

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KINGSTOWNE  
BENCHMARK BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP  
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION PLAN**

The sexual abuse of children is a significant issue in today's society. As recent headlines have shown, even churches are impacted by this menace. A single incident of abuse within a church can be devastating not only for the victim, but also for the congregation and the community. Fortunately, there are some simple, yet effective steps that a church can take to significantly reduce the risk of an incident.

This document presents the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan for the First Baptist Church of Kingstowne (FBCK), Kingstowne, VA. The plan guides FBCK's efforts to provide a safe and caring environment for children. FBCK's commitment to the plan assures families, church workers, the congregation, and the community that the church has taken steps towards keeping its children safe.

The plan is adapted from material presented in *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse*, by James F. Cobble, Jr.; Richard R. Hammar; and Steven W. Klipowicz (2003, Church Law & Tax Report). The plan covers all facets, activities, and ministries of FBCK, including FBCK's Korean Mission. The plan also covers activities and ministries of Benchmark Baptist Fellowship (BBF), FBCK's mission work in Fredericksburg, VA. Responsibility for execution of the plan is vested in the church's Education Committee. (As it relates to BBF, responsibility for execution of the plan is delegated to BBF's Education Committee.) The plan will be reviewed and updated periodically, as necessary.

FBCK's child abuse prevention activities can be divided into three main areas of focus: (1) screening candidate workers; (2) supervising workers and structuring activities to minimize the risk of an incident; and (3) training workers and educating the church on child sexual abuse and its impacts. These focus areas are explained in more detail in the following sections. The plan also details procedures for reporting incidences of suspected abuse (whether or not the incident involves a church worker) and procedures for responding to an alleged incident.

## **1 Screening Workers**

The church will screen candidate church workers who will have contact with children, in order to identify potential risks and issues. The screening program provides for several levels of screening, commensurate with the nature of the worker's responsibilities. All church workers who will have contact with children, whether as paid employees or volunteer workers, are subject to the screening program. The screening program will be administered by the Education Committee.

Table 1 summarizes the screening levels and criteria.

**TABLE 1. SCREENING LEVELS AND CRITERIA**

	Level of Screening		
	No Screening Required	Standard Screen Required	Extended Screen Required
Degree of contact with minors	No contact with minors except in group settings with direct supervision	Contact with minors in group settings without direct supervision; includes the potential for some contact in unsupervised settings	Frequent unsupervised or extended one-on-one contact with minors
Typical positions	Child care worker Classroom aide (note 1)	Child care worker Teacher Sunday School Junior Chapel Discovery VBS	Clergy Deacon SS Superintendent Youth director Camp counselor Bus worker
<b>Threshold Requirements (section 1.2)</b>			
Church member?	•	•	•
Six-month rule?	•	note 2	note 2
<b>Screen process (section 1.3)</b>			
Written application?		•	•
Verify references?		•	•
Personal interview?		•	•
<b>Extended screen (section 1.4)</b>			
County records?			•
On-line registries?			•
State records?			note 3
National records?			note 3
<b>Training (section 3.1)</b>			
At least yearly	Optional	Mandatory	Mandatory

Note 1: Unscreened workers may serve in these positions under the direct supervision of a screened worker.

Note 2: Six-month rule may be waived, based on prior church work experience and results of reference checks.

Note 3: Checks of state and national records database will only be required when the committee determines it is warranted.

## 1.1 Threshold Criteria

All candidates for positions involving contact with minors must meet two threshold criteria:

- They must be members of FBCK, and
- They must have been attending FBCK regularly for at least six months. This requirement may be waived based on the candidate's prior church work experience and the results of the reference checks.

## 1.2 Standard Screening Process

Screening is required for all workers who have contact with minors in group settings without direct supervision, including the potential for some contact in unsupervised settings. Typical positions requiring screening include teachers (Sunday School, Junior Chapel, Discovery Program, and Vacation Bible School) and child care workers.

The standard screening process will consist of the following steps:

- The candidate fills out a written application, supplying personal information, background information, and references. The candidate also completes and signs a background investigation consent and liability release form.
- The committee checks the candidate's references and background information. If any issues or discrepancies are discovered, the committee will investigate and resolve them.
- The committee conducts a personal interview with the candidate.

