



**KEEP YOUR
CHURCH
OUT OF
COURT** 
SEMINAR

Section 3
Abuse Prevention



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Abuse Prevention

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Section 3 Outline

Abuse Prevention

Abuse Prevention Summary* 45

- Mandated Reporters – Every state in the U.S. has laws identifying individuals who are mandated reporters, typically professionals who have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults. These laws are designed to ensure that suspected cases of abuse or neglect are reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation and intervention.
- General Abuse Prevention Guidelines – Effective Abuse Prevention Plans include background checks, adequate screening, automatic exclusions for ineligible workers, child protection policies, security procedures, and prompt incident reporting.
- 5-5-5 Method (also known as “Essentials Curriculum”) – “The Essentials: Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Training” curriculum is provided without charge by the Southern Baptist Convention as a resource for small and medium-sized churches. It leads churches to establish or evaluate an abuse prevention and response plan.

“Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect” by Louisiana DCFS* 49

- “A Comprehensive Exploration of United States Mandated Reporting Laws for Abuse and Neglect” by Remnant Counselor Collective

Read the full text of Remnant Counselor Collective’s article at:

<https://www.remnantcounselorcollective.com/resources/86536/the-ultimate-guide-to-mandated-reporting-laws-in-all-50-us-states-child-adult-abuse-neglect>

Child Protection Policies & Volunteer Screening

- Child Protection Policy/Reporting Process* 53
Every church should have a Child Protection Policy with robust abuse prevention rules and a clear reporting process for any suspected abuse or inappropriate volunteer behavior.
- Kids Ministry Leader Application* 59
Volunteers should be thoroughly vetted with background checks, references, staff leader observation and personal interviews. Any prospective volunteer with preschoolers, children or students should be considered for service only after a defined waiting period (usually six months to one year).
- Houston’s First Baptist Church Protection Policy* 63



Additional Abuse Prevention Exhibits & Resources

- **Accident Report*** 77
File an Accident Report to document all injuries, accidents or mishaps that occur at any church facility or event (onsite or offsite), as well as incidents involving any church-sponsored transportation.
- **Summer Camps/Trips Safety E-mail*** 79
Recognize special safety considerations for offsite travel, camps and other events. Anticipate hot (or cold) weather contingencies and brief leaders and volunteers on safety protocols for medical emergencies and other concerns.
- **Sex Offender Policy & Covenant*** 81
For churches and ministries with resources to manage identified sex offenders in public settings and facilitate ministry to this challenging group, create a thorough policy and covenant to establish clear guardrails and expectations. A well-staffed Safety and Security Team is a likely pre-requisite for any ministry of this kind.

* Document Attached



Abuse Prevention



[STEWARDSHIP](#) ▾
 [BUDGET](#) ▾
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Our Shared Responsibility

Churches have an obligation to address the opportunities and potential for the abuse of children with a determined, intentional preparedness effort. Work to create an environment where it is virtually impossible for sexual abuse to occur on church property during church ministries and events.

Every Christian's moral and legal responsibility is to report any suspicion of a child's abuse to law enforcement authorities.

Pastors, ministers, church leaders and volunteer workers may not know enough about a situation or may be afraid of making a false accusation, but the obligation to report our suspicions still stands. Churches are not equipped to conduct the kind of investigations required in abuse cases, and, in any event, local police departments are the appropriate authority tasked and equipped for this purpose.

Mandated Reporters

Any abuse—whether it be sexual, physical or any other criminal act—should be reported to local police without delay. If a crime has been committed, the first responsibility is to notify local law enforcement authorities. Taking merciful and attentive care of any alleged victims and their families is also a primary responsibility.

After these steps have been taken, the church must conduct pastoral care and church discipline work. This process starts with an incident report and ongoing caring ministry to any alleged victims, parents and family.

As church leaders, we have the high calling and duty to safeguard the minor kids and students entrusted to us. This requires a robust abuse prevention policy to provide for the safety of everyone in our care.

General Abuse Prevention Guidelines

Background Checks

Require background checks for any paid staff or volunteers who work with children in any capacity. Conduct periodic audits of ministry volunteer lists to ensure that background check procedures are being followed.

Coverage

Screen workers who work with preschoolers, children, middle school and high school students with due diligence. Make no screening exceptions for student workers.

Automatic Exclusions

Anyone with a history of sexual crimes (whatever the offense category and whether the sex crime was specifically against children or not) should not be allowed to work with preschoolers, children or students.

Abuse Prevention Policy

Create a policy to govern all interactions with minor children at any church event or regular ministry programming. Find a range of resources and guidance in the documents below, but some big rocks for an abuse prevention policy might include:

- **Two Workers Rule** – Always staff two or more workers per classroom or group. No worker should ever be alone with a child or a group of children. Make this rule a matter of policy for all ministries and organizations attached to the church.
- **Active Supervision** – Ministry staff, ushers or church security should make frequent visits to areas and hallways used for preschool, children and student ministry.
- **Open Doors** – During ministry events and activities, no classroom door in utilized areas should be locked. Auto-lock doors should be removed from areas used by minor children, unless required by law or for safety considerations.
- **Windows** – Classroom doors and preschool nursery areas should have windows.
- **Bathrooms** – For single-occupant (non-public, non-multi-occupant) preschool or child bathrooms, doors should be kept cracked whenever a child is taken to the bathroom by an adult worker.
- **Limit Abuse Opportunities** – Think through activities, camps and events with an eye for abuse opportunities and potential landmines. Do not allow or ask workers to be alone with a child or student.
- **Environment** – Create an environment where it is virtually impossible for sexual abuse to occur on church property during church ministries and events. Abuse prevention policy, guidelines, training, audits, awareness, security and video surveillance all play a role in creating this environment.
- **Video Surveillance** – Consider the use of video cameras in all areas used by preschoolers, children and students. Video surveillance can be passive, meaning that recordings are made and kept for a specific period of time, without active viewing of archived material except in cases of alleged abuse or an incident.

Security Procedures

Institute security measures for entry into your preschool and children's ministry areas. Preschool entrances should be protected and check-in and check-out procedures created to ensure that only authorized adults have access to their children.

