



## CHILD SAFETY POLICY

# UPDATE

October 2009

The safety of our children, youth, and special needs people is important to us. The possibility of sexual abuse is especially real in our time and culture. Accordingly, the Elders of FBC approved a revised and expanded Child Safety Policy in September 2008.

Implementation of the policy began in 2008 and “rolled out” in 2009, including:

- background checks;
- volunteer applications by people “new” to FBC;
- coaching of ministry leaders;
- formal training for staff, volunteers, parents, and others;
- education of our congregation at large.

The Elders approved minor revisions in October 2009. This edition and relevant forms are available on our web site, [www.fbccincy.org](http://www.fbccincy.org).

**The currently approved policy will be fully enforced effective January 1, 2010.**

This policy is administered by the Child Safety Policy Team (CSPT), consisting of people appointed by the Elders. A list of current CSPT members is posted on our web site and in our building. Please direct your Child Safety questions, concerns and suggestions to CSPT members.

**We urge everyone in the FBC Fellowship to read the Child Safety Policy, to learn its principles and key provisions, to get trained in Child Safety, and to help our staff and volunteers provide a safer and more secure environment at FBC.**

For the Child Safety Policy Team,  
Lyle Kelly

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Revision approved by Board of Elders on 19 October 2009



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## PURPOSE

Faith Bible Church's main objective in implementing this child safety policy is to guard against child abuse by providing:

- An environment that fosters healthy relationships and spiritual learning and growth.
- A safer and more secure environment for all children who are entrusted to our care, thereby reducing the risk of child abuse.
- Clear and shared guides to appropriate behavior by staff and by volunteers as they minister to children.

## DEFINITIONS

Within this document, the following definitions will apply.

**ABUSED CHILD** – A child who is the victim of sexual activity, is endangered or neglected, or suffers physical injury, mental injury, or death other than by accident. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional or mental, and may be the result of actions or a failure or refusal to act.

**ACTIVITY LEADER** – The worker who is in charge of a given ministry activity.

**ASSISTANT / HELPER** – A person who is present to assist a worker or workers in an FBC ministry or activity. This person may be a staff member or a volunteer.

**CHILD** – Any person who participates as a child or student in an FBC activity in the ministry range from Nursery to Senior High, or any Special Needs person who is entrusted to an FBC ministry by a parent.

**CSPT** – FBC's Child Safety Policy Team.

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FELLOWSHIP – FBC Family and Regular Attenders.

PARENT – The custodial parent or legal guardian of a child (or any adult surrogate whom the custodial parent or legal guardian approves and designates to the CSPT, ministry heads, or activity leaders). This EXCLUDES all adults who do not have a legal right of access to the child.

QUALIFIED WORKER – A worker who has completed satisfactorily the initial screening process and all subsequent ongoing screening requirements – or the equivalent as determined by the CSPT.

STAFF – A paid FBC employee.

WORKER – A person with primary responsibility for providing care and/or oversight of a child or children in an FBC ministry or activity. A worker may be a staff member or a volunteer.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Ultimate responsibility for the establishment of policies relating to child safety at FBC rests with the Board of Elders, who has approved this revised policy and may change its provisions at any time.

### The Child Safety Policy Team.

On behalf of the Board of Elders, the design, implementation and interpretation of this policy is delegated to the Child Safety Policy Team (CSPT), consisting of individuals appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the Board of Elders. When possible the CSPT will include at least one pastor, one elder, and representatives from the ministries or departments affected.

The members of the CSPT will appoint one of the team to serve as chair. This appointment may change at the pleasure of the CSPT. The chair will coordinate team activities, will serve as primary contact with those outside the team, and may serve as CSPT administrator.

### The Role of Others in FBC.

Other people with special interests or expertise to offer may work with or advise the CSPT.

This policy will be implemented with the cooperation of FBC staff, ministry heads, and activity leaders under the guidance of the CSPT. With the CSPT's approval, guidelines may be created by the various ministries for their specific situations.

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We encourage all people concerned about child safety to:

1. Ask themselves, “What can I do or recommend to reduce the risk of abuse or harm in this situation?”
2. Convey observations and/or suggestions to the elders, staff, CSPT members, ministry heads, activity leaders, and/or workers.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

The names, titles, and contact numbers of the current members of the CSPT will be readily available on the FBC premises, and may be posted elsewhere as appropriate.

