

I. Introduction

A. Receiving All Persons as Beloved Children of God

During each child dedication, and upon the baptism of every child of God, Erwin's First Baptist Church commits to uphold that person as a beloved child of God and to teach, strengthen, and support the individual's relationship with God. First Baptist is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

B. Purpose Statement

As children of God, and as an organized Body of Christ, we are charged and entrusted with the nurturance, safety, and faith formation of our children, youth, and adults with disabilities. All children are a gift from God, uniquely bearing God's own image, and when we honor this gift by welcoming and receiving them into our sacred care, we welcome God. The following policies give guidelines and extended definition as to how we fulfill our commitment to providing a nurturing, safe, and faithful ministry.

II. First Baptist General Policies and Procedures

A. Ministry Volunteers and Workers

1. Church Employee: All program staff will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate church staff member or the Personnel Committee, have references checked, and give written permission for a national criminal records background check. All records, forms, and reports regarding employees remain confidential with limited access by the ministerial staff, Personnel Committee, and appropriate supervisory staff only.

2. Primary Volunteer/Worker: Primary volunteers and workers have active leadership roles with children, youth, and/or adults with disabilities. All primary volunteers and workers will be interviewed by an appropriate staff person and must give written permission for a national criminal records background check (see Authorization of Release Form in the Appendix). All records, forms, and reports regarding volunteers and workers will remain confidential with limited access by the ministerial staff.

3. Secondary Volunteer/Worker: Secondary volunteers and workers are used for special events, temporary occasions, or as substitutes. Secondary volunteers and workers are not required to have background checks but must be supervised by at least one additional adult volunteer or worker who has an approved background check.

4. Minor Volunteer: If a minor desires to be a volunteer working with other minors, his or her parent or guardian must sign the Minor's Disclosure form (see Appendix). Minor volunteers should be five (5) years older than the children with whom they work and must be supervised by at least one additional adult volunteer who has an approved national criminal records background check.

B. Screening and Approval

1. Commitment: All volunteers and workers should be committed to the nurturance, safety, and spiritual development of our children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

2. Minimum Age Requirement: All primary volunteers and workers with children must be at least 18 years old. All primary volunteers and workers with youth ministry must be at least three (3) years older than the youth with whom they work.

3. 6-Month Rule: All ministry volunteers for children, youth, and adults with disabilities must be a member or regular attendee of First Baptist Church of Asheville for a minimum of the immediate six months prior to any volunteer service. In certain cases, volunteers and workers who provide credible references may be approved to serve with children, youth, or adults with disabilities prior to a six-month period. These volunteers and workers will serve under the supervision of an established minister, church employee, or primary volunteer/worker.

4. All primary volunteers and workers for ministry programs with children, youth, and adults with disabilities are required to complete the forms listed below. These forms will be submitted to, reviewed, and confidentially stored by the First Baptist Ministries Assistant. Copies of these forms can be found in the Appendix.

1. a) Authorization of Release of Information for a Background Check
2. b) Child/Youth/Adults with Disabilities Protection Information and Interest Form
3. c) Acknowledgment of Receipt and Affirmation of First Sanctuary Policy

5. Background Check: A national criminal background check shall be conducted for all paid ministry volunteers and workers, at the expense of First Baptist Church, in the states in which the applicants have resided since adulthood. Should it be necessary to start the applicant (paid or volunteer) in a ministry position prior to completion of the background check, the applicant will be staffed on a temporary and conditional basis and work under the supervision of qualified staff.

6. Disqualifications: Any applicant with a known history of disqualifying convictions or pleas will be excluded from working with minors or adults with disabilities. The ministerial staff person responsible for the respective ministry area, reviewing the background check and in consultation with the Senior Pastor, will make the final decision of approval or disapproval of all applicants. In such a case, the applicant will be privately informed of his/her disqualification by the supervising staff member.

a) Persons who have been convicted of, or pled guilty to, child abuse and/or violent offenses will be disqualified from working with children, youth, or adults with disabilities. Persons who have been convicted of, or pled guilty to, other serious crimes against persons (rape, assault, etc.) will be disqualified from working with children, youth, or adults with disabilities.

1. b) Persons having a criminal history of DUI or DWI conviction within the seven (7) years immediately prior to application shall not be qualified to serve as a ministry program driver.
2. c) Persons having a criminal history of a drug-related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be qualified to volunteer with children, youth, or adults with disabilities.