The first priority is the protection of children, not the church's reputation and not the protection of any person's reputation.

- **Police Report** – Report any evidence or signs of child sexual abuse to your local police department. Make no exceptions to this rule. Police investigators are the ones best prepared to investigate abuse claims and evidence.
- **Incident Report** – Complete an incident report for the church's records. Find generic accident report and incident report forms in Forms & Documents.



Incident Report by SafeChurch



Incident Report by SafeChurch

5-5-5 Method

The Essentials: Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Training curriculum is provided without charge by the Southern Baptist Convention as a resource for small and medium-sized churches. It leads churches to establish or evaluate an abuse prevention and response plan. Presented in five sessions, the training curriculum unpacks five essentials:

- **Train** – Proverbs 3:13-14
- **Screen** – Proverbs 2:11
- **Protect** – Psalm 140:4
- **Report** – Proverbs 31:8-9
- **Care** – Psalm 147:3; 9:9



The 5-5-5 Method provides an easy path for implementation:

- **5 Leaders** – Gather a team of 5 church leaders made up of those who lead or work with children, students, and vulnerable adults, the Pastor, deacons/elders, etc.
- **5 Essentials** – Go through the 5 essentials in the order they are presented and complete each essential's next steps before moving on to the next one.
- **5 Months** – Allow roughly 5 months to complete all of the Next Steps. A five-question assessment at start and finish measures progress toward full implementation of an abuse prevention and response plan in your church.

Background Checks & Screening

- MinistrySafe
- LifeWay/Clear Investigative Advantage
- Protect My Ministry
- Shepherd's Watch
- SafeChurch
- Sterling Volunteers

*To learn more about reporting
child abuse or neglect:*



<http://dcfs.la/report>

*To learn more about being a
mandatory reporter:*



<http://dcfs.la/reporters>

This public document was published at a total cost of \$1,165.38. Two thousand five hundred (2,500) copies of this public document were published in this first printing at a cost of \$1,165.38. The total cost of all printings of this document including re-prints is \$1,165.38. This document was published for the Department of Children and Family Services, P. O. Box 94065, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9065 by the Division of Administration, State Printing Office to educate the public on child protection services in Louisiana under "special exemption by the Division of Administration." This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31.

DCFS Form CPI-P2, Issued: 8/25 Replaces: 6/19

Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

*Who you are,
and what you
need to know*



 **Department of
Children &
Family Services**
Building a Stronger Louisiana

Who are Mandated Reporters?

Louisiana Children's Code Art. 603 defines "mandatory reporter." They are any of the following individuals:

- Health Practitioner
- Mental Health/Social Service Practitioner
- Member of the Clergy
- Teaching or Child Care Provider
- Police Officers or Law Enforcement Officials
- Commercial Film & Photographic Print Processor
- Mediators
- Parenting Coordinators
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Organizational or Youth Activity Provider
- Coaches
- Foster Parents
- Group Home Staff Members
- DCFS and Office of Juvenile Justice employees with supervisory or disciplinary authority over children
- Probation Officers

Depending on who perpetrated the alleged abuse/neglect, a report must be submitted to either Law Enforcement or DCFS, and in some situations to both agencies.



How to Report Suspected Abuse/Neglect to DCFS

Call toll-free 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437) to speak with a trained specialist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; **OR** for reports of alleged abuse/neglect that do not require immediate assistance, submit a report online through the DCFS Mandatory Reporter Portal found at https://mr.dcf.la.gov/c/MR_PortalApp.app; **OR** make a report from any DCFS Child Welfare office.

Per Louisiana law, reports made orally must be followed by a written report to DCFS within five days. This may occur by entering a follow-up report online through the Mandatory Reporter Portal or by mailing a CPI-2 form to the DCFS Centralized Intake Office, P.O. Box 3318, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. The online portal and the CPI-2 form are available on our website, dcfs.la.gov.

To report suspected child abuse or neglect to DCFS, call toll-free 1-855-4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437) to speak with a trained specialist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mandated Reporters may make reports of non-emergent child abuse and/or neglect online through the [DCFS website](#). Reports involving child fatalities, drug-exposed newborns, human trafficking, life-threatening injuries, sexual abuse, and/or when a child is in immediate risk of serious harm should NOT be made through the online portal, but called in to the Hotline.

Related Requirements for Reporting to Law Enforcement

La. R.S. 14:403 mandates any person who is 18 years of age or older who witnesses the sexual abuse of a child to report the abuse to law enforcement or the Department of Children and Family Services as required by Children's Code Article 610.

La. R.S. 14:131.1 mandates any person having knowledge of the commission of any homicide, rape, or sexual abuse of a child to report such information to a law enforcement agency or district attorney, except when the person having such knowledge is bound by any privilege of confidentiality recognized by law.



What is Abuse and Neglect?

The Louisiana Children's Code provides the following definitions of abuse and neglect by a parent or caretaker:

"Abuse" is any one of the following acts that seriously endanger the physical, mental, or emotional health and safety of the child:

- The infliction, attempted infliction, or, as a result of inadequate supervision, the allowance of the infliction or attempted infliction of physical or mental injury upon the child by a parent or any other person.
- The exploitation or overwork of a child by a parent or any other person, including but not limited to commercial sexual exploitation of the child.
- The involvement of the child in any sexual act with a parent or any other person, or the aiding or toleration by the parent, caretaker, or any other person of the child's involvement in any of the following:
 - Any sexual act with any other person.
 - Pornographic displays.
 - Any sexual activity constituting a crime under the laws of this state.
- A coerced abortion conducted upon a child
- Female genital mutilation as defined by R.S. 14:43.4.



"Neglect" is the refusal or unreasonable failure of a parent or caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment, or counseling for any injury, illness, or condition of the child, because of which the child's physical, mental, or emotional health and safety is substantially threatened or impaired. Neglect includes prenatal neglect.

Consistent with Article 606(B), ***the inability of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child due to inadequate financial resources shall not, for that reason alone, be considered neglect.*** Whenever, in lieu of medical care, a child is being provided treatment in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religious method of healing that has a reasonable, proven record

of success, the child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be neglected or maltreated. However, nothing herein shall prohibit a court from ordering medical services for the child when there is substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare.

