

# New Bridge Church Winterset Child Protection Policies and Procedures

New Bridge Church recognizes the great privilege and responsibility inherent in the fact that parents entrust their children to our care. We have a responsibility to do our best to provide a safe environment, to teach them the truths of God, and train them in the way to live. Parents, we recommend that you play an active role in keeping your children safe within the church, by keeping them with you when they are not involved in activities, assisting them when they are moving between activities, and by making sure you know where your children are at all times.

We believe that we can best provide protection for the children and students that participate in our activities by creating and following these policies and procedures. The aim of this document is to clearly spell out the church's position so that all who are interested, especially staff, volunteers and potential volunteers, may know what is required and what is allowed. Although no policy or procedure can guarantee that children will be protected 100% of the time, we are committed to adhering to these policies in order to strive to provide the safest environment possible.

These policies and procedures are intended to cover child protection in a broad sense for First Baptist; specific programs or planned events may have specific policies and procedures that will be considered as an addition to these. Updates to this document will be made on an as needed basis and the most current copy can be obtained from the church office. If any of the items contained are unclear to you or if you have questions about what is required for any planned event, please ask the Child Protection Team. When questions arise, remember that it is better to err on the side of protecting the child.

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Guidelines for Interaction with Children and Youth

Child Abuse: Definitions, Examples, and Indicators

## Definitions of phrases used within this document:

**Abuse** – Iowa law defines abuse as physical injury, sexual exploitation, neglect, or emotional distress of children. **Paid staff** – Any pastor, associate pastor or other employee who is paid by the church.

**Adult** – Any person who has reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

**Child Protection Team** – A team of church members comprised of the Strengthening Team Leader, a New Bridge staff member, and other appointed members.

**Children/Students** – Student refers those of Junior or Senior High age. Children are those younger than students, down to birth.

**Church Leadership** – A team of various members of the pastoral staff, Church Life Team, and Deacons

**Paid staff** – Any pastor, associate pastor, or other employee who is paid by the church

**Parent** – Legal parent or guardian

**Volunteer** – Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of children/students.

## Hiring Practices

### Policy

To hire pastors and staff that have a God-centered life and that will be faithful stewards to the children and students that they serve.

### Procedures

1. All staff applicants, whether paid or volunteer, complete both an *Employment Application* and *Application for Ministry form*.
2. A criminal background check through our insurance company will be performed.
3. State sex offender registries will be checked through the internet.
4. Listed references will be contacted. Notes from each contact will be made and filed.
5. During the interview process of final candidates, any potential detrimental information or unusual employment gaps will be discussed and responses noted and filed.
6. Interviewing will be conducted with at least two interviewers. Our Child Protection Policies and Procedures will be reviewed.
7. Hiring decisions will be made by more than one person.
8. All information gathered and noted will become part of a permanent confidential file.

## Screening of Workers

### Policy

To enlist volunteer and paid workers that will fulfill New Bridge's goal to protect by serving as faithful stewards to the children and students in their care. To satisfy the concerns of parents that we have a proper screening process in place to protect their children/students.

### Procedures

1. Age of workers  
All workers responsible for children may not be under 14 years of age and all workers responsible for students may not be under 18 years of age. Adults over age 21 will assist all children and student workers.
2. Leadership criteria  
Workers that are responsible for children/students are required to have six (6) months of continuous involvement with First Baptist, be a church member, and must complete the *Application for Ministry form*. The screening process must be completed **PRIOR** to their volunteer experience. Exceptions may be made with the consensus of the Child Protection Team.
3. Worker criteria  
All children and student workers, regardless of the position they hold or the length of time or consistency that they plan to volunteer, must complete the *Application for Ministry form* and the screening process must be completed **PRIOR** to their volunteer experience.
4. Checking references  
A member of the Child Protection team will contact personal references listed on the screening form. Former churches may also be contacted. Notes from each contact will be made and filed.
5. Background check  
For all workers, the state sex offender registry will be checked, either Iowa's or the state/states where the person has lived for the past year.
6. Interviewing  
First-time workers must be interviewed by a Child Protection Team member or the specific program director (Ex. VBS, Sunday school, Preschool Worship and Children's Worship) where he or she wishes to work. This brief, informal interview will include a review of the Child Protection Policies and Procedures.
7. Confidentiality  
All information gathered and noted will become part of a permanent confidential file.
8. Training  
Volunteers will be required to participate in mandatory, ongoing training in child safety and protection as scheduled by the church and complete an acknowledgement form. A signed acknowledgement form will be kept on file.