Information files on operational activities, and screening and training records for paid and volunteer workers, are managed by the CSPT and are considered confidential. A worker may have access to his or her records upon request to the CSPT; otherwise, only the CSPT and active elders will have access to these records for FBC purposes. A file pertaining to a specific worker who leaves the Fellowship will be placed in a sealed, dated envelope and retained indefinitely as evidence of due diligence. It may be re-opened if the person returns to the Fellowship. The Elders will ensure that the CSPT files are audited annually to verify compliance with the provisions of this policy.

If a worker requests to review his or her records, the review will occur at the church. The original records will remain in church custody. Upon written request by the worker, a copy of his or her records may be made for the worker by the church.

The CSPT will review this policy, and revise it if needed, at least every two years. For each edition of this policy to be effective, it must be approved by the Board of Elders.

The CSPT will administer a Child Safety line item in the FBC General Budget.

## **SCOPE**

This policy recognizes four types of situations with varying degrees of responsibility:

1. **CONTROLLED.** These are ministries or activities which are organized and supervised by FBC workers and where those FBC workers have primary control of children’s location and activities, whether on FBC premises or off-site. In a CONTROLLED situation this policy and relevant ministry policies apply in full.
2. **DISCLAIMED.** These are FBC ministries or activities which are organized by individuals in the FBC fellowship, whether on FBC premises or off-site, where parents (or their designees or representatives) have primary or substantial control of children’s location and activities. In a DISCLAIMED situation the FBC ministry head or activity leader is expected to publish a disclaimer of FBC

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responsibility and to provide a copy to the CSPT. Sample disclaimer: “Families and individuals participating in this activity assume responsibility for the supervision and safety of the children they bring to the activity.”

3. **PRIVATE.** These are activities conducted on FBC premises with FBC permission but organized and supervised by organizations or groups not formally associated with FBC. In a PRIVATE situation, an authorized representative of the organization or group must sign a Liability Release covering the ministry or activity. A copy of the Liability Release should be provided to the CSPT. FBC, under no circumstances, assumes responsibility for supervision, control, or safety of the children who may be involved in these PRIVATE activities. Such responsibility shall be the responsibility of the parents and of the organization hosting such PRIVATE activities.
4. **CASUAL.** These are scenarios wherein children are present on the FBC premises informally and in the company of parents or others, where those parents or others have primary or substantial control of children’s location and activities. FBC, under no circumstances, assumes responsibility for the supervision, control, or safety of the children who may be involved in these CASUAL scenarios. Such responsibility shall be the responsibility of the parents of the children.

## BIG PICTURE

There are four operational dimensions of this policy, each of which requires diligent execution and record-keeping:

- Screening of staff and volunteers.
- Supervision of ministry activities.
- Education and training of staff, volunteers, and others in the FBC Fellowship.
- Response and reporting for alleged or actual incidents or policy violations.

## SCREENING

Screening helps to ensure that only qualified people of good reputation have ministry access to our children.

Eligibility requirements for workers from the FBC Fellowship.

Ordinarily, workers must be Family or Regular Attenders of FBC with significant participation for at least six months before they can work with children.

On a case by case basis the CSPT, along with consultation with others as needed, may grant an exception to the six month participation policy.

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To become qualified, all workers must complete a formal application process (defined below). All workers must complete their application process within one year of beginning the process.

**At the outset of this policy the CSPT will use an expedited application process defined by, and on a timetable determined by, the CSPT for (1) FBC staff and (2) workers who have served for over two years at FBC in ministry to children.**

Eligibility requirements for workers obtained from outside FBC.

Workers obtained from outside the FBC Fellowship, whether compensated or not, must have approval by the CSPT prior to service to FBC.

For such a worker, the CSPT will obtain confirmation of qualifications equivalent to the FBC screening process (defined below) from the proposed worker, the worker's employer(s), and/or others as appropriate.

Age eligibility requirements for ALL workers and assistants.

Workers must be age 21 or older, except as allowed explicitly in this policy or in an FBC ministry's policy approved by the CSPT.

Assistants must be assessed by the ministry head or activity leader to be sufficiently mature for the permitted duty.

Other eligibility requirements for ALL workers and assistants.

FBC reserves the right, at any time, to conduct fingerprinting and/or in-depth investigation of any applicant, worker, or assistant.

FBC reserves the right to disqualify any individual who does not satisfactorily complete the initial or ongoing screening process.