When the screening process is complete, the committee will use the collected information to verify that the candidate is appropriate for the position of responsibility for which they are being considered.

Screened workers must attend a child sexual abuse prevention training session at least once a year (see section 3.1).

## 1.3 Extended Screening Process

When a worker may have frequent unsupervised or one-on-one contact with minors, a more in-depth screen is required. Typical positions requiring the extended screen include clergy, members of the Education Committee, Youth Program Directors, directors/leaders in Education ministries (Sunday School, Junior Chapel, Discovery, VBS), camp counselors, and bus ministry workers.

When additional screening is required, the committee will conduct background checks for criminal records. Records that could be searched include the following:

- County criminal records for Fairfax County (Spotsylvania County, for positions at BBF) and any counties of residence for the last 10 years (to include any surrounding counties as appropriate).
- Sex offender registries for Virginia and any states of residence for the last 10 years (to include any surrounding states as appropriate).

- State criminal records for Virginia and any states of residence for the last 10 years (to include any surrounding states as appropriate).
- National criminal records databases and FBI records.

In deciding which records to check, the committee will weigh the accuracy and comprehensiveness of each records search versus the cost and difficulty of the search. For most cases, checks of county criminal records and on-line sex offender registries will be sufficient. Checks of state criminal records, national criminal records, and FBI records are generally less accurate, less comprehensive, and more difficult to use, and therefore will only be used when the committee determines it is warranted. The committee may use a commercial background checking service to perform the checks, if appropriate.

#### **1.4 Use of Unscreened Workers**

Screening is recommended but not required for workers who will have no contact with minors except in group settings under direct supervision. Typical positions that do not require screening are (a) classroom aides who are assisting screened teachers in an open classroom, and (b) child care providers assisting a screened child care provider in an open room. However, candidates for these positions must meet the threshold criteria of section 1.2. Unscreened workers are encouraged but not required to attend a child sexual abuse prevention training session at least once a year (see section 3.1).

#### **1.5 Updating Information**

Applications will be reviewed and updated at least once a year, in conjunction with the August church election of officers and teachers.

#### **1.6 Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

Comprehensive records will be kept throughout the screening process. These records include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Applications,
- Signed background investigation consent and liability release form,
- Correspondences with references (including notes from verbal conversations),
- Summaries of personal interviews, and
- Results of records checks.

All records and information will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed or discussed outside of the committee without proper authorization. Records will be stored in a secure location, such as a locked file cabinet, with access controlled by the committee. Once a worker is no longer a member of FBCK, or for candidates that apply and are not given a position (whether or not due to the screening process), all confidential forms and documents will be placed in a sealed envelope and kept secured.

## **2 Supervising Workers and Structuring Activities to Minimize Risk**

FBCK is committed to structuring activities and programs and supervising workers to minimize the risk of an incident occurring. To this end, it has taken a two-fold approach:

- Implement a set of supervision policies that covers most situations, and

- Conduct an on-going effort to assess the risks of each activity, and to reduce risks where necessary by increasing supervision and/or restructuring the activity.

These are explained in more detail in the following sections.

## 2.1 Supervision Policies for Church Activities

No set of policies can cover every situation that the church might face. However, the policies in this section were developed to cover most common situations. These policies ensure appropriate supervision of children and accountability of workers during FBCK activities and programs.

