

First Baptist Church of Arnold



Child Safety Policy Booklet



First Baptist Church of Arnold desires to be a safe place for all children who attend. We believe that preventive steps can be taken to promote the safety of children and those who volunteer to work with them. First Baptist Church of Arnold is adopting a prevention program to reduce the possibility of child sexual and/or physical abuse occurring in this congregation. It will employ both education and new policies. Effective education will be implemented to safeguard children and workers. Please take the time to read and familiarize yourself with this material.

The First Kids Volunteer application form is to be completed by all applicants involved with the supervision of minors. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Child abuse can happen in any church. A profound legal and moral obligation exists to reduce the possibility of child abuse from ever occurring. The application, education, operating policies, and screening process will help to

1) safeguard the children to whom First Baptist Church of Arnold is seeking to minister; and 2) protect church volunteer workers from potential allegations of child abuse.

Jeff Russom
Children's Pastor

OPERATING POLICIES FOR FIRST KIDS

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of children is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing children.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well being of children by providing clear instructions about the operation of children's ministries at First Baptist Church of Arnold. The leaders of First Baptist Church of Arnold sincerely request the cooperation of the adults in our church who must abide by the stringent guidelines of this policy.

Child Safety Takes Priority -- The greatest priority of First Baptist Church of Arnold's First Kids is to help kids come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is obvious that any physical and/or sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of First Baptist Church of Arnold.

Adults do **not** have a right to serve as workers. Adults **MAY** have an opportunity and the privilege to serve when selected by the church. This means that workers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well being of children.

A Higher Standard -- As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every worker at First Baptist Church of Arnold must avoid even the **appearance** of inappropriate behavior. All workers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place. Workers in First Kids are expected to observe these policies and guidelines as well as the other Christian standards of moral behavior.

II. SUPERVISION

Adequate Supervision of First Kids Workers -- Church staff and volunteers who supervise First Kids Workers are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or re-assignment from children's work.

Reporting Potential Abuse -- First Kids Workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation of a child in their care (whether or not it is believed to be connected with any ministry activity) will immediately inform the Children's Pastor or Senior Pastor of such injury, abuse, or molestation.

III. TWO WORKER RULE

It is very highly recommended that at least two adults should be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during every First Kids program. (At times, this is difficult, but having another adult present will help insure the safety of the children and is also the best protection against false accusations.)

IV. PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Physical contact with children should be minimal. We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church should deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. First Baptist Church of Arnold has implemented a touching policy that will help safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them.

Many children in today's society are in desperate need of true love and affection. Many come from homes that are either physically, verbally, and/or sexually abusive. Many children come from homes where they are never affirmed. Often when children do a good job, adult leaders like to reward them with a hug or other form of physical affection. Be cautious about physical contact with your children. On the other hand, many children today never receive a kind word or display of love from their parents and are crying out for someone to love them. While not telling you to never hug the children in your care, because of the rise of sexual abuse in our society, even harmless forms of physical contact may appear questionable to others and disturbing to children who have experienced abuse in the past. Adult workers must use Godly discretion in this area.

Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.

Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others. Church workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader, staff member, or a pastor.

WORKER SELECTION AND SUPERVISION

The following guidelines will be used as First Baptist Church of Arnold reviews applicants for positions in First Kids:

I. SIX MONTH RULE

Applicants must have been a member of First Baptist Church of Arnold or a regular attendee of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for children's work. In some situations this rule is not feasi-

ble and may be waived on basis of probation. If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion.

II. FIRST KIDS VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

All First Kids volunteers must complete and sign an application form and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

III. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

All volunteer applicants must read, complete, and sign the "Truths We Hold Dear" doctrinal statement that outlines the church's position on our essential beliefs.

IV. SIGNATURES ON GUIDELINES

All volunteer applicants must agree by signature on their application that they have read and understand the child safety policies and guidelines of First Baptist Church of Arnold and that they agree to abide by them.

V. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

The church will keep confidential all information received in the volunteer applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse is divided into four types -- physical, neglect, emotional, and sexual. They may be found together or separately. For example, a physically abused child may also be emotionally abused while a sexually abused child may not be physically abused.

Additionally, **these signs and symptoms may be the result of other causes and should always be considered carefully.** If you are still unsure, after reading these signs, please consult a local hotline or mental health/social work professional.

Signs of physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries (burns, bites, sores, bruises, lacerations, broken bones, or black eyes).
- Fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school / church.
- Afraid of the parent or refuses to go home with parent at end of day
- Shrinks when adults approach.
- Reports an injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Signs of neglect:

- Frequently absent from school / church.
- Begs or steals food from classmates.
- Lacks adequate medical or dental care.
- Lackluster skin and/or hair.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Wears inadequate clothing during harsh weather conditions.
- Abuses alcohol or drugs.
- Reports that no one is at home to care for him or her.

Signs of sexual abuse:

- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults.
- Extremely withdrawn or depressed.
- Has bloody underclothing.
- Reports that genitalia have been touched or played with by an adult or older child.

Signs of emotional maltreatment:

- Extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant, demanding, or aggressive behavior.
- Inappropriately adult-like or infantile in behavior.
- Severe delays in physical or emotional development.
- Attempts suicide.
- Shows no attachment to adults at an early age.

Additionally, children who are abused have various emotional signs, such as depression, anger, and anxiety. Again, these signs are only indicators of the possibility of abuse and should never be used alone. Look for patterns and the overall context of the child and his/her behavior to make a determination about abuse.

Report these signs to the Children's Pastor. He will then follow-up by talking with the child and then reporting the abuse to the appropriate authorities if abuse seems likely.

HOW TO REACT WHEN A CHILD WANTS TO TALK ABOUT ABUSE

General Points

1. Accept what the child says.
2. Keep calm.
3. Look at the child directly.
4. Be honest.
5. Let them know you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality.
6. Let them know that if they have broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
7. Be aware the child may have been threatened.
8. Never push for information.

Helpful Things to Say

1. I believe you.
2. I am glad you have told me.
3. It's not your fault.
4. I'm sorry that happened to you.
5. I will help you.

Avoid Saying

1. Why didn't you tell anyone before?
2. I can't believe it.
3. Are you sure this is true?
4. Why? How? When? Who? Where?
5. Never make false promises.

6. Never make statements such as "I'm shocked, don't tell anyone else."

Again, reassure the child they were right to tell you and you believe them.

Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

After Listening to the Child

1. Immediately refer to one of the Church Pastors. Speak only to that one person, no one else, even "in confidence".
2. Make hand-written notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of the interview), writing down exactly what the child said and when he or she said it. Record the date, time, place and any other person present (e.g. the child's friend). Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed up.
3. Do not try to investigate any claim yourself. Let the proper authorities investigate. They are the trained to investigate any claim. If you, or anyone in the church tries to investigate, they are likely to contaminate any evidence and testimony so that conviction of any guilty abuser is made impossible.

Having read this brochure in it's entirety, please read, complete, and sign the following:

1. First Baptist Church of Arnold First Kids Volunteer Application Form
2. Request for Child Abuse or Neglect / Criminal Record
3. Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy
4. "Truths We Hold Dear" doctrinal statement.

**Return completed forms directly to the
First Kids Office**