

The Youth Ministry Safety Policies and Procedures Handbook

*First Baptist Church
205 West Piccadilly Street
Winchester, VA 22601
540-662-5367*

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Purpose Statement:

The youth of First Baptist Church Winchester are both a blessing and a responsibility. Their care and well-being are primary concerns of the church. The church shall provide a safe, secure, and nurturing environment in which our youth can begin and grow in their spiritual journey. These policies and guidelines have been established in order to meet this goal.

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I. The Prevention of and Response to Child Abuse

The Virginia Child Abuse Law

Virginia's Child Abuse Law, Chapter 12.1 of the Code of Virginia, both defines and delineates child abuse. In addition, the law also describes the responsibilities of "any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children." It is the intent of First Baptist Church Winchester to honor and abide by this law in both the prevention of and response to any possible issues of child abuse.

Reporting Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse

1. Any conduct that seems inappropriate for workers must be immediately reported to a director or leader.
2. When a worker suspects a case of abuse, the worker must immediately insure the safety of the youth, report the incident to the person in charge, and notify a member of the church ministerial staff. The person reporting the allegation must document all the pertinent information concerning the incident. Investigations will be handled discreetly.
3. The parents of a youth involved in an allegation of abuse must be notified immediately. When necessary, leaders and family members will have appropriate medical personnel examine the minor as soon as possible.
4. All allegations of abuse will receive serious consideration by church leaders, who will
 - Listen supportively
 - Have two people present to hear the victim's allegation
 - Hear the victim's full account without minimizing the allegation
 - Make neither a positive or negative judgment concerning the allegation
 - Refrain from discussing the allegation with anyone except those who need to respond to it, and those who are identified as witnesses or persons having knowledge deemed pertinent to the investigation
5. If an allegation is brought to a church leader, the appropriate persons will be notified: Child Protective Services, the church's lawyer, and the church's insurance carrier.
6. If an allegation is made against a church employee or a volunteer, that person will be relieved of duties involving the care of or direct contact with children or youth until the investigation is concluded. Paid employees of the church will receive their normal monetary compensation until the investigation is completed.
7. The pastor or other staff member should provide whatever care or resources may be needed, but under no circumstances should the pastor or staff member investigate or be drawn into a discussion of the allegation. That individual must not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.
8. A high regard for each person's rights, including those of privacy and confidentiality, must be maintained at all times.

9. An Incident Report (appendix A) located in the church office must be filled out if child abuse is suspected. The documentation of the allegation will be given to a member of the ministerial staff and kept in a secured file.
10. A spokesperson designated by the pastor will, if appropriate, inform the congregation and respond to media inquiry, preferably by using a prepared statement that safeguards accuracy, privacy, and confidentiality. (See appendix B.)
11. When the investigation is complete, the Church Council will make a report to the church, which may include a recommendation.

II. Qualifications for Youth Leaders and Workers

At First Baptist Church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of youth is vital. These guidelines are intended to protect the youth, as well as those who work with them at our church. These policies will assist our congregation in providing a physically safe, emotionally secure, and spiritually nurturing environment for all who attend services or activities sponsored by First Baptist Church. These policies apply to all who work with minors at First Baptist—volunteers, chaperones, and compensated workers.

1. Any person who works with youth in any setting must be a church member or actively involved in the life and ministry of First Baptist Church for at least six months. Being actively involved includes regular attendance at worship services and/or Sunday school.
2. Any person who works with youth must be at least twenty-one years of age. Approval of the Minister to Youth and the Senior Pastor may be given to individuals who are 20 years of age who wish to work with the youth. Anyone under 20 years of age will not be allowed to work with the youth.
3. All workers must meet the following requirements:
 - Complete an application form (appendix C) which requires references and which may include an interview and a background check prior to beginning service. Forms will be kept in strict confidence accessible only to the ministerial staff.
 - Attend and complete a training session to learn the policies and procedures of First Baptist Church for those who work with youth.
 - Review those same policies on an annual basis.
4. All child care or teaching settings will require a minimum of two workers. The term “worker” is synonymous with any leader, teacher, caregiver, chaperone, or volunteer with youth. If only two leaders are present and they are related, a third non-related worker is required.
5. A background check must be conducted on all employed youth workers before official service begins. Until a background check has been received from the state, a worker is placed in a probation period. This will allow working with another approved worker. A background check may be conducted on volunteer workers.
6. All workers must follow an “open classroom” policy. A classroom may be observed or visited by church personnel, Department Directors, the Sunday School Director, or parents of youth in the room. Doors should either be left open or have unobstructed door windows.
7. The ministerial staff may make any changes or updates to these policies as needed with the approval of Church Council.