- Classroom and childcare activities will be done in open rooms, when possible. An open room is defined as one (a) with a window that permits viewing from outside the room, and (b) in which supervisors and others can have unannounced access to the room.
- Classroom and childcare activities require at least one screened worker per room, when done in open rooms during regularly established times. Classroom aides, childcare assistants, and other unscreened workers must remain under the direct supervision of a screened worker. When an open room cannot be used, at least two screened, unrelated workers are required.
- Any organized activity involving minors requires the participation of at least two screened, unrelated workers if either (a) the activity takes place off of church property, or (b) the activity takes place during a time when the church as a body is not meeting.
- Any organized activity involving minors requires the participation of at least two screened, unrelated workers, one of which has passed an extended background screen, if (a) the activity occurs in a home, (b) the activity involves an overnight stay, including lock-ins, camping trips, hotel stays, or church camp, (c) the activity involves changing clothes or becoming undressed (such as in locker rooms or dressing rooms), or (d) the activity occurs in an isolated environment, such as a building set off by itself or a park that has secluded areas.
- Transporting minors (not accompanied by parents/guardian) to/from activities or between home and church requires at least two screened, unrelated workers. If a worker needs to escort a child to or from the vehicle, the workers must conduct the escort in such a way that both workers have full sight of the minors and each other at all times.
- Any counseling, discipline, private tutoring, or other one-on-one activity with a minor will be done by a screened worker in an open room or in full view of another screened worker. Furthermore, the worker conducting the counseling (or other one-on-one activity) will advise at least one other screened, unrelated worker about the activity. When feasible, one-on-one activities will be conducted by a worker who has gone through an extended screen.

Table 2 summarizes the screened worker requirements of these policies.

**TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF SUPERVISION/ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES**

<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>SCREENED WORKERS REQUIRED</b>
Classroom and childcare (in open room)	At least 1
Classroom and childcare (not in open room)	At least 2
Activity is - off church property, or - not during regular hours	At least 2
Activity - takes place in a home - involves overnight stay - involves disrobing/change of clothes - takes place in isolated location	At least 2 (one of which has extended background screen)
Transporting minors	At least 2
Counseling or other one-on-one activity (in open room)	At least 1 (with notification of a 2 <sup>nd</sup> )

The Education Committee will have the authority to exempt an activity from a policy, depending on the particular circumstances, but only after a risk analysis has been performed to ensure that exempting the activity does not unduly increase the risk of an incident occurring.

**2.2 Risk Assessment and Reduction**

FBCK will continually monitor and evaluate its programs and activities to assess the risks they present. This assessment process will include an examination of three primary interrelated risk factors:

- **Isolation.** Most, but not all, sexual abuse occurs in isolated settings. As a general rule, risk increases as isolation increases. Four subfactors that affect isolation are: (1) the number of people present, (2) the time of the activity, (3) the location of the activity, and (4) the physical arrangements.
- **Accountability:** Child sexual abuse can only happen in settings when there is a lack of proper accountability. In general, risk decreases as the degree of accountability increases. Three factors that affect accountability are: (1) personal character and integrity, (2) number of people present, and (3) openness and approval associated with the activity.
- **Power and Control.** In general, risk increases when there is an imbalance of power, authority, influence, and control between a potential abuser and a potential victim. Example situations in which imbalances might occur include: (1) young people with significant age differences (5 or more years) are paired together, or (2) an adult exerts power or control over a minor without corresponding oversight by another adult.

Once risks have been assessed, measures can be taken to reduce any risks that are too high. Typically, two methods can be employed, alone or in combination:

- Increase supervision. This could be done in a variety of ways, including (a) increasing the number of adults participating, (b) increasing the number of screened supervisors or using supervisors that have passed an extended screen, or (c) moving from general supervision (in which the focus is on the group at large) to specific supervision (which focuses more on specific individuals and actions). Increased supervision could also mean an increased degree of accountability, such as alerting church leaders about the activity and providing details in advance about what is planned.
- Restructure the activity. Often, activities can be restructured to reduce risk, without substantially changing the focus of the activity. Possible areas to consider include: (a) changing meeting times or locations, (b) making alternate transportation plans, or (c) changing the age groups used within the activity.

This on-going process of risk assessment and reduction will, in general, not be a formal undertaking, but rather an inherent part of the planning of each activity.

### **3 Training and Education**

#### **3.1 Church Workers**

FBCK will conduct regular training for church workers on child sexual abuse and this prevention plan. Areas to be covered by the training include:

- The definition of child abuse,
- Sexual and physical abuse symptoms,
- What constitutes inappropriate conduct,
- The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct,
- Church policies that govern working with minors,
- The screening process and the rationale behind it, and
- Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct.