## Addressing Known Sex Offenders

### Policy

To show God's love to known sexual offenders within our church while protecting those who attend church-sponsored activities. A known sexual offender may become or remain a member of New Bridge with strict adherence to our procedures.

### Procedures

1. Discovery  
The Child Protection team will conduct searches of the Iowa Sex Offenders Registry the first month of each quarter to identify any known sex offenders that attend church. Additional searches will be done when there is special emphasis on enlisting workers such as for VBS, AWANA, etc.
2. Personal Interview  
Our pastor and a member of the Child Protection Team will conduct an interview with a known sex offender to show our support in their restoration and parole/probation conditions as well as our commitment to the safety of the children, students and adults that participate in church activities. The pastor can inquire about specific ministry needs of the individual and how New Bridge can assist in the area of accountability. Non-public information will be kept in confidence.
3. Disclosure  
As an accountability measure, the identity of known sex offenders will be disclosed to the Church Life Team, Child Protection team and our deacons. Specific individuals within the church (Ex. Children Sunday School teachers) will also be notified of this public information, depending on their responsibilities and possible interaction with the sex offender.
4. Prohibited Participation  
A known adult sex offender cannot participate in any of New Bridge's child or student programs in any way. If they are inadvertently asked to participate, we expect them to immediately decline.
5. Escort  
A known sex offender may be assigned an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.

## Conducting Activities

### Policy

To provide a safe and healthy environment for the children and students who participate in New Bridge activities once a parent has delivered their child to or a student has arrived at the activity. To protect not only children and students entrusted to New Bridge activities, but also to protect our volunteers, leadership, and paid staff from false accusations of sexual abuse.

### Procedures

#### 1. Random Visits

There will be random, unscheduled visits by a member of the Child Protection Team or the leader of the activity (Ex. AWANA leader, VBS director) or a designee. One or more classes or sections may be visited each week and the visitor will remain there at the length of time needed to assess the safety of the children. Additional visits will be made to bathrooms, closets, offices, and other areas where safety is a concern.

#### 2. Two Adult Rule

Unless an emergency arises, at least two paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when children/students are present. A door will be left fully open if two adults are not present (Ex. one adult must leave the room temporarily). Speaking to a child/student in one-on-one situations should be conducted in a public setting where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.

#### 3. Adult Supervision During Activities

Two properly screened adults must be present in the following situations:

- Regularly scheduled or special event for children/students held at the church or Studio 316. A regularly scheduled event is one that is held on a regular, ongoing basis (Ex. Bible study, Jr. and Sr. High nights at Studio 316)  
A special event is one that is not regularly scheduled nor normally offered by the church (Ex. party, fellowship, lock-in)
- Special event for children/students not held at the church or Studio 316, but sponsored by the church or in the church's name (Ex. mission activity, community activity)
- Any time children/students are part of a church-sponsored event and leave the location during the event. (Ex. nature walk, go for snack)

#### 4. Childcare

Opportunities to watch younger children occur during special meetings, services, and fellowships. When watching younger children is involved, no fewer than two caregivers will have that duty. Two adults are preferred but at least one must be an adult and the other may be a student over 14. Student-aged caregivers are never to be left alone with children.

#### 5. Access to restroom

Children, less than 5 years old, will be accompanied to one of the single restrooms available within the church by staff or a volunteer who then wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the child.

#### 6. Illness

If childcare is requested for a child who presents symptoms of illness, care will be denied. If a child becomes ill while in childcare, parent will be notified immediately and the child is to be removed from church care by the parents.

#### 7. Distribution of Medicine

It is the policy of New Bridge Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medication policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (Ex. asthma or severe allergic reactions) or when the parent has filled out an authorization form.