"Prenatal neglect" means exposure to chronic or severe use of alcohol or the unlawful use of any controlled dangerous substance, as defined by R.S. 40:961 et seq., or in a manner not lawfully prescribed, which results in symptoms of withdrawal in the newborn or the presence of a controlled substance or a metabolic thereof in his body, blood, urine, or meconium that is not the result of medical treatment, or observable and harmful effects in his physical appearance or functioning.

A **Physician Notification** is required if a newborn exhibits symptoms of withdrawal or other observable and harmful effects in his appearance or functioning that a physician believes are due to the use of a controlled dangerous substance in a lawfully prescribed manner by the mother during pregnancy. Reporting requirements can be found on our website at <http://www.dcf.la.gov/page/substance-exposed-newborns-reporting>.



When to Report Abuse/Neglect

The Louisiana Children's Code (Article 610) specifies that mandated reporters shall make reports immediately upon learning of incidents of child abuse or neglect.

Contact DCFS when you believe a child may have been abused or neglected by an individual that the agency is authorized to assess and/or investigate.

Contact your local or state law enforcement agency when you have reason to believe the perpetrator is:

- a teacher, instructor, administrator, staff person, school bus driver, teacher aide, paraprofessional, food service worker, or employee of any public or private elementary, secondary, vocational-technical training, special, or postsecondary school, city, parish, or other local public school board, if the abuse or neglect is perpetrated on a student



- another child who does not reside in the same residence for cases of suspected sexual abuse
- any other suspected perpetrator not defined above.

Dual reporting to both DCFS and law enforcement is allowed and, in some situations, mandated.

ANY INDIVIDUAL with knowledge of a homicide, rape, or child sexual abuse is required by law to report this information to Law Enforcement.

Who Does DCFS Investigate?

1. A "caretaker", defined as any person legally obligated to provide or secure adequate care for a child, including a parent, tutor, guardian, legal custodian, foster parent, an operator or employee of a residential or treatment facility licensed by DCFS or the Louisiana Department of Health; or other person providing a residence for the child.
2. A person who maintains an interpersonal dating relationship with a parent or caretaker.
3. A person living in the same residence as a parent, caretaker, or child.
4. An employee or operator of an early learning center or registered family child day care home.
5. An indeterminable individual when reported by a mandatory reporter, but the reporter suspects that the abuse occurred at a child's residence.

DCFS' Role When Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Occurs

DCFS conducts investigations involving child-on-child sexual abuse when the caretaker is allegedly culpable. When child-on-child sexual abuse occurs in the home, without allegations of caretaker responsibility, a family assessment is conducted.

When Law Enforcement refers incidents to DCFS of child-on-child sexual abuse that occurred in a school setting, DCFS will conduct family assessments with the children and families involved.

What are Possible Outcomes for Mandated Reporters?

Any person who is required to report the abuse or neglect of a child and knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be fined not more than \$500, imprisoned for not more than six months, or both. If the abuse is sexual or results in serious bodily injury, neurological impairment, or death of the child, a mandated reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report it shall be fined not more than \$3,000, imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for not more than three years, or both.

Any person who has knowledge of the commission of any homicide, rape, or sexual abuse of child and fails to report or disclose it to a law enforcement agency or district attorney, unless bound by privilege of confidentiality recognized by law, shall be fined not more than \$500, or imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for not more than one year or both.

Any person 18 or older who witnesses the sexual abuse of a child and knowingly and willfully fails to report to law enforcement or DCFS, as required by Children's Code Article 610, shall be fined not more than \$10,000, imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for not more than five years or both.

You may be requested to testify regarding any incident of which you have direct knowledge if the case becomes the subject of legal or judicial action.

State law protects the identity of all mandated reporters, and you are given immunity from legal liability as a result of reports you make in good faith.



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: _____



Leader Application

Thank you for taking the time to share with us about you. We want you to know that the following information will be confidential and only shared with the appropriate Kids Ministry and pastoral staff we deem necessary. Please complete the entire application and return it to the Kids Ministry office when finished. Thanks again!

YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (Cell) _____ Email _____

Date of Birth _____

YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE:

Occupation _____

Employer _____

Work Status: Full-Time Part-time Student

Marital Status: Single Married Divorced

If married, your spouse's name: _____

Children? Tell us their names/ages: _____

YOUR EDUCATION EXPERIENCE:

High School _____ Year Graduated _____

University _____ Year Graduated _____

Degree _____

YOUR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE:

Are you a member of First West? _____ Yes _____ NO

How long have you been a member? _____

If not, where are you a member? _____

Church last attended. _____

Please take the time to fill out the next few pages & tell us more about you. Our goal is not to overwhelm you, but to protect our kids.

LEGAL/LIFESTYLE

In caring for children, we believe it is our responsibility to seek a leader that is able to provide healthy, safe, and nurturing relationships. Please answer the following questions. Any specific concerns can be discussed individually.

In so far as your responsibilities with our Kids Ministry, the amount of time you can spend with minors is so important. We would love to see you here every Sunday but know that may not be possible. Please briefly explain any time commitments that would hinder your availability. (Sport Team Season Tickets, work-related travel, Youth Sports League coach/parent, etc.):

Are you currently using illegal drugs? _____ Yes _____ No

Have you ever gone through treatment for alcohol or drug abuse?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Have you ever been arrested and/or convicted of a crime?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe: _____

Have you had any sexual relations with a minor after you became an adult?

_____ Yes _____ No

Have you had a painful experience in your life that may hinder you from productive ministry with children?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe (or if you desire, you can meet with a minister privately):

MINISTRY

What other ministry have you been involved with? (other First West ministries, former church, FCS, volunteer work, etc.):

What ministry time do you prefer to serve?

9AM _____ 10:30AM _____ Wednesday Evening _____

How often would you prefer to serve?

Weekly _____ Twice a Month _____ Monthly _____

Do you have a specific grade/age you would like to serve with?

