

**Youth and Child Protection Policy**

1. **Understanding and Identifying Physical and Sexual Abuse:**
	1. Definitions:
		1. Child Sexual Abuse – occurs when anyone engages in sexual contact or sexualized behaviors with a child. It includes any form of physical contact for a sexual purpose or any other behavior involving contact, which may be considered sexual behavior directed towards a child. It does not include normal affectionate behavior towards children and excludes normal health and hygiene care.
		2. Physical Abuse – occurs when anyone inflicts physical harm on a child or another person, or uses force that is unwarranted by the situation.
		3. Applicant – means all prospective Broadway Baptist Church (BBC) employees, contract workers or volunteers, who work with children.
		4. Employee – includes anyone who is hired or approved by BBC and is financially reimbursed for his/her services.
		5. Volunteer – is a member of BBC who offers his or her services to BBC willingly and without pay. A volunteer is required to be member of BBC for at least six months prior to offering his or her services to the church and must be in good standing. Examples of volunteers include but are not limited to; Children’s Sunday School superintendent and assistant, Sunday School and Bible School teachers, teachers assistants, Nursery workers, Youth Department workers, teachers and assistants, and parents acting as host, hostesses or chaperones.
		6. Department Leader – the volunteer or employee responsible for overseeing the identified children or youth activity of the church.
	2. Signs of Sexual and Physical Abuse:
		1. Physical Signs – include but are not limited to, lacerations and bruises; irritation, pain or injury to the genital area; difficulty with urination; discomfort with sitting; torn or bloody underclothing; venereal disease.
		2. Behavioral Signs – include but are not limited to, anxiety when approaching the church or nursery area, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults, sexual self-consciousness, “acting out” sexualized behavior, nightmares, withdrawn from church activities and friends.
		3. Verbal Signs – may include phrases like “I don’t like (a particular church worker)”, “(A church worker) does things to me when we’re alone”; “I don’t like to be alone with (A church worker)”; “(A church worker) touched me”.
2. **Screening Process** Screening is to be used with all applicants and church employees, full-time, part-time, compensated or volunteer and pastoral staff according to the guidelines set forth below, prior to working with children or youth.
	1. Screening Form – The “Youth and Child Worker/Volunteer Screening Form” will be completed prior to any initial children or youth assignment. Volunteers and employees only need to have one Screening Form on record with the church. The completed form shall be submitted to the church secretary for processing. In an effort to respect the confidentiality of each applicant, only the Chairman of the Administrative Committee and the Pastor will be able to review the background reports. Applications, screening forms and background reports will be kept in a confidential file by the church secretary.

* 1. Applicant Precautions – BBC recognizes the fallibility of all persons, either through personal choices, victimization, developmental issues or other factors, which may influence an applicant’s ability to carry out the safeguards in this policy. At a minimum, the following conditions may require additional consideration or possibly exclusion from the privilege and responsibility of working with children or youth at BBC:
		1. Adult survivors of child abuse should meet with the Pastor before working with children or youth.
		2. Misrepresenting personal information on the “Screening Form” will be considered a serious breach of trust and will impact the applicant’s consideration for working with children and youth.
		3. Those individuals with a past criminal history, especially crimes against others, may be excluded from working with children or youth. Individuals with felony convictions will automatically be excluded.
		4. Anyone driving a car, bus, van or other motor vehicle used to transport children or youth will be required to have their driving record checked by BBC.
		5. No one with a criminal history of abusing or neglecting children will be permitted to work with children or youth.
	2. Training – All volunteers or employees will attend an annual training session on child and youth protection safeguards. The Department Leaders shall be responsible for the following training to be done annually during the month of January:
		1. BBC’s Youth and Child Protection Policies and Procedures;
		2. Understanding appropriate and inappropriate touch and how to deal with touch which is inappropriate;
		3. Recognition of signs and symptoms of child abuse;
		4. Understanding of common “abuse and harassment” language;
		5. Other areas pertaining to reducing the risk of child sexual and physical abuse.

Evidence of attendance and successful understanding will be recorded and signed by the attendee and the Department Leader. The church secretary will maintain this document.