All screened workers must attend a training session at least annually. In addition, on-line and take-home material will be made available to workers. Successful completion of on-line and take-home training material may be used in lieu of the training session, upon approval of the chairman of the Education Committee. Copies of material used in training sessions will be kept on file. FBCK will maintain accurate records of the training that each worker receives.

#### **3.2 Congregation**

FBCK will provide information to its congregation on the problem of child sexual abuse, how to detect and report suspected abuse, and steps that parents and families can take to reduce the risk of abuse. This includes providing literature (such as brochures and flyers) in an open public area, and placing periodic notices in the church bulletin about the availability of the literature. The church will also provide support and counseling for adult survivors of sexual abuse.

FBCK will provide information to its congregation on its Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan and the actions that the church is taking to provide a safe environment for the children placed in its care.

#### **4 Reporting Procedures**

This section gives the responsibilities and procedures for reporting incidences of suspected child abuse. These procedures should be followed whether or not the incident involves a church worker.

##### **4.1 Mandatory Reporting Responsibility**

“Mandatory reporters” are those persons that are required by law to report any incidences of suspected child abuse to state or local agencies. In Virginia, mandatory reporters are defined under Virginia Code §63.2-1509(A), which says in part:

*“The following persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately... Any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children.”*

Under this statute, church teachers and youth workers **might** be considered mandatory reporters. It is FBCK policy that church workers report any suspected incidences of child abuse within the guidelines of the mandatory reporting law, whether or not they would legally be considered mandatory reporters.

Under Virginia’s mandatory reporting law:

- A report must be made if there is reason to suspect that a child has been abused.
- The report must be made to the local department of the city or county in which the child resides or in which the suspected abuse occurred, or alternately to the Virginia state hot-line.
- The report must be made within 72 hours of the first suspicion of child abuse.
- A reporter is immune from any civil or criminal liability on account of the report, unless they acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

##### **4.2 Line of Reporting**

Any incidences of suspected child abuse will be reported to the chairman of the Education Committee, or as appropriate or necessary, to another member of the Education Committee. The Education Committee will be responsible for reporting the incident to county or state agencies, notifying the Pastor, and determining a plan for responding to the allegation (see section 5). The committee will also notify the person making the initial report, to verify that mandatory reporting requirements have been met.

##### **4.3 Reporting Hotlines**

The following numbers may be used to report incidences of suspect child abuse:

- Fairfax County Child Protective Services: (703)324-7400
- Spotsylvania Social Services: (540)507-7898

- Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (in state): (800)552-7096
- Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (out of state): (804)786-8536.

#### **4.4 Pastoral Privilege**

Depending upon circumstances, information given to church leaders about suspected child abuse may be considered privileged communications (VA code §19.2-271.3 and §8.01-400). Information is considered privileged if it meets the following criteria:

- It is given to a regular minister of the church in his professional capacity and in the discharging of the functions of his office. For the purposes of this plan, a regular minister is understood to be one who has been ordained.
- It is communicated in a confidential manner.
- The person giving the information is seeking spiritual counsel and advice relative to the information.

As of January 1, 2007, such privileged communications are explicitly exempt from child abuse mandatory reporting requirements (VA code §63.2-1509(A)).

Should a church leader learn of a potential child abuse situation through privileged communications, he will take whatever actions he can to secure the safety and welfare of the child involved, to the extent possible without breaking the sanctity of the privileged communications.

Information not meeting the above criteria is not considered privileged. Examples include:

- Information given or obtained as part of the screening process.
- Reports or confessions of potential abuse made to church workers, unless meeting the criteria above.
- Reports of suspected abuse being made through the reporting chain.

While not considered privileged communications, such information will still be treated with appropriate confidentiality.

Should a situation arise in which it is not clear whether a communications is privileged or whether disclosing of the information is proper, the church's lawyer will be consulted.

## **5 Response Procedures for an Alleged Incident**

This prevention plan greatly reduces the risk that an incident of child abuse should occur within the church. Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100 percent effective. The response procedures in this section will be followed should an allegation of misconduct be made against a church worker.

### **5.1 Underlying Principles**

A number of underlying principles will be used to guide the church's response:

- All allegations will be taken seriously.

- Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church's attorney.
- Adequate care will be shown for the well-being of victims and their families.