Yes No

If yes, please write here: _____

REFERENCES

Please list two references. These references can come from First West leadership, professional, or personal relationships (non-family members).

Name	Phone	Email	Years Known
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The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the church to contact any person or entity listed on the Application form. I also authorize any such person or entity to provide the organization with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

I further authorize First West to conduct a criminal background check or other background information as it may relate to my volunteer work with the Children’s Ministry at First West. I understand that these records will be kept confidential and will only be used to determine any past history or behavior that may reflect on my performance within this ministry.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

HOUSTON'S FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

— EFFECTIVE —
JAN 11, 2022



PROTECTION POLICY

— CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND SPECIAL NEEDS ADULTS —

CREATING A CULTURE THAT CARES



HOUSTON'S FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH

HoustonsFirst.org

 **HoustonsFirst**

 **@HoustonsFirst**

 **@HoustonsFirst**

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INTRODUCTION – THE WHY!

“Every child has the right to be safe from harm. Nevertheless, every year the lives and physical, mental, (spiritual) and emotional wellbeing of millions of children around the world are threatened by maltreatment such as abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.”

— Family Health International 360

At Houston’s First Baptist Church we take seriously the responsibility to create environments of safety and security, protecting the wellbeing of children, youth and special needs adults (CYSNA). These policies and procedures have been developed to prevent intentional and unintentional harm happening to children, youth and special needs adults as they participate in programs, services and activities across all campuses and auxiliary ministries. These policies are also intended to assist our staff and unpaid volunteers as they serve the church.

As a Relevant Biblical Community, it is imperative that we understand relevant issues with commitment and resolve to confront them in the context of safe community empowered by Biblical Principles. Our desire is to place **Appropriate Adults** in the environments of children, youth, and adults with special needs by increasing both knowledge and awareness of the facts associated with child sexual abuse.

- An estimated ONE in 10 children will be a victim of sexual abuse before their 18th birthday.
- There are an estimated 42 million adult survivors of sexual abuse living in the US today.
- Of the estimated 36% of children who disclose abuse, many are disclosed to a friend or family member who does NOT choose to report the abuse.
- 60% of child sexual abuse victims will NEVER tell anyone!

Research has shown that a remarkable difference is made when adults take responsibility with action and resolve, making proactive choices regardless of risk and supporting one another in the context of community.

God’s heart for the vulnerable is on display throughout the pages of scripture with over 2,000 references to children, justice, injustice, the poor, the fatherless, and the widow including protective themes for all vulnerable peoples. The vulnerable are those who find themselves in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or the risk of abuse or neglect. Their very survival hinges on their connection to someone bigger, stronger and wiser for protection, comfort, and delight as well as help regulating their feelings. These needs invite both the potential for help and the potential for harm.

Disclaimer: As the statistics above indicate, we recognize there are possibly staff and certainly many among the vast number of volunteers who may find themselves right in the middle of these numbers. Discussing childhood sexual abuse and the means by which we must prevent it may be triggering and difficult. If that is you, please know that it is our deepest desire to cultivate a **Culture that Cares by both caring and grieving this space with you. We model what we share here by becoming a safe place for you too! At the end of this packet you will find a wealth of resources and ways to start or continue your healing journey.**

It is essential to understand that as image bearers we cannot separate the body from the spirit. Abuse of any kind, especially sexual abuse, is a violation of personhood and deeply alters the capacity to give and receive love. It is therefore imperative as disciple makers and reconcilers that the pursuit of a healthy theology of protection (or safeguarding) be a foundation in both the motivation and the execution of every activity, program and initiative created within all areas and levels of ministry at Houston's First Baptist Church.

"If theology is to the church as a compass is to sailors in a storm, then safeguarding [Protection] is the true north of all the helpful service the church has to offer. Together they must set the direction of all Christian ministry."

— Dr. Krish Kandiah

The following document was created to provide knowledge of child protective issues facing our society today and to clearly communicate strategies for protection and reporting guidelines. The goal is to strengthen both capacity and resolve to protect children. As both citizens and Christians, Houston's First Baptist Church's expectation is that all staff and volunteers demonstrate resolve, integrity and courage to actively participate as God's agents of protection for the most vulnerable.

Our desire is that a culture of care be created that adheres to the standards, principles, and guidelines presented in this document and which all staff, deacons, volunteers, interns, members of Houston's First Baptist Church, official guests, partner organizations and anyone who might come in contact with children, youth and adults with special needs would seek to follow both in the church and in their personal lives.

For those who work and serve at Houston's First Baptist Church, either paid or volunteer, these standards are non-negotiable while working, ministering and/or traveling on behalf of Houston's First Baptist Church. Because of our commitment to this culture of care, any paid staff or unpaid volunteers who violate the standards in this policy will be subject to any of the following, depending on the situation:

- Restriction/limitation of duties
- Required retraining
- Request to stop serving as volunteer
- Dismissal/termination
- Prosecution

Preventing child sexual abuse happens in a ***Culture that Cares***. It is important that we be aligned in purpose and values as we engage this important work.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR APPROPRIATE INTERACTION WITH KIDS

- 1 **We will SAY SOMETHING if we SEE SOMETHING.** If you observe any behavior (child, parent, volunteer, or staff) that seems “off” or suspicious, report this to your supervisor or a staff member right away.
- 2 **We will watch for and report “grooming” behavior.** Anything that creates secrecy, privacy or isolates a child from the group by an adult should be reported.
- 3 **We will maintain the Two-Adult Rule.** Two adults must be present in the room or area of ministry and one-on-one interactions should be interruptible and visible.
- 4 **We will ensure private activities are only performed by approved persons and do not violate the two-adult rule.** This includes activities such as diapering, toileting, dressing, and bathing.
- 5 **We will teach and model healthy touch.** We will not engage in spanking, hitting, or threatening any child, nor any behavior or touching which is inappropriate with a child including sexualized behavior such as kissing and fondling. We will respect a child’s ability to say NO.
- 6 **We will exercise due diligence in avoiding risky behavior in “hotspots.”** Hotspots include transportation, bathrooms, closets, camp lodging, or secluded areas.
- 7 **We will communicate with everyone in a safe, respectful, and encouraging manner.** We will not bully, give false promises, engage in sexualized talk, “pet names,” shouting, shaming or silencing of any child, volunteer, staff member, or parent. This also includes the addition of a second adult in all electronic communication with students.
- 8 **We will affirm each person’s inherent dignity as someone made in the image of God.**
- 9 **We will report any behavior by children that is not age-appropriate in an effort to provide restoration and healing.**
- 10 **We will provide professional communication with parents/guardians and not insult or criticize parenting techniques.** Any practices deemed dangerous to a child will be reported to a supervisor.
- 11 **We will be aware of the potential for peer abuse in any form and seek to provide supervision and intercession that will minimize this risk.**
- 12 **Every approved CYSNA volunteer will check-in and wear a visible PRINTED sticker during their time of service.** NO ONE without this sticker will be allowed to serve.