1. **Guidelines for Church Workers and Facilities**
	1. The “Two Person” Rule:
		1. No one-to-one activities with children/youth unless in full view of others.
		2. No one-to-one adult/youth sleeping arrangements in a retreat/overnight setting. On all overnight occasions, a minimum of two workers must be present at all times.
		3. When working with children (for activities other than Sunday School or Vacation Bible School), two adults, or one adult and one teenager, should be present for all activities. For the junior high or youth program, both workers must be at least 21 years old.
		4. If only one person is available, that person must immediately notify their Department Leader and request another screened and approved helper.
	2. Obtain Parent Permission – church workers should obtain the consent of the child’s parent or guardian before going out alone with the child/youth. Workers should notify an appropriate church leader of such a meeting in advance. For the youth mentor program or youth pastor at BBC, parent permission should be obtained annually.
	3. Classroom Doors – All classrooms and other areas used by children or youth must have a window in the door or the door must be left open during use unless two adults are present.
	4. Provide Adequate Personnel – Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or guardians.
	5. Use a Church Nursery Identification Procedure – Nursery personnel should clearly identify the child and the child’s parent or caretaker.
	6. Improper discipline, including corporal punishment or other forms of discipline which are physically or emotionally abusive, are prohibited.
2. **Reporting Procedures**

A. If there is suspicion of child abuse or child abuse is witnessed, the proper authorities must be contacted immediately.

**For allegations against volunteers or employees, contact the Blount County Sheriff’s Department at 273-5000.**

**To report any suspicion of child abuse or if the abuser is a parent or guardian, contact the Tennessee Department of Children's Services at 1-877-237-0004.**

B. Children and youth workers have a personal responsibility and a legal obligation to report any suspected abuse to the Blount County Sheriff’s Department and Tennessee Department of Child Services. Tennessee law mandates reporting by any person who has knowledge of physical or mental harm to a child if: (1) the nature of the harm reasonably indicates it was caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect; or (2) on the basis of available information, the harm reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

Tennessee law also mandates reporting by any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, regardless of whether it appears the child has sustained an injury as a result of the abuse.

C. The Pastor, or designee, is responsible for contacting the child or youth’s parents/guardians about any concerns, suspicious behaviors or suspected abuse.

D. All efforts at handling the incident must be documented.

E. If the alleged abuser is a volunteer or worker at the church, the Pastor will request support from at least one person knowledgeable in reporting guidelines and care of victims and perpetrators to assist in following up. At the Pastor’s discretion, other knowledgeable people may be asked to assist, but the number of persons involved should be limited for confidentiality reasons.

F. Any time a report to the Police or Department of Child Services is made, the Pastor must be informed.

G. The Pastor may also consult an attorney regarding compliance with state reporting laws, and cooperation with the investigation.

1. **Guidelines for Ministry after an Investigation:**
	1. If allegations are unsubstantiated by Children’s Services:
		1. Investigations shall cease.
		2. Every effort will be made to exonerate, reconcile and restore said member.
		3. The Pastor, with support from selected others, will respond with love, care and concern to the complainant(s) and to the accused and his/her family.
	2. If allegations/investigations demonstrate poor judgment or unwise behavior, but not child abuse:
		1. Grace and mercy will be extended in the context of repentance, accountability and justice.
		2. Education and/or counseling will be required.
		3. The person will be removed from church ministry settings until deemed appropriate by the Pastor.
		4. Actions taken will be communicated to the complainant, as appropriate and at the discretion of the Pastor.
	3. If the Children’s Services investigation substantiates child abuse:
		1. Ministry to the victim and family:
		* Ministry will be handled with sensitivity and care.
		* Pastoral care and spiritual support will be offered.
		* A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
		1. Ministry to the offender:
		* The individual will not be permitted to participate in child and youth ministries.
		* Specialized counseling will be required.
		* Pastoral care and spiritual support will continue for the offender and family during rehabilitation, if appropriate.
		* The Administrative Committee may recommend to the church body that the individual be removed from church membership. This would only be done after careful consideration was given to issues such as repentance, safety and the goal of reconciliation.
		1. Ministry to the congregation:
			* Trained people will be made available to assist anyone affected in the congregation by addressing their concerns in order to bring healing.
		2. Ministry to the accused/offender’s family:
			* Ministry will be offered with sensitivity and care providing support and prayer.
			* A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
	4. Records related to the suspected abuse will be kept confidentially in a permanent file.

END OF POLICY