The screening process for FBC workers.

Workers must complete a formal application process, which includes at least the following elements:

1. Completed and signed FBC application form.
2. Completed and signed FBC background check consent form (applies only if age 18 or older).
3. Completed and signed acceptance of a dated edition of the FBC Child Safety Policy and of the relevant FBC ministries' policies (if any).
4. Personal interview by the relevant FBC ministry head or designee.
5. Completed reference checks.

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6. Completed background check(s) (applies only if age 18 or older).
7. Completed motor vehicle check (applies only to workers likely to drive with children as passengers to or from “controlled” activities).

References must include all organizations who serve children and with which the applicant worked or volunteered within the past five years, and at least one person (unrelated to the applicant) who has been part of the FBC Fellowship for at least one year.

For each applicant, the CSPT (personally or through designees) will:

- Verify that all requested elements are provided by the applicant.
- Check all data in the application, looking for gaps and inconsistencies.
- Conduct an in-person interview, record explanations of gaps or inconsistencies, and explain any recommended exceptions to our expectations. If possible, the personal interview will be conducted in the presence of more than one person, so that input and opinions can be compared.
- Contact all references and record the results, noting especially any information requested but not verified or obtained.
- Conduct the appropriate background check(s) and record the results.
- Determine and record the applicant’s eligibility.
- Notify the applicant about the outcome of the process.

Each worker will also be expected to attend an initial formal Child Safety training session, and subsequent update sessions, conducted in a group (such as a teachers’ meeting) or one-on-one with the CSPT or a person designated by the CSPT.

## **SUPERVISION**

Supervision helps to ensure that risky situations do not develop in ministry.

### Awareness of Risk

In situations involving children, there are always three abuse risk factors involved:

- Isolation.
- Accountability.
- Power and Control.

FBC workers and participants should continually evaluate these risk factors in their situation, and when possible, increase supervision when risk increases.

### Coverage

Each activity will have a clearly designated worker in charge: the “activity leader.”

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There should be at least one qualified worker and one additional worker or assistant present at an activity covered by this policy. Each ministry will decide on appropriate worker/assistant-to-children ratios to provide adequate supervision.

Workers should arrive for the activity prior to the arrival of the first child and remain until after the departure of the last child.

Parents are encouraged to observe or assist in an activity with the explicit knowledge of the activity leader.

In a situation where additional help is warranted, and an adult (age 18 or older) or teen volunteers to assist, they may do so at the discretion of the activity leader.

No assistant under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility for, nor be alone with, any children, except in an emergency.

Special precautions in the event of an emergency may be specified in ministry guidelines.

Custody and Identity of Children of Kindergarten Age or Younger

It is recommended that children in Nursery through Pre-K/K use a security tag system or pager system. In this system, no child will be released unless the corresponding number or pager has been received by the activity leader or designee.

It is recommended that each child in Nursery through Pre-K/K wears a name tag to allow easy identification.

Workers and assistants shall strive to ensure that the children do not leave an activity unattended.

Custody of Children Older Than Kindergarten Age

Children older than Kindergarten age may be dismissed from the activity to meet their parents or family members, unless parents have indicated otherwise. In this case, the child's departure is to be communicated explicitly to the activity leader, and the parent or designee becomes responsible for the child.

Attendance

Workers will complete an attendance record, to include at least the activity name, date and location; names of all of those present (including workers, other adults, and minors); and (when possible) a contact number for parents of participating children (if the parents are not on the premises or in the activity area).

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It is recommended that, for each child of preschool age and younger, the record will also show the location of the parent (or other person responsible for the child) on the premises or in the activity area (if that is so).

### Visibility

When possible, all activity in a given space must be readily visible to outside observers. Workers must document any exception for CSPT files.

At least one door in each activity room or area must be unlocked to permit inspection.

One-on-one counseling must be conducted where all participants remain visible, and preferably when other people are nearby.

Pastors and elders, and persons qualified by the screening process, have the right to visit and observe any activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

### Discipline

Discipline should encourage character and behavior that honors the Lord and should emulate His firm, patient, loving care for us.

Respect for and by children is expected, and discipline is expected to be appropriate for the child's age. Children will not be spanked or disciplined in ways that deprive them of their basic right to be safe.

Communication that could be interpreted as humiliating, degrading, or threatening is inappropriate.

Each ministry may establish additional discipline guidelines.