7. Interviews for Paid Workers: All paid ministry workers for children, youth, and adults with disabilities shall be interviewed by a minister, staff person, or committee member within the corresponding ministry area in order to determine suitability for working with minors and/or adults with disabilities.

8. Training Orientation: All ministry volunteers and workers for children, youth, and adults with disabilities shall be strongly encouraged to attend a training orientation regarding the First Sanctuary policy on an annual basis. All volunteers and workers must provide written acknowledgment that they have received and read the First Sanctuary policy (see Appendix).

C. Ongoing Guidelines

1. Two Person Rule: A minimum of two adults should be present at all times when children, youth, or adults with disabilities are present in the church for a ministry event or service. This accomplishes two important objectives: first, it reduces the risk of incidents of abuse; second, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. This rule also applies in the event of an authorized church outing. Where impractical or unfeasible to maintain two adults within every immediate space, adjustments should be made to ensure clear access and visibility (e.g., open doors and/or clear windows), and adequate supervisory adults in proximity to the assembled group of minors or adults with disabilities.

2. Worker-to-Child Ratio: The following minimum ratios of adult workers to children, youth, and adults with disabilities should be observed at all church programs:

- o Infants 1:4
- o Toddlers 1:5
- o Preschool 1:8
- o Elementary 1:12
- o Youth 1:12
- o Adults with Disabilities 1:5

3. Transportation: In the event of a church outing, a best-faith effort will be made for the two-person rule to apply during transportation of children, youth, and/or adults with disabilities. Drivers must have a valid driver's license. Drivers must abide by all traffic laws and there must be a functioning safety belt for each person in the vehicle (including the driver). No driver should use a cellular phone for any reason while operating a vehicle for a church outing. The non-driving adult shall be responsible for monitoring all passengers while the vehicle is in operation.

4. Overnight Events: A minimum of two adults must be present for any overnight event with children, youth, or adults with disabilities. If the group is co-ed, there must be both a male and female adult present. For no reason should any adult ever share a bed with a child or youth unless the adult is that child's parent.

5. Romantic or Sexual Involvement: A volunteer or worker shall not be romantically or sexually involved with a child, youth, or adult with disabilities. It is the responsibility of all volunteers and workers to avoid sexual or inappropriate physical contact with minors or adults with disabilities within their care, even if such minors or adults with disabilities attempt to initiate the contact.

6. Suspected Abuse: Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children, youth, or adults with disabilities will be reported as soon as possible (and at least within 24 hours) to the Department of Social Services, the Erwin Police Department, and to the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church.

D. Reporting Incidents of Abuse

1. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children, youth, or adults with disabilities will be reported as soon as possible (and at least within 24 hours) to the Department of Social Services and to the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church. Reports will initially be made orally and then in writing (see Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse in the Appendix). The Senior Pastor

will share the report with the Deacon Body and the minister or staff providing direct oversight of the child, youth, or adult with disabilities involved.

2. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances. The Senior Pastor will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.

3. Reports from persons requesting to remain anonymous will be made by telephone in the presence of a witness of the reporter's own choosing to verify the filing of the oral report.

4. All adult members of First Baptist, staff, and other adults participating in programs on the property of FBC should be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children, youth, or adults with disabilities. The Church will be supportive of individuals who in good faith make reports of incidents or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse. All reports will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.

5. Organizations that use the facilities of the First Baptist Church must comply with the following procedures:

1. a) Organizations that have reporting procedures of their own will follow those established reporting procedures. A copy of their reporting procedures should be submitted to the church office, in addition to a signed Liability Release form (see Appendix) that releases the First Baptist Church from any liability of injury or abuse occurring at the church facility. In addition to following their own reporting procedures, any organization that uses the facilities of the First Baptist Church will also notify the Senior Pastor or his/her designee as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident of abuse involving any person affiliated with such organization and who uses the First Baptist Church facilities or about any incident or suspected incident occurring at the facilities of First Baptist. All forms must be updated annually.
2. b) Organizations that use the facilities of the First Baptist Church and do not have reporting procedures of their own shall follow the reporting procedures outlined in the First Sanctuary policy. An official representative from the organization must sign a form of acknowledgment and agreement to the First Sanctuary Policy. These forms must be updated annually.

6. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

E. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Erwin's First Baptist Church will strive to provide adequate care and respect to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegations can be substantiated or cleared.
 2. All procedures listed in the previous section will be strictly followed.
 3. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
 4. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
 5. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
 6. The liability insurer and attorney for the Church will be notified of the incident within 24 hours by the Senior Pastor or his/her designee.
 7. The safety and security of the child, youth, or adult with disabilities must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
 8. An in-depth investigation will be carried out by the civil authorities and/or law enforcement authorities rather than church personnel.
 9. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee will be the sole spokesperson for the Church insofar as media inquiries are concerned.
10. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared or substantiated.

