

First Baptist Church of Kissimmee

Protection Guidelines

SCRIPTURALLY IMPOSED DUTIES

The Bible imposes upon believers the duty of protecting children and of reporting allegations of abuse to appropriate officials. Scriptural commands also impose a duty of faithful stewardship to protect the people the ministry serves and the church property purchased with God's money.

DUTY TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE

Christ plainly expresses His love of children and His wrath upon those who offend these little ones.

Psalms 127:3-5

*Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
children, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons born in one's youth. Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
Such men will never be put to shame when they speak with their enemies at the city gate.*

Matthew 18:1-6; Matthew 19:14

DUTY TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE

God created the institution of government to punish evildoers. Those who abuse children are evildoers and must be punished according to the ordinances of man and God. This does not mean the abuser should not be counseled and lead to Christ if not yet a believer; it does mean that man's law requires that his abusive action be reported to government officials to protect children and to punish him if found guilty.

Romans 13:1-5

Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. For government is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of your conscience.

1 Peter 2:13; Galatians 6:1

DUTY OF STEWARDSHIP

As believers, we are called to be good stewards of the mysteries of God. One of the mysteries of God is the church, including the physical assets of the church purchased with God's money. Leaders of the church must be diligent not only in protecting the children within the ministry, but also in protecting the physical assets the Lord has provided to the church.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

A person should consider us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of God's mysteries. In this regard, it is expected of managers that each one of them be found faithful.

Matthew 25: 21, 29

DUTY OF LEADERSHIP

Not only are the children themselves treasured assets of the ministry, but the workers who minister to them are also gifts from God. These volunteers should be appropriately thanked and praised for their service at every opportunity by grateful ministry leaders.

Proverbs 22:1

A good name is to be chosen over great wealth; favor is better than silver and gold.

Definitions & Character Traits of Abuse & Neglect

Child Abuse:

Child abuse manifests itself in a number of ways, including physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect issues. Abuse is any willful or threatened act or omission that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired.

What to Look For:

PHYSICAL: Abuse may be suspected or evident when a child is observed with marks on their body that are unusual or suspicious for the area seen. Typical areas of concern may include the head, back, torso, buttocks, and thighs. Marks may include bruises, cigarette burns, or open wounds. The marks may indicate recent or past injuries.

EMOTIONAL: Abuse may be suspected or evident when a child is observed to be unusually fatigued, fearful, unusually quiet and withdrawn, or particularly insecure.

SEXUAL: Abuse/molestation may be suspected or evident when a child verbalizes the depiction of an incident, draws graphics or writes stories depicting an incident, uses sexual terms, and/or gestures beyond his or her normal developmental level of understanding, or is sexually aggressive toward other students in a way beyond the normal developmental level. The child may also complain of "private areas that hurt."

Neglect: Any act or omission where a child is deprived of, or allowed to be deprived of, necessary supervision, food, clothing, shelter or medical treatment, or is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. Abuse may be suspected or evident when a child is observed to be malnourished, repeatedly disheveled in appearance, verbalizing that he or she is often left alone at home or at unusual locations, repeatedly unwashed, losing weight, or dehydrated.

NOTE: Health and counseling professionals, or those functioning in that role, are required by Florida statute 39.201(1)(d) to report all cases of abuse or suspected abuse to the Department of Children and Family Services, 1-800-962-2873. This agency determines whether or not a circumstance is truly abuse. Once a call is made to this agency, they have complete authority over the disposition of the situation. At that point, First Baptist Church of Kissimmee may not contact the family. It is against the law to constrain a health or counseling professional from making a report or to contact the family after the report.

EXPECT

A child who has been abused will likely demonstrate some of the observations mentioned on page one. Staff who become aware of a potential problem may likely be reticent and extremely cautious for fear of what may come as a result of filing a report. Some may suggest or attempt to persuade against filing a report. Some may want to discount the observations as not involving child abuse. Some may defend a “parent’s right to punish their own child.”

The state agency will likely respond by investigating at a later time, making a home inspection relatively soon, depending on their assessment of the severity of the report.

In the case of a suspected employee abuser, the Department of Children and Family Services will contact the local police department. The police will send an officer to the church to take a statement from the employee. From that point forward there are two investigations ongoing: one concerning the child and one concerning the employee. Both are out of the hands of church personnel. In the meantime, the police will not allow the suspected employee to be at work or volunteer for any church related activity involving children.

If you suspect abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) or neglect of a child:

1. Promptly report to the ministry staff leader any allegation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect. This includes a written copy of the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse/neglect that is suspected.
2. The church staff will investigate within 24 hours of receiving the complaint. This will be geared towards determining whether there is reasonable cause to believe the allegation or suspicion.
3. When appropriate, the alleged offender will be asked to step down from preschool/children/student ministry leadership pending the outcome of the investigation. (if applicable)
4. Confidentiality of the investigation and the one bringing the allegation are very important. There should be no discussion of the incident or suspected abuse with the general public.

Policies & Procedures in Abuse Prevention
FBC Kissimmee – Preschool/Children/Student Ministry

1. All ministry leaders/teachers attend a training educating & discussing the policy & procedures of the church.
2. All leaders/teachers will be required to be a part of the church for 6 months before having a leadership role in a ministry involving children.
3. All leaders/teachers will be required to completing a written application & provide references to be checked & completed by the church staff before having a leadership role in ministry involving children. This application includes a mandatory background check to be performed by the church ministry.
4. There should always be two (2) adult workers in each class of children.
 - a. Classes should be combined if 2 workers are not available or properly supervised by the ministry leader.
 - b. All doors should have windows cut into them. If a door is not equipped with a window, the door should be left open.
 - c. A ministry worker should never be alone with a child, if avoidable. Under no circumstances should a worker be alone with a child in a vehicle or other secluded or dark area.
 - d. A ministry worker should not permit a child to stay overnight alone at his or her home, etc.
5. You should never be in a restroom alone with a child. If a child is in the restroom before you enter, wait outside until the child is finished before entering the restroom. *If you are assisting a child, keep the door open or ask another adult to be with you while attending to the needs of the child.
6. Displays of affection should only be given when initiated by the child & should only occur when appropriate. Displays of affection are never to be given when you are alone with a child.

Child Protection Guidelines
Receipt & Acknowledgement

My signature below represents that I have:

- *viewed the Protecting Our Future video located at www.fbckissimmee.com
- *received a copy of First Baptist Church of Kissimmee Child Protection Guidelines
- *reviewed & understand the guidelines given to me

Further, by signing this receipt & acknowledgement, I represent to First Baptist Church of Kissimmee that I will abide by the policies, procedures, & reporting requirements.

Leaders' Name: _____

Date: _____

Leaders' Signature: _____