### Bathroom Visits

For children in Sixth Grade or younger, it is recommended that:

- The most frequently-used bathrooms are chosen. On FBC premises, this includes the main bathrooms, the gymnasium bathrooms, and Nursery bathrooms.
- Children visit the bathroom in pairs or groups.
- At least one qualified adult worker accompanies or supervises the child(ren).
- A stall's door remains open if a worker must assist a child in the stall.

Each ministry may establish more specific bathroom guidelines.

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Physical Contact

All physical contact with children should be above reproach, build trust and confidence instead of suspicion or discomfort, and convey God's love and holiness.

Staff, workers and assistants will have no romantic involvement with a child.

If a conversation occurs between a worker or assistant and a child regarding romantic behavior or sexual issues, the worker or assistant should report this incident "up the chain" (to the appropriate ministry head or to an elder or pastor). To preserve confidentiality, details should not be conveyed.

Children receiving individual counseling should be told that they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult, especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling.

Ministry guidelines and training material may illustrate age-appropriate acceptable and unacceptable physical contact with children.

Special documented arrangements may be made between the ministry head, workers, and parents for the care of a Special Needs individual.

Gifts to children

No FBC staff, workers, or assistants are to give gifts to individual children without the knowledge of each child's parent. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, it is recommended that gift giving be done on a group basis and/or for special occasions only. Gifts should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

Physical Safety

Each ministry may create and manage additional physical safety policies and procedures.

Special Issues with Overnight or Off-Site Activities

For any overnight or offsite activity, and any activity requiring transportation, the activity leader must obtain from each participant a Permission Form signed by a parent.

For activities requiring a permission form, each participant must also complete a Health Information Form, unless a current one is already on file (i.e., current within one year of the activity). The activity leader or designee(s) will take a copy to the activity, while the original will remain on file at the church.

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It is recommended that FBC workers at an off-site activity be age 21 or older. At the explicit discretion of the activity leader, workers of age 18 to 20 may be employed, and younger persons may serve as assistants with close supervision by workers.

The activity leader will provide an adequate number and mix of workers and assistants to supervise the activity. See “Coverage” above. For any mixed-sex overnight activity, there must be both male and female workers. Any exceptions to these guidelines must be documented and this record must be given to the ministry head.

When possible, qualified workers will ensure that “unqualified” adults (age 18 or older) (other than a child’s parent) are not left with children in a situation where no qualified workers can observe closely.

Drivers for off-site activities must:

- Be age 21 or older EXCEPT when:
  - >> transporting only their younger siblings or relatives OR
  - >> a person of age 18 or older, but less than age 21, has the explicit consent of the activity leader to be a driver for that specific activity, and has the explicit consent of the parent(s) of the children to be transported.
- Possess a valid driver’s license appropriate to the vehicle being driven.
- Possess current proof of insurance for the vehicle.
- Ensure that all vehicle occupants use seat belts properly in transit.

When possible, a worker will not drive alone with a member of the opposite gender.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Education and training aim to ensure that:

- FBC leaders fully and continually support our Child Safety policy.
- FBC inquirers and visitors understand that we take child safety seriously.
- FBC Fellowship understands the rationale and scope of our policy.
- FBC staff, volunteers, and workers obtained from outside our fellowship are familiar with our policy and abide by its provisions.

### The Fellowship

This Child Safety policy will be posted on the FBC website, highlighted at least annually to the Fellowship at large, and featured in the Introduction to FBC classes. Copies will be available at the Family Center. A copy of Ohio’s Child Abuse Reporting Law will be posted conspicuously where ministry occurs with small children, older children, and teens.

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To help improve ministry flexibility, to increase policy understanding and support, and to enhance the overall level of child safety at FBC, the CSPT will encourage parents to undergo the screening process and policy training.

#### Staff and workers

The CSPT will offer training in the policy to all elders, staff, and ministry heads, so that they know the content and can enforce its provisions.

This policy will be emphasized, highlighting changes and key aspects, at least annually with all FBC elders, staff, ministry heads, paid workers, and volunteers.

Workers who miss the group sessions must undergo a personal review with the CSPT or designee as soon as possible thereafter.

At the discretion of the CSPT, workers who fail to comply with annual requirements may have their Child Safety qualification revoked.

The CSPT will maintain a current list of qualified persons.