8. All workers involved in transporting youth must abide by all regulations established by the Administrative Management Committee of First Baptist Church as stated in the “Vehicle Use Guidelines” (See appendix D).

III. Supervision Guidelines for Youth Leaders/Workers

We live in an age where abuse towards minors is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue by taking steps to protect the youth in our care. First Baptist Church has implemented a policy that will safeguard our youth while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry with them. The following guidelines are to be followed by anyone who has custody or supervision of youth.

Exemplary Leadership: All leaders are to model the love of Christ while leading youth and avoid behavior which may be misconstrued as negative or inappropriate. This is needed to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Confidentiality: There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Youth workers must report to a staff minister if a minor discusses harming him/herself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. Conferring with a minister on these issues is not considered breaking a confidence. This guideline is in compliance with state law.

Two Person Rule: Any youth will not be in the primary care of only one adult. This accomplishes several important objectives: helps assure appropriate levels of supervision, reduces the risk of injury, reduces the risk of abuse, and reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. If only two leaders are present and they are related, a third non-related worker must be present.

Open Door Policy: All gatherings of youth at First Baptist Church are open door. This means that pastors, parents, and church members have the right to observe any activity that involves youth.

Individual Counseling: Any adult counseling a youth should do so in a public place in view of others. When possible, females should counsel females and males counsel males. A staff member should refer youth who might need long term counseling to an appropriate professional in the community.

Report Suspected Abuse: Any suspected child abuse must be reported to a youth leader or staff member immediately. The reporting procedures (appendix A) outlined in this handbook will be followed. Staff members should not provide any counseling in this situation.

First Baptist Church Public Response Statement: This statement is intended to shape our attitude and response towards any allegations of child abuse. (See appendix B)

Corporal Punishment: No form of physical punishment is ever appropriate at First Baptist Church. Workers shall consult with the ministerial staff when help with behavior guidance/discipline is needed.

- **Dating or Sexual Involvement:** No adult child/youth worker is to date or be romantically or sexually involved with a child/youth.

Failure to Follow Guidelines: Workers who disregard these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from duty at the discretion of the ministerial staff.

Emergency Evacuation Plan: See appendix E.

Use and Care of the Youth Building: Workers and leaders are expected to follow the guidelines for use of the Youth Building (301 House). (See appendix F.)

Medical Procedure: All leaders should know and follow the three-step medical procedure.

#1 Give First Aid (Stop bleeding, give CPR, etc.)

#2 Call 911

#3 Notify parents/guardians

Appendix A

Incident Report of Alleged Abuse of a Child/Youth

ACCUSED

Name of Accused: _____

Ministerial Staff _____ Employee _____
Volunteer _____

Address of the Accused: _____

Telephone Number of the Accused: _____

Date of Alleged Abuse: _____

Place of Alleged Abuse: _____

Time of Alleged Abuse: _____

Victim's Statement of Alleged Abuse:

VICTIM

Name of Victim: _____ Age: _____

Parents'/Guardians' Names: _____

Address of the Victim: _____

Telephone Number of the Victim: _____

Was a Parent or Guardian Notified: YES _____ NO _____

Name of Parent or Guardian Notified:

Has the victim, or someone speaking for the victim, confronted the accused with allegations?

YES _____ NO _____

Has the pastor or another member of the ministerial staff been notified of allegations?

YES _____ NO _____

Has the accused been reported to any civil authorities? YES _____

NO _____

Child Protective Services _____ Police _____ Commonwealth Attorney

WITNESSES

Please list the names, addresses, and phone numbers of any witnesses:

OTHER INFORMATION

Date: _____

Time: _____

Name of Person Filing Report:

Signature of Person Filing Report:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Date Filed:

Appendix B

First Baptist Church Public Response Statement

(To be used as a public response to an allegation)

The members of First Baptist Church believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth is vital. Therefore, we have educated our congregation regarding the nature and impact of child abuse. Because we have zero tolerance for any form of child abuse, we have implemented appropriate policies for those who work with children/youth. While we are fully cooperating with the authorities that are investigating this matter, we recognize that all the individuals in this situation need love, encouragement, and support. It is our prayer that this matter will be resolved in the best interests of everyone concerned.