3. SCREENING PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEERS

3.1 ROLE OF CERTIFIED SCREENERS

1. Definition

A designated individual assigned by a Ministry Leader to screen and approve prospective volunteers according to the CYSNA Protection Policy.

2. Job Description

The role of a screener includes the following responsibilities:

- Follow the CPP screening process as outlined in this document.
- Diligently follow up on all missing information, red flags or concerns regarding prospective or active volunteers.
- Maintain, verify and store accurate records of all prospective and current volunteers serving within their ministry.
- Ensure that all current volunteers are up to date on annual review requirements.
 - Email upcoming review process to current volunteers, a minimum of 1 month in advance.
 - Email both volunteers and ministry leaders when a volunteer is no longer eligible to serve if they have not completed the process.
- Shares responsibility with the Ministry Leader to ensure that all volunteers have been appropriately screened per the process below and found to be appropriate to serve with children.
- Attend all designated CPP training and meetings.
- Effectively communicate to prospective volunteers and other ministry staff the CPP requirements for those approved to serve with minors and adults with special needs.

3. Selection of Screeners

Screeners are selected by the ministry leader in which they work (i.e. Preschool selects for Preschool). They must be a full-time staff member of Houston's First and approved by the Assoc. Director of Operations. At that point, they are considered Certified Screeners for HFBC.

3.2 CYSNA TEN STEP SCREENING PROCESS

1. Initial Interest — A prospective volunteer communicates an interest in serving with children or adults with special needs. This starts the screening process.

2. CPP Volunteer Application — Any prospective volunteer must complete the required application fully. The application is used to gain information as to the appropriateness of the prospective volunteer.

3. Staff Approval Email — The CPP Office will send out Staff Approval emails **FOR** all campuses **TO** all campuses to gather any additional information or concerns known by staff. Screeners will be notified if any issues are raised.

4. Background Check — All prospective volunteers (18 years and older) must complete and pass a criminal background check. Any background check found to have issues of concern will need to be approved by the Assoc. Director of Operations before proceeding.

- Background Checks must be completed every 5 years. For any current volunteer that began serving before age 18, a background check must be completed and passed by their 18th birthday.

5. Membership Requirements — Prospective volunteers must be a confirmed HFBC church member as indicated on their Rock profile.

6. Six Month Church Involvement — Prospective volunteers must have a minimum of 6 months between the creation of their ERA (Estimated Regular Attender) tag in Rock and the begin date of their service. Examples of activities which would cause the creation of an ERA tag are tithing, registering for an event through Rock, or attending an LBS class.

7. Three References:

- HFBC Leadership – Examples include LBS Director or Teacher, Staff Member, Deacon, Ministry Leader, or Serving Group Leader
- Professional Reference – Former employer or ministry supervisor
- Personal Reference – Non-family member

8. Interview — Each prospective volunteer must be interviewed by a Certified Screener either In-Person or by Zoom.

9. Approval/Rejection — Once these steps have been completed, a Certified Screener will determine, based on this information, if the prospective volunteer is appropriate for the ministry in which they are applying to serve.

10. Volunteer Onboarding by Ministry — Ministry Leaders will appropriately onboard each new volunteer. This onboarding will include training in the CODE OF CONDUCT and any other appropriate procedures.

3.3 MINORS SERVING WITH KIDS

HFBC students, age 11–17, who seek to work with Children’s, Preschool or Special Needs ministries.

1. Minors are required to fill out a Minor Application which is reviewed by a screener.
2. Minors must have email approval from the Ministry Director of the ministry they are currently in (First Kids or HUB).

3.4 NON-HFBC VOLUNTEERS

Adults who do NOT attend HFBC, but do attend a like-minded (New Testament) church and seek to be involved in either a one-time event or an ongoing ministry.

A. One-time event Approval (Non-HFBC Volunteer – temp)

1. Required to fill out a CPP Volunteer Application which is reviewed by a screener.
2. Required to pass a background check.
3. Must have a Non-HFBC form completed and signed by their attending church regarding their involvement and appropriateness to serve with kids.
 - The Assoc. Director of Operations will approve/deny based on this information.
 - The **Approved to Serve** tag will expire at the end of the event.

B. On-going Ministry Approval (Non-HFBC Volunteer)

1. Required to fill out a CPP Volunteer Application which is reviewed by a screener.
2. Required to pass a background check.
3. Must have a Non-HFBC form completed and signed by their attending church regarding their involvement and appropriateness to serve with kids.
4. Must provide two references:
 - Professional Reference – former employer or ministry supervisor
 - Personal Reference – non-family member

5. Must be interviewed by a Certified Screener either in-person or by zoom.

- The Assoc. Director of Operations will approve/deny based on this information.

3.5 NON-CYSNA HFBC STAFF

HFBC staff members who serve in an area besides CYSNA seeking to work in a ministry or event with kids.

A. Treated as a prospective volunteer and subject to the screening process above.

4. TRAINING AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: Failure to complete the requirements below will result in being moved to “unable to serve” status in ROCK for volunteers and non-compliance issues for staff members.

4.1 SCREENERS

- A.** Required to attend specific training for screeners 4x/year.
- B.** Must complete Skillful Screening Process Training by Ministry Safe every 3 years.
- C.** Required to attend “check-in” meetings 4x/year.
- D.** Missed training/check-in meetings may result in loss of certification.

