

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity or ministry. This Policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church.

This policy pertains to all activities and ministries of the church which occur within the nursery suite, the children's department and the youth department, all of which are supervised and regulated by the Associate Pastor for Worship/Music and Children and the Associate Pastor for Students and Education of Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

SECTION 2. CORE VALUES

The following core values drive all levels of ministry to children at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church:

1. Every child matters.
2. Ministry to children is a blessing.
3. Parents are primary disciples of their children .
4. Our goal is individual transformation.
5. The Gospel is central to everything we do.
6. God's Word is our ultimate authority.

SECTION 3. WHO MAY WORK IN THE NURSERY, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OR STUDENT MINISTRY

A. PAID WORKER - paid workers may be hired by the Personnel Committee to work with children at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church by meeting the following qualifications:

1. They are at least 21 years old.
2. They fill out an application and give references as to their character and ability.
3. They pass a criminal background check as explained in Section 4 of this policy.
4. They give evidence of Christian conversion

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY (continued)

SECTION 3. WHO MAY WORK IN THE NURSERY, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OR STUDENT MINISTRY (continued)

B. VOLUNTEER WORKER - volunteer workers are needed to staff the nursery and work with children and students in all phases of church life. A volunteer may work in these ministries if they meet the following qualifications:

1. They have been a regularly attending member of Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church for at least six months.
2. They have given evidence that they are able to work with children in the nursery, the children's department or youth department.
3. They have been interviewed and authorized by the staff member(s) overseeing the ministry in which they intend to serve
4. They pass a criminal background check as explained in Section 4 of this policy.
5. Teenagers may work in the nursery as long as they are under the direct supervision of a member of the church who is at least 21 years of age and meets all the other criteria above.

SECTION 4. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

A criminal background check, including check of sex offender registries, is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers who work with children in any capacity at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign a disclosure and authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the form, he/she will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Worship/Music and Children, and the Associate Pastor for Students and Education on a case by case basis in light of all surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Convictions for any offense directly related to violence towards children or sexual abuse of any kind will immediately disqualify someone from working with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file ~~in the~~ office at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church. A new background check will be required every two years for each worker, or as deemed necessary by ministerial staff.

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY (continued)

SECTION 5. WORKER TRAINING

All adults who wish to work with children in any capacity at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church will be required to participate in worker training provided by the Associate Pastor for Students and Education and/or the Associate Pastor for Worship/Music and Children. Upon completion of training and after passing the required background check, workers will be issued an approved worker's certificate which will be kept on file at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church. Recertification will be required every two years, or as deemed necessary by ministerial staff.

SECTION 6. CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURE

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for the safety and behavior of their children at all times. Parents should keep children with them until they are dropped off with the appropriate Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church worker.
2. Only those approved by parents/guardians may drop off and pick up children (Nursery-6th grade).
3. The following procedure will be followed when dropping off or picking up in the nursery:
 - A. When a child is dropped off at the nursery, the parents will be given a pager.
 - B. A sticker identifying the child will be attached to the child.
 - C. Before the child can be picked up from the nursery, the pager must be presented.
 - D. The child will not be released to ANYONE who does not have the pager.

Access to the nursery will be limited to nursery workers. Parents should leave the children with the nursery coordinator or ~~paid~~ **nursery** worker and not enter the nursery area. Children over three years of age are not permitted in the nursery area. (Exception; Sec 2 3 Item B#5)

SECTION 7. NURSERY WORKER EXPECTATIONS

1. Nursery workers are not to give children anything to eat or drink except for the approved nursery snack.
2. Nursery workers need to check diapers at least every 30 minutes. They should follow proper procedure in sanitation after checking diapers.
3. Toys are to be sanitized properly after every session.
4. Nursery workers are to provide some activity for children while keeping them in the nursery area.

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY (continued)

SECTION 8. POLICY FOR PARENTS OF NURSERY CHILDREN

1. Parents are not to feed children in the nursery (other than the approved snack). Parents wishing to feed their children other than the approved snack should take their child out of the nursery, feed them in the fellowship hall and bring them back to the nursery.
2. Parents must disclose all allergies to nursery workers when dropping off children.
3. Parents should bring a diaper bag with extra diapers, bottles (with formula already pre-mixed), and an extra change of clothes.
4. In order to protect other children in the nursery area, parents are asked not to bring children to the nursery who have had a fever in the last 24 hours, vomiting and/or diarrhea, any unexplained rash, any contagious diseases, or pink eye or other eye infections.

SECTION 9. GENERAL POLICIES

1. It is our goal that a minimum of two *unrelated* adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity regardless of the number of participants, location or activity. In a Bible Study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one worker provided there are other adults present in the general area and classroom doors have an uncovered window or remain open to give a clear view of classroom activities.
2. Certain student counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult workers. These general guidelines should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open and the window of the door shall remain uncovered. When possible, counseling of children should take place in a common area with other adults in the general vicinity.
3. When possible, children are encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. If this is not possible then children should be taken to the bathroom in groups. No adult should be alone in the restroom with a child with the door closed. Should assistance be required, another adult caregiver should be present or the bathroom door should be propped open.
4. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by workers of both genders.
5. It is the policy of FABC not to administer prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Exceptions to this policy may be granted for children with life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Associate Pastor for Worship/Music and Children and Associate Pastor for Students and Education to develop a plan of action. If it is deemed necessary that an FABC worker administer medications, detailed instructions must be provided by a parent and an FABC Medical Release and Liability form must be filled out.
6. It is the policy of FABC to require that every child participating in a church sponsored trip or off campus event have a fully completed and notarized FABC Medical Release and Liability form on file with the church. This release is good for one year or until such time as it is rescinded in writing by a parent/guardian.

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY (continued)

SECTION 10. DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of FABC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting or other physical discipline of children. Adults should not yell at students.

Parents are the primary disciplers of children, therefore, parents will be made aware of any ongoing or severe behavior problems. The following guidelines will apply to all workers at any level of ministry with children at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church.

1. Though all adults are responsible for classroom management, the teacher's primary responsibility is to teach the class while additional workers are *actively* involved in managing students.
2. Adults should never use class time for fellowship or conversation, rather their focus and attention should be given to students.
3. Adults should encourage children with nonverbal cues, proximity warnings, and quiet redirection as necessary.
4. If required, adults should take students into the hall to discuss behavior rather than doing so in the classroom or in front of other students. (See Section 9 #2)
5. The following are general guidelines for behavioral expectations:
 - Students should never be unsupervised
 - Students should respect and obey adults
 - Students should respect one another
 - Students should respect others' privacy and property
 - Students should be good listeners
 - Students should never be abusive or bully others
 - Students should actively participate in all activities
6. The following discipline policy should be followed in the steps provided by all workers when dealing with behavior issues: (Steps 2-4 require parent notification upon pickup of child)
 1. Redirect: using visual warnings, nonverbal warnings, and verbal warnings
 2. Conversation in the hall:
 - Define expectations
 - Identify the problem
 - Get to the root
 3. Conversation with pastoral staff (DIG)
 4. Conversation with parent (either take child to parent or have parent come to you - DIG)
 5. Conference between teachers, parents, and pastoral staff (for severe or ongoing behavior issues)

ARTICLE V. NURSERY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH POLICY (continued)

SECTION 11. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

For the purposes of this policy “child abuse” is any action or lack of action that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and adult or between a child and another child at least 4 years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at FABC becomes aware of suspected abuse of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Senior Pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at FABC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified and FABC will comply with the State’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. FABC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Senior Pastor will be our spokesperson to media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquires or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.