engage in any behavior or touching which is inappropriate with a minor including sexualized behavior such as fondling or kissing. Workers will model healthy touch and respect the minor's ability to say no.

Communication:

All communication is to be respectful, safe, and encouraging. No bullying, shouting, shaming, or sexualized communication is allowed. Due diligence is shown here by including the addition of a second adult in electronic communications with minors.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure:

For children below 5th grade and under, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian who will receive a "sticker" for the child. The parent or guardian must present the "sticker" in order to sign out the child from our care. Older siblings will not be allowed to pick up the child. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the sticker, a ministry supervisor will be contacted.

Training and Other Requirements:

Failure to complete the requirements below will result in being unable to serve in the ministry area

1. Required to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training by Ministry Safe prior to serving and subsequently every 2 years.
2. Must renew background check every 2 years.
3. Must be very familiar with the CODE OF CONDUCT.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse:

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

It is important to remember that unless you see the abuse happening you are dealing with potential abuse. It is not your responsibility to decide IF abuse has occurred, but to report and allow the authorities to make that decision. Report potential abuse IF:

- You have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect.
- You witness any abuse to a child at First West by any person.

Steps to Take:

- 1.If this is an emergency situation, contact West Monroe Police Department, 9-1-1, or appropriate agencies first.
2. Report to the Ministry Leader, Senior Lead, and Executive Pastor.
3. Report potential abuse to the authorities. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified except in situations when the parents are suspected to be the perpetrator.
5. The worker or Church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
6. Complete an incident report form and submit to Executive Office immediately.

7. The insurance company will be notified, and the Church will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.

8. The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

9. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.

10. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

I have carefully read and understand this Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy and agree to abide by its terms.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____