4.2 MINISTRY LEADERS

Division heads or anyone else who designates screeners.

- A.** Required to attend specific training 2x/year – one of these will be alongside screeners from their ministry.
- B.** Must complete Skillful Screening Process Training by Ministry Safe every 3 years.

4.3 ALL CYSNA STAFF

Those working with CYSNA on a regular basis.

- A.** Must complete the Sexual Abuse Awareness Training from Ministry Safe within 6 months of employment and subsequently every 3 years.
- B.** Must attend specific CYSNA Protection training (in addition to requirement for all staff).
- C.** Must be very familiar with the CODE OF CONDUCT.

4.4 ALL VOLUNTEERS

- A.** Required to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training by Ministry Safe within 6 months of beginning to serve and subsequently every 5 years.
- B.** Required each year to complete the Annual Review.
- C.** Must be very familiar with the CODE OF CONDUCT.

4.5 ALL HFBC STAFF

- A.** Must attend/watch CYSNA Protection training (1x/year).
- B.** Must be familiar with principles in the CODE OF CONDUCT.
- C.** Must complete Ministry Safe Training (Sexual Abuse Awareness) every 5 years.

5. RESPONSE TO INDICATORS OF ABUSE

5.1 PROCESS FOR REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE

A. When to report

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 HFBC by any person.

B. Steps to take

- Report any potential abuse to your ministry leader.
- Complete a Disclosure/Incident Report.
- Report potential abuse to authorities.
- Send report to CPP Office.

5.2 CONFIDENTIALITY IN REPORTING

Do not disclose the names of any abuse victims or potential perpetrators to anyone except your ministry leader, authorities or to others when requested to do so by church leadership.

5.3 CARE FOR THE CHILD

- The parents of the child must be contacted, except in situations where the parents are suspected to be the perpetrator.
- Do not leave the child alone.
- Do not question the child.

5.4 INTERVENTION WITH THE ALLEGED PERPETUATOR

- Have membership services remove their **Approved to Serve** Tag and put a block on their Rock Profile.
- Inform Assoc. Director of Operations of the allegation.
- Inform the individual in person (phone is acceptable) and in writing that while the review process is ongoing they may not
 - Serve in any area with children present.
 - Serve in any leadership capacity with HFBC or our ministries.
 - Enter the preschool or children's area, even to drop off/pick up their own children.

5.5 ASSISTANCE FROM JPMCC

The Counseling Center is available and should be included in any situations of potential abuse. They can assist in ongoing care for the child and family as well as help in communicating with parents and others in authority. It is not necessary to call the Counseling Center for reporting abuse to the Hotline.

6. CYSNA PROTECTION POLICY OFFICE

6.1 ROLE OF CPP OFFICE

The CYSNA Protection Policy Office is comprised of Central Support personnel assigned by the Director of Operations to oversee, audit, and train HFBC Staff and volunteers in CPP Policy. It is NOT the responsibility of the CPP Office to recruit or approve volunteers but to oversee and assist in the process. The responsibility of recruiting and screening appropriate adults (or minors in some instances) to serve as volunteers remains with Ministry Leaders.

6.2 AUTHORITY/AUDITS

- The CPP Office has the authority to conduct random audits of events, ministries and volunteers throughout the year. The CPP Office has zero-tolerance for non-compliance of the CYSNA Policy and has the authority to refer non-compliance issues to HR. Any issues of non-compliance will result in verbal and written warnings and if necessary, termination of employment.
- The CPP Office is also the final say regarding questions of interpretation of CPP policy.

6.3 ROLE OF HR IN THE CPP

The HR Department will intervene when it is understood that the CPP has not been followed by employees and steps to correct those errors by the CPP Office have been unsuccessful. This intervention may include retraining, transfer and/or termination of employment. HR will also ensure that the CPP CODE OF CONDUCT is included during the onboarding process and Ministry Safe training is completed for all staff, regardless of the employee's role.

7. RESOURCES

A. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Appropriate Adult — A person deemed safe to interact with kids through the screening of their experience, reputation, involvement, background and previous actions.

CYSNA – Children, Youth and Special Needs Adults.

Failure to protect — To fail to provide safety in a reasonable way to a child or vulnerable person.

Grooming — Establishing an emotional connection with a child, and the adults around the child, to gain access to and time alone with the child with the intention of lowering the child's inhibitions for child sexual abuse.

Hotspots — Areas and environments with a higher risk for abuse to occur due to isolation, inability to monitor, or other risk factors. They include transportation, bathrooms, closets, camp lodging or secluded areas.

Ministry Leader — A Minister or Director over an area of ministry that works with kids or interacts with kids in a significant way. Examples are: Children's Minister, Go Houston Coordinator, Ministry Coordinator for after-school programs at Faith Center, etc.

Minor — Any person under the age of 18. May also be referred to as "child."

Peer-to-Peer Abuse — Any of the types of abuse listed below where the abuser is also a child, youth or special needs adult.

Red Flag — An issue or incident that raises alarm as to someone's "appropriateness" for serving with kids.

Screener — A person selected by a Ministry Leader who completes the training necessary to be considered "certified."

Types of Abuse:

- **Emotional** — A pattern of behavior that causes adverse effects on a child's emotional development including shaming, humiliating, rejecting, or name calling.
- **Neglect** — Ongoing failure to provide for a child's physical, educational, emotional, social, or safety needs.
- **Physical** — Any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury. This may include but is not limited to hitting, punching, pinching, kicking, etc.
- **Sexual** — Includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation of a child by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in sexual activities (physical, verbal, visual, or psychological).
- **Spiritual** — Occurs when someone in a position of spiritual power or authority in a faith-based environment misuses their power and the trust placed in them, with the intention of controlling, coercing, or dominating a child.