Appendix C

First Baptist Church Application for Youth Workers

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Address: _____
Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Name of church of which you are a member and date of membership:

Name(s) of other church(es) you have attended regularly in the last five years:

Indicate previous experience with children and youth in a church setting (places, dates, and types of work):

Indicate previous non-church work with children and youth (places, dates, and types of work):

Have you ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor? No Yes
Comments: _____

Have you ever been accused or convicted of sex related or child abuse related offenses?
 No Yes
Comments: _____

Personal References (not relatives):
Name: _____ Name: _____
Address: _____ Address: _____
Phone: _____ Phone: _____

Applicant's Statement
The information provided is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize First Baptist Church to contact any references, churches, or organizations which I have listed regarding my qualifications to work with children/youth. I do _____/do not _____ waive the right of access to statements made by the references.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY A MINISTERIAL STAFF MEMBER
____ Applicant is known by me and has previously worked with minors at First Baptist Church
____ Applicant has not previously worked with minors at First Baptist Church. References were checked and results attached.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Position: _____

Applicant has completed training: YES NO
Approved: YES NO

Appendix D

Vehicle Use Guidelines

Subject: Use of Motor Vehicles Belonging to First Baptist Church

Purpose: This procedure provides instructions and procedures governing the scheduling and use of vehicles belonging to First Baptist Church.

Applicability: The procedures outlined in this document are applicable to all persons and organizations that wish to schedule the use of Church vehicles for any activity. It specifically applies to members of Church Staff as well as other users.

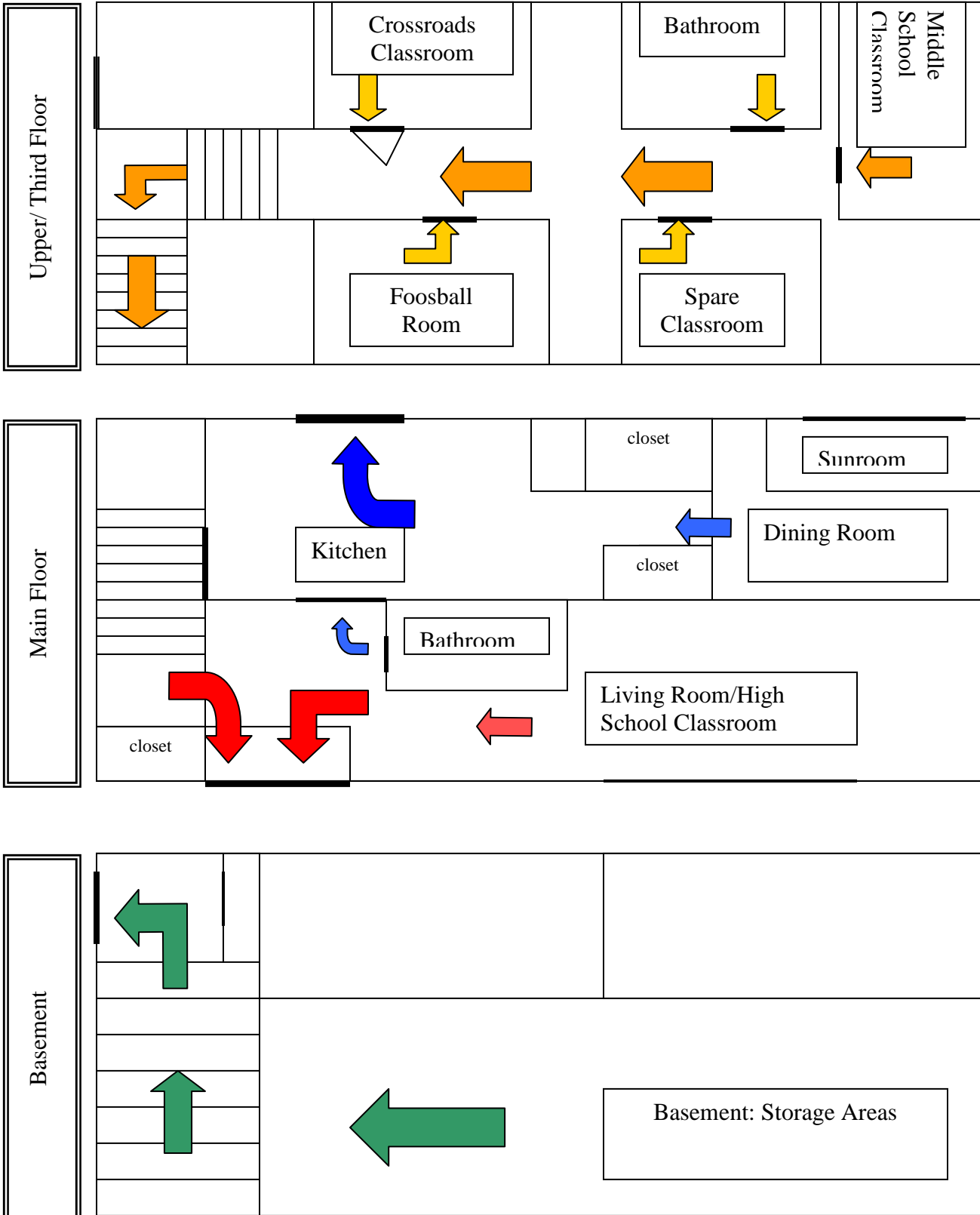
GENERAL:

1. **Policy**-The primary purpose for vehicles owned by the Church is to support spiritual activities. Use for these activities takes precedence over all other uses. Lowest priority for use of vehicles is for recreational activities. Vehicles are intended for use by Church organizations and not for individual use.
2. **Scheduling**-Individuals or organizations wishing to use vehicles for authorized purposes will submit a vehicle request form (located in church office.) To be considered valid, all information including certification of driver's credentials and pick up and return time must be completed. In case of conflict over scheduled use, spiritual activities take precedence over recreational uses. The chairperson of the Administrative Management Committee will have final judgment when prospective users cannot resolve the issue.
3. **Operator Qualifications**-All operators of Church vehicles must be at least 25 years of age and possess a current, valid Virginia motor vehicle operator's license. This requirement can not be waived.
4. **Operation**-Operators will appear in person to pick up a vehicle. They will present their operator's license to a member of the staff who will make a copy for Church records. Operators are expected to operate the vehicle safely and to obey all state and local laws. Operators are personally responsible for fines or other legal actions resulting from failure to comply with speed limits or other laws. Operators will insure that the vehicle is properly maintained while in their possession. On extended trips all fluid levels are to be checked at least daily and replenished as required. Upon return the operator will complete and submit a report which includes mileage and a report of incidents or damage to the vehicle.
5. **Exclusions**-Use of vehicles for administrative purposes is not authorized. Vehicles are not to be used by individuals as a convenience.

Responsible Organization: Administrative Management Committee

Appendix E

Emergency Evacuation Plan (301 House)



Appendix F

Use and Care of the Youth Building (301 House)

In order to insure that this facility is utilized in the most consistent and effective manner, the following guidelines have been established.

- All requests for use of the youth facility shall be made through the First Baptist Church office at 540-662-5367.
- No reservations will be taken for events during a scheduled worship service/Bible study.
- All persons using the youth facility are expected to comply to the following:
 - Close the doors and turn off the lights at the conclusion of the event.
 - Use only the rooms you have been assigned.
 - Be sure that the space you use is left the way it was found. We rely on the rooms being set-up for other church activities at the close of each day. Set-up and breakdown is the sole responsibility of the group using the room.
 - The kitchen and dining areas are to be cleaned immediately after the event by the individuals or groups using these facilities. Any personal dishes or food shall be removed after the scheduled event. Floors will be cleared of any liter. Spills in the kitchen shall be wet mopped. Carpeted areas are to be vacuumed if needed. If a function occurs on a Saturday, this is especially important due to the regular use of this building on Sunday. If custodial services are needed, please notify the church office immediately. A fee may be charged.
 - Children and youth are not allowed in the kitchen area without adequate supervision.
 - Use of candles requires extreme caution and supervision.
 - Trash must be placed in plastic garbage bags as provided by the church and taken out to the trash cans located on the alley side of the Children's Education Building.
 - Each group must provide its own table coverings, napkins, cups, plates, utensils and decorations.
 - Smoking is prohibited in all buildings of the church. No use of drugs or alcohol is permitted in any building or on the church grounds.