III. Training and Education

A. Training in Policies and Procedures

1. All First Baptist volunteers and workers involved in ministry with children, youth, or adults with disabilities, in addition to all First Baptist staff members, are required to read, acknowledge, and comply with this policy.
2. All First Baptist Church volunteers and workers involved in ministry with children, youth, or adults with disabilities will be trained during an orientation period regarding protection of children, youth, and adults with disabilities from abuse, and protection of adult volunteers and workers from a false accusation of abuse. This training will include:
 - o The ongoing guidelines of the First Sanctuary Policy
 - o Procedures for reporting observed incidents or suspected incidents of abuse.
3. Staff members shall periodically initiate training and education programs in review of the First Sanctuary Policy for volunteers, workers, and church staff in programs involving children, youth, and/or adults with disabilities. These programs may also include training for CPR/First Aid.
4. Information on the First Sanctuary Policy will be part of new member orientation.

5. The First Sanctuary Policy will be reviewed and updated as needed by a designated committee.

Appendix

Forms for Erwin's First Baptist Church volunteers and workers

Acknowledgement of Receipt for workers and volunteers

Authorization of Release

Child/Youth/Adults with Disabilities Protection Information and Interest Form Minor Disclosure Form

Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

Forms for community groups using First Baptist facilities

Acknowledgement of Policy and Release of Liability for Organizations

Acknowledgement of Receipt for Volunteers and Workers

I, _____, have received a copy of the **First Sanctuary: A Policy for Protection of Children, Youth, and Adults with Differing Abilities** and acknowledge that I have read, understand, and will comply with all the contents therein.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

I hereby authorize Erwin's First Baptist Church or any representatives acting on behalf of First Baptist to conduct an investigation of my past employment and activities in connection with my request to participate as a volunteer in ministries for children, youth, and adults with disabilities sponsored by First Baptist. I acknowledge that in conducting such investigation, First Baptist, or any representatives acting on behalf of First Baptist, may procure or cause to be procured consumer reports that contain information about me, including information concerning my motor vehicle driving record, criminal record, and involvement in legal proceedings. I also acknowledge that in conducting such investigation, First Baptist, or any representatives acting on behalf of First Baptist, may procure or cause to be procured investigative consumer reports that contain information about my character, general reputation, and personal characteristics and that such reports may be based on interviews conducted by a consumer reporting agency.

I understand that I have a right to request certain information from any consumer reporting agency that provides a consumer report to First Baptist and that I have the right to dispute inaccurate information with the consumer reporting agency. I further understand that I have the right to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report requested by First Baptist. Finally, I understand that if First Baptist takes an adverse action against me concerning my request to participate as a volunteer in ministries for children, youth, and adults with disabilities sponsored by First Baptist and if such action is based in whole or in part upon a consumer report provided by a consumer reporting agency, I will be informed of that fact, given a summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, provided with a copy of the consumer report, and given the name, address, and telephone number of the consumer reporting agency that prepared the consumer report.

I hereby authorize any agency, entity, or organization (including, without limitation, any police department, the Tennessee Department of Public Safety, and any law enforcement agency) that possesses records or information about my motor vehicle driving record, criminal record, and involvement in legal proceedings to release such records and information to First Baptist and any representatives acting on behalf of First Baptist.

I acknowledge that this Authorization for Release of Information will remain on file with First Baptist throughout my participation, if any, as a volunteer in ministries for children, youth, and adults with disabilities sponsored by First Baptist and will serve as an ongoing authorization for First Baptist to procure or cause to be procured, from time to time during the course of such participation, consumer reports that contain information about me.

I have carefully read this Authorization for Release of Information and have voluntarily agreed to its terms to assist First Baptist in evaluating my qualifications as a volunteer in ministries for children, youth, and adults with disabilities sponsored by First Baptist.

Print Full Name _____

Driver's License Number and Issuing State _____

Current Home Address _____

Other Names by Which You Are Known or Have Been Known _____

Signature _____

Social Security Number _____

Date of Birth _____

Date _____

CHILD/YOUTH/ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES PROTECTION INFORMATION AND INTEREST FORM

This form is to be completed for any person(s) involving the supervision or care of children. Its purpose is to help the Church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in Church programs and use Church facilities. This application for service is strictly confidential, and will be reviewed in confidence only as required and outlined in the Screening section of the First Sanctuary Policy. Thank you for your cooperation.