Volunteer — Any person not employed by HFBC participating in ministry activities without compensation

B. TEXAS CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INFO

Hotline — 1-800.252.5400

C. JULIANNA POOR MEMORIAL COUNSELING CENTER

- Schedule an appointment — 713.335.6462
- Fees — \$100/session for non-HFBC members, \$50/session for HFBC members
- Scholarships available
- Sessions last for 45 minutes
- Services offered:
 - Individual and Couple Counseling
 - Family Counseling
 - Adolescent Counseling – Anxiety, depression, same-sex attraction, gender dysphoria.
 - Preparation for Marriage
 - Life Transitions
 - Group Counseling
 - Support Group

D. CYSNA PROTECTION POLICY OFFICE

Houston's First Baptist Church — The Loop Campus

- Assoc. Director of Operations — Claire Bonilla
 - Email: Claire.Bonilla@HoustonsFirst.org
 - Phone: 713.957.7809
 - Office: Rm 140G
- CYSNA Administrator – Amy Thorn
 - Email: Amy.Thorn@HoustonsFirst.org
 - Phone: 713.957.5873
 - Office: Rm 140

E. DISCLOSURE/INCIDENT FORM**HFBC CYSNA Protection Disclosure/Incident Form**

This form is to be used when a child, youth or special needs adult discloses potential abuse to an HFBC staff member or volunteer, or a potential CYSNA protection incident occurs during an HFBC sponsored event. Please provide as much information as possible.

Reporter's Name:

Child's Name:

Date of incident:	Time of incident:
--------------------------	--------------------------

Location of incident:

List all people who were present when the incident occurred (adults and children):

Provide a detailed description of the incident:
--

Provide a description of any action taken after the incident:
--

Was a report made to DFPS? If yes:

Date of report:	Case #
------------------------	---------------

Name of reporter:

Hotline or webform?

NOTE: This report **MUST** be filed with the teacher or adult directly responsible immediately following the accident.

PERSON INJURED	ORGANIZATION _____ DEPARTMENT _____
EXACT PLACE OF ACCIDENT	DATE OF ACCIDENT

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT: Give time of accident, situation at the time of the accident, and an explanation of how the accident occurred.

DESCRIPTION OF INJURY:

WITNESSES

NAME	ADDRESS
NAME	ADDRESS
NAME	ADDRESS

ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE ACCIDENT

CHECK APPROPRIATE BOX:

- Child observed by _____ and returned to class/activity.
- Child given first aid by _____ and returned to class/activity.
- Parent called
- Child taken home
- Child transported to hospital by _____
- Other: _____

Signature of Teacher/Adult
in charge at time of accident: _____

Signature of person filing report: _____

Date _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date _____

Summer Camps/Trips Safety E-mail

To:

BH: Jana, Katelyn, Elizabeth

Children: Chanda, Chris

Students: Mark Cole, Garrett, Clayton

Senior Adults: Woods, Janet

CC: Debbie, Pattie, Bill, Hope

BCC: Mark Fenn, MW

Team,

As we get ready for another summer ministry season, I wanted to check in and remind us all about a few IMPORTANT reminders about church-provided transportation and general safety.

The safety of our children, students, adults and volunteer leaders is, of course, paramount in everything we do. It goes without saying that safety sometimes results in inconvenient delays to our schedule and planning. I know you know this, but let me say it anyway: BEING SAFE IS ALWAYS OUR FIRST PRIORITY.

Thank you in advance for all the ways you diligently prepare and execute camps, trips and events through the summer months!

Let me direct you to pay close attention to these key safety measures:

- 1. Adult Supervision** — Adult leaders should be evenly spaced out across all parts of summer ministry events. This is especially important on any church-provided transportation of any duration. Ensure that adult leaders and staff are distributed proportionately across multiple buses and vans whenever we are transporting adults or minors on a church-sponsored trip.
- 2. Hot Weather Contingencies** — Plan in advance for any hot weather contingencies, such as bus or van mechanical issues. Bottled water is an absolute necessity for summer trips, since some situations could arise where it would be important to have quick access to water in a dangerously high-temperature environment for extended periods.
- 3. General Safety** — In any contingency such as those described above, remember our first responsibility is the safety of our kids, students, adults and adult volunteers. That remains true at all times during transport and while at a church event. Our abuse prevention policies remain in full force at all times for any event and that means that no adult should be alone with a minor at any time. As always, watch for signs and signals if any adult leader appears to be overanxious or eager to create opportunities for adult/minor time away from the group. Be alert for trip and fall hazards, especially with relation to entering and exiting busses and vans (especially important for senior adult trips).

- 4. Backup Transport Plans and Protocols** — The bus rental company is responsible for backup transportation in the event of an on-the-road breakdown. Depending on the situation, this may take some time and kid/student/adult safety is paramount and our FIRST RESPONSIBILITY. Be sure to have a clear transport breakdown contingency plan when traveling in multiple vehicles. Never leave a broken down bus or van behind unless its occupants are safe and replacement transport is on the way. If it is excessively hot, make plans to get stranded individuals to an air-conditioned rest stop or other area, especially if the ETA of replacement transportation is not known.
- 5. Medical Releases and Liability Waivers** — Be sure to have designated leaders on each bus with access to appropriate medical releases. Answer these important questions:
 - Who has the list of every kid/student/adult volunteer on each bus or van? (Every bus or van leader—and overall event leader—should be able to account for their charges and be aware of any medical conditions present)
 - If a medical emergency occurs during transport, do your leaders know what to do?
 - Who has the release form required for medical care if a kid/student/adult volunteer is taken to a hospital?
- 6. Equipment and Vehicle Maintenance** — As a trip and event leader, you have the right to require a replacement bus or van if there are major mechanical issues with the vehicle provided by the rental company. Among any range of serious mechanical issues, it's important to have properly functioning air conditioning in the summer months, for example. If you are uncomfortable with any other issue, huddle with other leaders and insist on a replacement if you see anything that compromises safety.

Thank you for everything you do to ensure the safety of our people in the days ahead.

Be safe and well,

Tim

FIRST WEST | Sex Offender Policy & Covenant

First West accepts as central to its mission the establishment and maintenance of a caring environment for every child of God, not just our own children, and a place of grace for all, including those whose crimes are public knowledge. Knowing that children are at risk, not yet having the ability to protect themselves, First West determines to provide protection for them and the entire First West family by carefully monitoring any sex offender who wishes to take part in the life of this church family.