#### 8. Behavior Problems

If a child becomes abusive or unmanageable, the parents will be notified with the contact numbers that they provide. After they have been contacted, two caregivers will remain with the child until they are picked up by their parent.

9. Transportation

Two adult workers or paid staff will be present if a child/student needs transportation.

10. Reporting Abuse

If a worker engages or is suspected of abuse with a child/student, they will be removed immediately from the situation and that position. See the **Reporting Abuse** section for further actions.

## Counseling of Children/Students

### Policy

To provide God-centered counseling in a caring, safe, and confidential atmosphere that protects both the counselor and the counselee.

### Procedures

1. Counseling scope and referrals  
Pastoral counseling will focus on premarital, spiritual/biblical counseling or counseling to determine an appropriate referral. Counseling for matters such as domestic abuse, mental health, and addiction rehabilitation should be referred to professional counselors who have expertise and certification in such areas.
2. Session limits  
Open-ended counseling relationships that last for extended periods of time will be avoided. At the start of the counseling, a limit on the total number of sessions and the length of each session will be established. If the counselee has needs that extend beyond the session limit, they will be referred to a professional counselor.
3. Location limits  
Counseling should only take place in the pastor's office or church building during regular business hours while another staff member is present in the building. The greater the visibility of the counseling sessions, without compromising confidentiality, the less likely there will be an allegation of misconduct. Avoid off-campus counseling, at a home or even in public places.
4. Opposite gender counseling  
To avoid allegations of impropriety, the location limits above will be followed. If confidentiality is not compromised, a same gender adult should be present during the counseling sessions.
5. Avoid boundary violations  
Counselors are advised to establish an accountability system with their spouse or another person to head off improprieties in counseling relationships. Be aware of the risk and know what types of situations to watch for:
  - Increasingly personal conversations
  - arranging meetings outside the normal counseling location or time
  - any physical contact beyond handshake greetings, such as inappropriate pats or hugs
  - expressed feelings for or fantasized relationships with the counselor or counselee
  - transporting the counselee without another adult in the car
  - a counselor who begins to hide feelings or meetings with a counselee from the counselor's accountability system, including spouse.
6. Confidentiality  
If notes or other documents are generated during the counseling session, this documentation will be kept in a locked location. The counselor should not discuss the substance of the sessions or conversations with the counselee with other parties, unless the counselee is in an abusive situation.
7. Reporting violations  
Any improprieties will be reported as described in the **Reporting Abuse** section.

## Reporting Abuse

### Policy

To provide a consistent response to alleged sexual abuse that is appropriately respectful to both the alleged victim and their family as well as to the alleged perpetrator, and to maintain confidentiality when possible. It is our policy to report all suspected cases of abuse; reporting suspected abuse should not be viewed as disloyal, but is an act of caring and concern.

### Procedures

**Items 1 – 4 will be carried out within 12 hours of the reporting. Items 5 –8 will be carried out within 48 hours.**

1. Workers are to immediately report suspicious activity or alleged abuse to the Child Protection Team. Team Member names are posted in the church office.
2. The contacted member will take immediate action, including notifying the child's/student's parents and completing the *Reporting Abuse Questionnaire* form.
3. If the alleged abuse may have caused physical injury, advise the child's/student's parents to have their child examined immediately by a qualified physician.
4. The alleged perpetrator will be removed from their staff or volunteer position immediately and informed of our procedures. If they are paid staff, they will be put on paid leave, pending further confidential investigation. He or she will not be allowed to work with children/students until the case is resolved.
5. New Bridge's insurance carrier will be notified and, if a law is broken or is in question, law officers will be called in. Church Leadership will cooperate fully with all authorities throughout the investigation, under the guidance of the church's attorney. Church staff and volunteers are not mandatory reporters in the state of Iowa even though they might be in their occupation.
6. A member of the Child Protection Team will communicate with staff and volunteers whose work is affected by the allegation.
7. An investigation will be undertaken by two members of the Child Protection Team who may meet with the alleged perpetrator and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
8. Two members of the Child Protection Team will meet with the child's parents, and with their permission, the child, for the purpose to understand the circumstances and nature of the allegations.
9. Every action taken in dealing with the situation will be carefully documented and filed, along with the *Reporting Abuse Questionnaire* form in confidential files within the church office.
10. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Child Protection Team members involved in the investigation will meet separately with three groups: the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim with his/her parents and with the Child Protection Team. A report of the investigation will be presented and recommendations for actions.
11. All media requests will be referred to the Child Protection Team members involved or the church's attorney. The church may make a public "position statement" with requests for further comments directed to the church's attorney.
12. Church member will be advised to avoid commenting publicly on the accusation to help reduce the chance of conflicting and contradictory statements being made which would further hurt those involved as well as the public image of the church
13. A designee of New Bridge will maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.