For new workers, it is recommended that the CSPT (or designee) offers training in Child Safety to groups at least twice a year, and to individuals opportunistically as appropriate. It is recommended that training should include at least these topics:

- FBC's Child Safety Policy.
- Ohio's reporting requirements.

It is recommended that Child Safety violation and incident procedures and child medical emergency procedures are emphasized at least annually to ensure that key FBC personnel can cope effectively and that required materials are current and available at designated locations.

## **RESPONSE AND REPORTING**

Response and reporting help to ensure that FBC acts in appropriate ways for the benefit of all concerned.

#### Response to actual or perceived violations of policy.

Individuals are encouraged to report (verbally or in writing) actual or perceived violations of this policy or ministry policies to the activity leader, to the ministry head, to a pastor or an elder, or to the CSPT. This should be done in the spirit of constructive criticism.

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The activity leader or ministry head will use the report as a teaching moment with those involved. To document improvement possibilities and/or to document repeated admonitions to an individual, it is recommended that the activity leader, ministry head or CSPT member complete an Incident Report.

At the discretion of the CSPT, workers who fail to respond substantially to correction or advice may have their Child Safety qualification revoked.

Response to an incident or observation.

**The CSPT expects aggressive, immediate, discreet, good-faith handling of alleged or suspected incidents or evidences of child abuse. All laws will be followed.**

It is important to know that:

- Ohio law provides that anyone reporting suspected child abuse or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from such reports, is immune from any civil or criminal liability that otherwise might be imposed as a result of such actions when taken in good faith. (ORC Section 2151.421(G))

- A person who knowingly makes or causes another person to make a false report that alleges that any person has committed an act or omission that resulted in a child being an abused or neglected child is guilty of a violation of the law. (ORC Sections 2151.421(H)(3) and 2921.14)

A worker who observes, or receives information about, an injury, medical problem, abuse incident or suspicious circumstances (including possible indicators of abuse) will:

- If appropriate and possible, move the affected child(ren) to a safe place.
- If appropriate and possible, render or secure first aid.
- Confront the situation promptly, firmly, respectfully, and discreetly.
- Quickly inform a member of the CSPT (or a pastor or an elder, who will contact a member of the CSPT as soon as possible).
- Promptly complete an Incident Report.

It is recommended that other workers who observe or receive information about an incident or suspicious circumstances participate in completing the Incident Report.

It is recommended that all meetings or conversations held in the course of responding to an incident have one or more witnesses present.

The CSPT is responsible for these immediate next steps:

- If appropriate, summon medical and/or police assistance (e.g., a 911 call).
- If appropriate, notify the parent(s) of the child.
- Gather and evaluate the Incident Report(s).
- Decide whether to initiate abuse response action.

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If NO abuse response action is warranted, the CSPT will:

- If appropriate, notify the FBC pastors and elders.
- Retain the original Incident Report(s) in secure and confidential FBC files.

If abuse response action is warranted, the CSPT will:

- Notify the FBC pastors and elders, in confidence.
- Notify the appropriate county's child protective agency. Regardless of whether the agency advises FBC to file a report with them, record the agency representative's name and other particulars of the call.
- Notify FBC's liability insurance company.
- If appropriate, consult with an attorney on further fact-gathering, reporting, or other recommended actions.
- If the alleged or suspected abuse appears to implicate an FBC worker, suspend that person from duties involving children, pending the outcome of related investigations.
- Appoint an incident spokesperson.
- Retain the original Incident Report(s), and an official record of all actions on the incident, in secure and confidential FBC files.

Spokesperson.

It is recommended that an FBC liability insurance company attorney, or an FBC attorney, or their designated representative, be present with the spokesperson while answering any investigative questions from the police, social service agencies, or news media.

To avoid compromising any ongoing investigation, to preserve confidentiality and privacy, and to minimize confusion and possible misinformation, the spokesperson will convey only such information as is required under the circumstances.

Other follow-up to an incident.

If formal abuse actions were pursued, it is recommended that pastoral and elder resources be made available as appropriate to the immediate parties involved and to their families.

It is recommended that the Board of Elders consult with FBC's liability insurance company attorney or designated representative, and/or an attorney secured by FBC, on other formal follow-up actions, including (but not limited to):

- Informing the FBC Fellowship.
- Deciding whether to take action or further action on an FBC person.

It is recommended that the CSPT review the Incident Report(s) to look for ways to improve this policy, its implementation, and related training.