First West believes that God's grace has been extended to all; that grace invites repentance, and repentance requires acknowledgement of sin, sorrow for sin, and a turning away from sin, all with the support and prayers of God's people. In that context, First West determines to provide a means whereby a sex offender can live in that grace in the life of this Church family as long as he/she cooperates with the policies and procedures of First West. For the benefit and protection of all people, if a sex offender, registered or unregistered, wishes to attend First West, First West requires that the sex offender enter into this Accountability Covenant, as a condition of their participation at First West and prior to attending any services or activities on Church property. For purposes of this Accountability Covenant, these persons are hereinafter referred to as "Participant."

Policy and Procedures

- Participant must sign a release permitting First West to contact Participant's probation officer for specific information about Participant's offense(s).
- First West may contact Participant's probation officer and request the probation officer's recommendations on whether that the Participant should be allowed to attend the Church and, if so, under what conditions.
- First West may notify its insurance carrier to inform them of Participant's record and to discuss policy coverage.
- Prior to being allowed to attend service or activities, Participant must have an initial meeting with at least one member of the First West Senior Lead Team and at least one representative of the First West Safety Team to discuss whether participation at First West will be permitted and, if so, to establish the terms of participation. The parole or probationary officer may be invited to attend this meeting. First West representatives may, at their sole discretion, refuse to allow the Participant to attend the Church. This decision shall be an exercise of judgment by the leadership of the Church considering all of the facts and circumstances including, but not limited to, the nature of Participant's offenses, history, repentance and recommendations of Participant's probation officer.
- Participant must adhere to all applicable additional requirements deemed necessary by First West representatives and must sign the attached Accountability Covenant in order to take part in the life of the Church:

1. Participant will be identified to all pastoral staff and Children/Student Ministry leaders by name and photo.
2. Participant is not permitted to be involved in any preschool, children's or student ministries.
3. Participant is not permitted to be in the Children's Ministry education wing or classrooms (both 1st and 2nd floors), the Hangar, indoor or outdoor playgrounds, the Weber Next Generation Building, or any other area where children/ youth activities may be taking place.
4. Participant must be actively involved in a treatment program /counseling with a qualified professional until such time that the mental health professional is willing to write a letter to the Church stating that the individual no longer requires treatment.
5. Participant must agree to ongoing, full disclosure to First West leadership of Participant's sex offender status, including any new offenses or developments in his/her case; Participant must further agree that Participant's parole or probation officer may be contacted for periodic updates.
6. Participant shall be required to be physically accompanied *at all times* by one or more assigned accountability partners while attending services or activities on campus or Church activities off campus where children may be present. First West may require that an accountability partner submit monthly documentation of Participant's attendance to Church representatives and the Safety Team, which will monitor Participant's compliance with the Accountability Covenant.
7. Accountability partners, staff or Church leaders who become aware of any violation of the Accountability Covenant will notify First West Senior Leadership or the Safety Team immediately.
8. First West representatives may conduct an annual review meeting with Participant, and reviews of compliance may be conducted as often as First West deems necessary.
9. Other terms and conditions may be added to the Accountability Covenant on a case-by-case basis as deemed appropriate by First West leadership for the protection of members, guests and the Participant.
10. Should Participant not comply with the requirements, the Participant will be required to discontinue attendance and participation in all services and activities of First West, on or off campus, and will be prohibited from being on any First West campus.

Sex Offender Covenant

I, _____, as a sex offender who has received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, promise my Church family at First West, that I will adhere to First West Sex Offender Policies and the following guidelines for the protection of the children, the Church and my witness as a Christian:

1. I understand that First West representatives may contact my parole or probation officer to whom I will report as often as they deem necessary.
2. I have received permission from my parole or probation officer to attend church services.
3. I will continue to participate in a treatment program with a qualified professional until that professional notifies the church in writing that such treatment is no longer required.
4. I will not participate or work with minors in any capacity. I will participate in ministries involving only adults.
5. I will refrain from any physical, verbal or digital (e.g., e-mail, texting, social media, etc.) contact with minors (anyone under 18 years of age) that attend First West.
6. I will refrain from being present in any part of the Church facility where nursery, preschool, children or student activities are in session.
7. I will refrain from placing myself in a questionable or compromising position regarding special needs/mentally challenged adults or members of the opposite sex attending Church events.
8. I agree to notify First West Senior Leadership within 24 hours of being contacted by any law enforcement officer concerning any new charges or allegations.
9. I will consult with First West Church leadership before committing to participate or serve any ministry opportunity (i.e., volunteer activity or event). When in doubt regarding my involvement with a specific activity, I will consult in advance with appropriate Church leadership for permission to participate.
10. I will submit to the authority of an appointed or approved accountability partner if deemed necessary by First West leadership and follow any addition guidelines or arrangements as required by First West.
11. I understand that if I violate any of these conditions, I will be required to meet with First West representatives to review the circumstances at a time and place of their choosing.

I, _____, have read and understand this Accountability Covenant. Before God and my Church family, I commit to maintain this Accountability Covenant. If I fail to comply with this covenant in any way, no matter how minor, I understand that First West may revoke my participation privileges in this church, its events and functions and I may no longer be able to come on to First West property.

I consent to and will execute any and all documents necessary to allow First West to obtain any of the information or make any of the contacts described herein or as may be reasonably requested by First West. I further state that such requests will not invade any confidentiality or privacy rights that I may have and I expressly waive any privacy rights or confidentiality. Additionally, I expressly authorize First West to reasonably disseminate any and all information it learns directly and/or indirectly from me and/or from documents I have authorized First West to obtain and/or review to give effect to this Accountability Covenant. Notwithstanding any of the above, I further acknowledge that First West may terminate, limit, or modify in any manner at its sole discretion at any time, with or without reason or explanation, my ability to attend First West and/or participate in Church activities as set forth above.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Signature	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Senior Lead Team Member	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Global Children's Minister	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Global Student Minister	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Accountability Partner) (if required)	Printed Name	Date