## 5.2 Response Steps

The following steps will be taken in response to an allegation of misconduct. The Education Committee will oversee the church's response, in consultation with the Pastor and other church leaders. Additional guidance can be found in *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse*.

- *Provide a caring response to the initial allegation.* This will focus on three simple points: (1) that the complaint is being taken seriously; (2) that procedures exist for such complaints and that those procedures will be followed; and (3) that the church desires to extend care and support in whatever way possible to the victim and the victim's family.
- *Document the allegation.* The church will collect and record basic information about the complaint to verify that there is sufficient substance to make a report and to assist investigators.
- *Seek assistance from professionals.* The church will immediately contact its insurance representative and its lawyer for assistance.
- *Provide support to the victim.*
- *Fulfill state reporting obligations,* in accordance with section 4 of this plan.
- *Decide on options regarding the alleged perpetrator.* Most likely, the alleged perpetrator will be temporarily relieved of any duties involving contact with minors and restricted from any activities involving contact with minors while the case is being investigated. The alleged perpetrator may also be subject to church disciplinary measures in accordance with the church constitution.
- *Respond to congregational concerns.* Information will be shared with the congregation as deemed necessary, while placing a high priority on the rights to privacy of both the victim and the accused. Any meetings for this purpose will be restricted to church members only.
- *Respond to the media.* As necessary, the church will respond to the media. A single spokesperson will be appointed by the committee, and all requests for information will be coordinated through the spokesperson.

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**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KINGSTOWNE  
BENCHMARK BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP  
APPLICATION FOR CHURCH WORKER POSITION**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Any other names you are known by \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ Driver license # \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Church position(s) being considered for: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of screen requested:

- Standard Screen (appropriate for teachers, childcare workers, and similar positions)
- Extended Screen [includes criminal background checks] (required for leaders, directors, counselors, and similar positions)

*Instructions: The following information will be used to confirm the trust being placed in you. Please answer as completely and truthfully as possible. If additional space is needed or any answers require more explanation, please attach to this form.*

**RESIDENCE HISTORY**

List where you have lived over the last 10 years, starting with your current address.

Dates	Address History
_____ to present	Street _____ Apt _____ City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____
_____ to _____	Street _____ Apt _____ City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____
_____ to _____	Street _____ Apt _____ City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

List your employment history for the last 10 years, starting with your current employer. If you were self-employed, unemployed, a student, or worked as a homemaker, please note so.

Dates	Employment
_____ to present	Employer _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Position held _____ Name of supervisor _____
_____ to _____	Employer _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Position held _____ Name of supervisor _____
_____ to _____	Employer _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Position held _____ Name of supervisor _____

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**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP HISTORY**

List any churches that you held membership or attended regularly over the last 10 years. Include any offices or positions of responsibility you held, and the reason you left.

Dates	Church Membership/Attendance
_____ to present	Church _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Positions held _____ Reason left _____
_____ to _____	Church _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Positions held _____ Reason left _____
_____ to _____	Church _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Positions held _____ Reason left _____

**REFERENCES**

List references that can provide information on your character and integrity.

Type of reference	Reference
Member of FBCK	Name _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Relationship to reference _____
Relative not living with you	Name _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Relationship to reference _____
Co-worker, neighbor, or friend	Name _____ Phone _____ Street _____ City/State/Zip _____ Relationship to reference _____

List any criminal convictions (other than minor traffic violations). If none, write *none*.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been arrested, tried, or convicted of a criminal offense of a sexual nature?

No                       Yes (*attach explanation*)

Why would you like to have this position of trust?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I certify that the information contained in this application is true and accurate.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KINGSTOWNE  
BENCHMARK BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP**

**BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CONSENT AND  
LIABILITY RELEASE FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize First Baptist Church of Kingstowne, Kingstowne, VA, and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, current and past employment, education, credit history, criminal or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information on my Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for volunteering/employment now, and if applicable, during my tenure of volunteerism/employment with First Baptist Church of Kingstowne.

I release First Baptist Church of Kingstowne and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or law suits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

The following is my true and complete legal name and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Full Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ (for identification purposes only)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_