Today's Date: _____
Name: _____
Birth date: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Number of years at current address: _____
Day Phone: _____
Immediate Prior Address: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____
Zip: _____
Evening Phone: _____

Note: If the above addresses include less than 7 years of residency, please include additional addresses on the back of this form

1. Are you a member of First Baptist Church?

Yes: _____ since : _____
No: _____ active participant since: _____

1. Please list the names and addresses of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years: _____
2. Church's Name and Address Dates Attended:

3. List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children's work: _____
4. Please check the ages and areas of service that interest you.
Ages:
Preschoolers (Birth-Pre-K)
Elementary (K-5th)
Youth (6th-12th)

Areas of Service:
Sunday School
Special Programs
Recreation
Vacation Bible School
Other:

*****This Form Must be Notarized*****

Minor's Disclosure Form

To be in compliance with **First Sanctuary: A Policy for Protection of Children, Youth, and Adults with Disabilities**, please complete and notarize the following:

I hereby certify that I know of no reason why the minor named below should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with the other minors in the ministries of Erwin's First Baptist Church.

Print Minor's Name: _____

Minor's Date of Birth: _____

Print Parent's or Guardian's Name: _____

Parent's or Guardian's Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

*****Place notary's stamp, signature and date below*****

Sworn to and subscribed before me.

Notary Public Date Signed Notary Seal Below:

REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's name:

Victim's age/date of birth:

3. Date of initial conversation with/report from victim:

Place of initial conversation with/report from victim:

4. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here):

5. Name of person accused of abuse:

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

6. Reported to Senior Pastor: Date/time:

Summary:

7. Call to victim's parent/guardian:

Date/time:

Spoke with:

Summary:

8. Call to local children and family service agency:

Date/time: _____

Spoke with:

Summary:

Call to local law enforcement agency:

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary:

Other Contacts:

Date/time: _____

Spoke with:

Summary:

Signature of Incident Reporter

Date

Acknowledgement of Policy and Release of Liability for Organizations

We believe that First Baptist Church of Asheville is called to provide a safe, loving and secure environment for all children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

As an organization using the facilities at the First Baptist Church, we seek to create a safe and nurturing environment and to establish healthy relationships with the children, youth, and/or adult with disabilities while under our care on the campus of First Baptist. To ensure that every person is safe from abuse or neglect, we will:

- Observe the two-adult rule;
- Observe the open-door policy;
- Display affection appropriately and respect others' boundaries;
- Release the child, youth, or adult with disabilities to authorized person(s) only;
- Refrain from any use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, profanity, or inappropriate language;
- Report any signs of injury or possible abuse to FBCA as quickly as possible.

We have:

____ Received a copy of my organization's Child Protection Policy and will abide by it

____ Read the Child Protection Policy in its entirety and agree to abide by it

We understand and agree that neither the First Baptist Church, nor its trustees, deacons, representatives, or employees, may be held liable in any way for an occurrence in

connection with the Activity which may result in injury, harm, or other damages to the undersigned or members of our organization and guests, invited or not. Rather, I/We agree that our Organization alone shall be responsible for any property damage, personal injury or death that may occur during our use of the premises.

As part of the consideration for being allowed to use this facility and grounds as well as all appliances and fixtures in the activity, we release FBC, its trustees, representatives, or employees from any claim for damages, injury or death which may occur while participating in the Activity. We further agree to save and hold harmless FBC, its trustees, representatives, or employees from any claim arising out of or participation in any form or fashion in the Activity.

We represent that our organization has general liability insurance with coverage limits of _____ in effect as of the date of the Activity. We agree to name FBCA as an

additional insured on our general liability insurance policy and shall provide proof of such additional insurance coverage to FBC prior to the date of the Activity.

We further state that _____ is authorized to sign this
(name of representative)

agreement; that we understand the terms herein are contractual and not mere recital; and that we have signed this document of our own free act and volition. We further state and acknowledge that we have fully informed ourselves of the content of this affirmation and release by reading it before we signed it.

Most importantly, we will treat every child youth, or adult with disabilities with dignity and respect, acknowledging every person as a beloved child of God.

We, _____, do hereby agree to this covenant
(name of organization)

freely and willingly and I sign this document on _____(date).

Signed by _____ (organization representative)

Witnessed by _____ (FBC representative)