

Child Abuse Prevention & Protection Policy

Faith Family Fellowship

Spanish Fort, Alabama

INTRODUCTION: Members of Faith Family Fellowship come from a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and needs. Many of Faith Family Fellowship ministries have couples and single adults who have children in our Preschool, Childrens and Student ministry areas, including our AWANA program. The church leadership is committed to providing an environment which is as safe as possible for children and students who attend the church or any sponsored programs or activities, and to take the necessary precautions to assure as best we can that our workers are free from accusations or suspicion.

The church leadership recognizes the need to have formal, written policies and guidelines to help prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of abuse to a minor. The following procedures are not based on a lack of trust in a particular worker, but instead are needed to protect our preschoolers, children, students, employees, volunteers, and the entire church body.

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.”

Mark 10:14,16

“Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful.”

1 Corinthians 4:2

By fostering awareness of appropriate, as well as inappropriate behaviors in the presence of minors, Faith Family Fellowship, as part of the body of Christ, will demonstrate Christian love and respect for one another.

Leadership recognizes that certain people have exceptional talents for teaching and supporting the growth and development of Faith Family Fellowship children and students, and we wish to encourage them to use their spiritual gifts. At the same time, however, we have set certain criteria on those adults who choose to serve in this capacity so as to protect the well-being of our children and students.

Our intent is not to be judgmental, for we are all accountable to God. We rely on God’s wisdom in developing, implementing and carrying out His will through these guidelines. Compassion and truth will be the guiding forces for any investigation, reporting or follow-up action that results from the procedures as outlined in this policy.

PURPOSE: It is the purpose and intent of Faith Family Fellowship to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and students of our church and community.

GOAL: It is the goal of Faith Family Fellowship to protect children and students from sexual abuse or molestation by employees or volunteers in this church and by anyone else while the child is in the care of the church, and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child.”

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, pornographic photographs or videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

DEFINITION OF A MINOR: A minor is any individual under the age of 18 years.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

All personal information voluntarily disclosed, result of the security background check, or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be considered confidential. The results of the security background check initially will be reviewed by the designated *staff member / legal team member*. After this initial review, if the designated staff member determines that further review should be made, the designated *staff member / legal team member* may consult with the church staff member who will be supervising the volunteer or employee (“the supervisory staff member”) or conduct further inquiries, as necessary, after obtaining written permission from the volunteer or employee.

The policy and procedure set forth will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities of Faith Family Fellowship.

This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our church: 1) selection process, 2) protection process, 3) reporting procedures, and 4) responses to allegations.

I. SELECTION PROCESS

A. *Employee:* anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children and/or students. Church employees will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate staff member, have references checked and verified, and give written permission for a possible criminal records check.

B. *Volunteer:* anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

A volunteer will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by the appropriate staff member, have references checked and verified, and give written permission for a criminal records check.

In addition to the above requirement, a volunteer must be a member of Faith Family Fellowship for at least six (6) months. Any variation from this must be approved by the Ministerial Staff supervising minister, and/or church legal counsel. Several ministries of Faith Family Fellowship are community oriented and have volunteers from outside the church body. Exceptions can be made for those who have been members of another church for at least six (6) months and have a clear testimony of salvation and a letter of recommendation from their pastor.

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by the result of the security background check, crimes against children or persons (as defined in the Code of Alabama) will disqualify a volunteer or employee from the participation in or sponsorship of any activity or program involving minors.

II. PROTECTION POLICY

A. Two Adult Rule

Every attempt will be made to have two (2) adult workers present or nearby with preschoolers, children and students at all times during church activities. In addition, age-group ministers, greeters and/or the program director will be present and available on each floor and in the hallways where minors are present. Every effort shall be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with one minor.

B. View Windows

Every effort shall be made to place preschoolers, children and students in rooms with view windows for all teaching and learning activities.

C. Over-Night Activities

Volunteer adult chaperons and supervisors will be required to comply with all of the policies as outlined herein.

D. Within Town Activities

Volunteer adult chaperons and supervisors will be required to comply with all of these policies as outlined herein.

E. Out-of-Town Activities

All participants shall have written parental consent and a notarized medical release form. Consent forms may be completed for a single church-year period and must be renewed annually. Volunteer adult chaperons and supervisors shall be required to comply with all of these policies as outlined herein.

F. Preschool Security Policies

Faith Family Fellowship has a well thought out, working program that should be conscientiously followed.

III. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Observed or reported child sexual abuse or child molestation should be reported immediately to the supervising minister.

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with an appropriate person to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family. When time and circumstances permit, the report should first be made to the appropriate age-group minister, who will proceed with the correct and thorough process.

IV. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS

A. Any allegation will be taken seriously and church staff will take appropriate action, and appropriate notification will be made to the Department of Human Resources of the State of Alabama.

B. The official spokesperson for the church will be designated by the pastor. Consultation with the church attorney prior to any public comments is strongly advised. No other staff members or church employee shall speak to the media in an official capacity.

C. The church staff will document (in writing, with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.

D. The church will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. Faith Family Fellowship staff will minister to all involved, as well as investigate, and cooperate with authorities.

PROHIBITED ACTS AND BEHAVIOR

A. The following act or omissions (“prohibited acts”) will not be tolerated or accepted during any Faith Family Fellowship activity and/or program and shall be reported to the supervising staff member immediately after the safety of the child, children or youth involved has been assured:

1. Direct observation or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a child or youth.
2. Display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child or youth.
3. Sexual advances or sexual activity between a person and a child or youth.
4. Sexual advances or sexual activity between a youth and a child.

5. Infliction of physical abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth.
6. Emotional or psychological mistreatment of a child, children, or youth, including verbal abuse.
7. The possession of obscene or pornographic materials.
8. The presence, possession, consumption of or being under the influence of any illegal drugs or alcohol.

B. Consequences of Violation

1. Any volunteer or teacher accused of committing a prohibited act will immediately be notified and suspended from participation from all children and youth activities and programs of Faith Family Fellowship. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the church under the leadership of the designated staff member, law enforcement, or child protection agencies.
2. After the investigation by the designated staff member or in conjunction with the church attorney, any person found to have committed a prohibited act shall be prohibited from future participation in all children and youth activities and programs of Faith Family Fellowship.
3. As required by Alabama Law, all reports of abuse will be timely reported to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement agencies. Such reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this child protection policy.
4. Failure by any person to timely report a prohibited act to the designated person shall be considered a procedural violation of this child protection policy and shall be ground for dismissal from participation in all children and youth activities and programs of Faith Family Fellowship.

I have read this policy and agree to its terms.

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