## ADDENDUM

### Guidelines for interaction with children & students

The presence of these policies may cause some to wonder just what action would be appropriate and what would be inappropriate. While it is impossible to present a comprehensive listing of every conceivable action, the information below may be helpful.

Child sexual abuse is defined as "...criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready." (Hammar, pg. 13).

It must also be understood that it is *always* the adult's responsibility to maintain appropriate behavior. It is *never* the child's responsibility to govern the adult's behavior.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve both touching and non-touching aspects. Some examples of each are listed below:

#### **Touching**

Fondling  
Oral, genital, and anal penetration  
Intercourse  
Forcible rape  
Allowing children to witness sexual activity

#### **Non-Touching**

Verbal Comments  
Pornographic materials  
Obscene phone calls  
Exhibitionism

If you have questions concerning any action, activity, or behavior contact the Pastor and Child Protection Team.

**Child Abuse:  
Definitions, Examples and Indicators**

*Child Abuse is any act committed by a person who is in a position of trust which is not accidental and harms or threatens to harm a child. This person is most often an adult member of the child's family, but may be any trusted person who is more powerful. Abuse can be verbal, physical or sexual and always results in emotional abuse as well. Examples and indicators of such abuse are as follows:*

**Physical Abuse**

*Examples:*

- Assault with an implement
- Bullying, shaking or slapping
- Burning or scalding
- Kicking or strangling

*Possible Indicators:*

- Marks that cannot be explained
- Lacerations or bruises
- Hostile, aggressive behavior
- Self-destructive behavior
- Signs of repeated trauma

**Sexual Abuse**

*Examples:*

- Sexual contact above or beneath clothing (anything from touching to intercourse)
- Exposing children to or using them for pornography
- Exposure to sexually explicit acts
- Use of explicit sexual language

*Possible Indicators:*

- Sexualized or promiscuous behavior
- Pseudo maturity and precocious knowledge of sexual acts
- Substance abuse and other self-destructive behavior (hostile, aggressive, fearful, withdrawn and/or secretive)
- Running away, setting fires
- Injuries to vagina or genitals
- Painful urination or defecation
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Children who sexually abuse other children

**Verbal Abuse**

*Examples:*

- Yelling, ridiculing, and demeaning behavior
- Use of sarcasm
- Threats of violence

*Possible Indicators:*

- Confusion and isolation
- Low self esteem
- Perpetuating abuse
- Self-destructive behavior

**Emotional Abuse**

*Examples:*

- Isolation, such as shutting a child in a closet
- Knowingly permitting substance abuse
- Extreme discipline
- Inadequate nurturing
- Emotional ramifications of other forms of abuse

*Possible Indicators:*

- Speech or eating disorders
- Poor physical development or failure to thrive
- Lack of self esteem
- Hyperactive or disruptive behavior
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Extreme approval seeking
- Inability to be autonomous
- Hostile, verbally abusive behavior

**Neglect**

*Examples:*

- Abandonment
- Refusal to seek medical treatment
- Inadequate supervision
- Health hazards in the home
- Ignoring a child's need for contact, affirmation
- Permitting chronic truancy

*Possible Indicators:*

- Failure to thrive
- Inappropriate dress for weather
- Chronic hunger or fatigue
- Dirty and unkempt clothes and body
- Unattended medical condition
- Depression and passivity

(Metropolitan Lutheran Ministries)