

Youth Protection Policy

First Baptist Church, California, Missouri

Adopted:

August 2009

Updated April 2012

**Youth Protection Standards
First Baptist Church, California, Missouri**

Purpose

The purpose of these standards is to establish protection for youth in all church programs and ministries and to guard against all forms of child abuse. In all programs and ministries, we seek to provide an environment that reflects the Christian characteristics of love and respect.

Applicability

These standards apply to all church paid staff and volunteers who provide services or support to First Baptist Church, its programs, and its ministries.

General Conduct for the Protection of Youth

The following standards are intended to assist Church Personnel in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions between adult leaders and youth to identify and stop those that:

- May be inherently harmful to youth;
- Are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents; or,
- May create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily.

These standards should also be used by paid staff and volunteers to make decisions about interactions with youth in church-sponsored and church-affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. Adherence to these policies not only enhances the protection of our membership, but also ensures that the basic values of our church are preserved.

Definition of Youth

For the purpose of these standards, "youth" shall be defined as any participant in youth programs and ministries ages 12 to 18.

Youth Protection Standards

1. All leaders (paid and volunteers) shall complete the youth protection training prior to serving in the youth ministry department. Paid staff will be required to submit to background checks from an accredited agency.

2. No person shall be allowed to volunteer as an adult leader with youth unless that person is a member of First Baptist Church. A person may assist as a volunteer under the direction of an adult leader who has completed youth protection training.

3. Two adult leaders (paid and/or volunteers) or one adult leader and a parent of a participant, both of whom must be 21 years of age or older and unrelated, are required for all scheduled activities, trips, retreats, or outings.

4. Parents or guardians shall complete written permission forms before adult leaders (paid and volunteers) transport youth for a church-sponsored activity or for any purpose, including permission to transport youth home.

5. One-to-one counseling with youth will be done in an open, public, or other place where private conversations are possible, but occur in full view of others (i.e. – an office with a windowed door or clear view from the outside) between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., except when such counseling takes place on a youth activity (Note: even on a youth activity, one-to-one counseling should still be done in an open and public place). One-to-one counseling between paid staff and youth outside the church is prohibited. First Baptist Church authorizes only ordained ministers who have been called by this congregation to conduct personal and private counseling with youth.

6. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) will respond to youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, culture or socio-economic status. Paid staff and volunteers shall portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They shall avoid even the appearance of favoritism.

7. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to youth ministry or camp activities.

8. Proper clothing for activities is required by adult leaders (paid and volunteers) and youth at all church functions, including on church property and off premises. Proper clothing will be identified by the Youth Ministry Team (for example – clothing for camp would be different than clothing for church).

9. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with youth.

10. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from having sexual contact with youth.

11. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of youth off church premises, except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program by the Pastor and Youth Ministry Team.

12. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually-oriented materials on church property or in the presence of youth.

13. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities.

14. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with youth, unless there is more than one adult present or is an immediate family member. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge, with the understanding that males and females sleep in separate rooms.

15. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of youth, except in situations where only communal facilities are available, in which case reasonable modesty should be used.

16. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) must respect the privacy of youth such as going to the bathroom and changing clothes. They must also protect their own privacy in similar situations.

17. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while in the presence of youth, or while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for youth.

18. Church staff is only able to communicate privately with youth through church approved media devices such as a phone and/or computer that can be readily checked or held accountable by another church staff member or chairman of the deacons.*

19. Phone calls or texting between adult volunteers and students (unless relatives) should be only for informational purposes only and should NOT counsel, advise, problem solve, or have an extended conversation without church staff involvement.*

20. Any social media communication needs to be fully open and visible to anyone (such as a wall post).*

21. Any email or message that is sent to a youth from an adult volunteer needs to also be addressed to the parent and/or church staff member.*

Note: At any time, violation of any of these guidelines may result in immediate dismissal of paid staff and separation of volunteers from youth activities.

* Adopted at the 22April2012 Business Meeting

Standards for Appropriate Affection

First Baptist Church is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing, and safe environment for our youth ministry that protects our youth from abuse and our adult leaders (paid and volunteers) from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate, creating a well-understood standard for each individual to reference. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows adult leaders (paid and volunteers) to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, as well as to identify and educate individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with youth. These Standards were developed referencing, in large part, behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom youth and their parents for future abuse. The following standards are to be carefully followed by all adult leaders (paid and volunteers) working around or with youth. All adult leaders (paid and volunteers) who work with youth shall agree to read, sign, and comply with First Baptist Church Standards for Appropriate Affection.

1. Appropriate forms of affection: Love and affection are an essential part of church life and ministry. There are many appropriate ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with youth in public rather than private ways.
 - Brief hugs.
 - Pats on the shoulder or back.
 - Handshakes.
 - "High-fives" and hand slapping.
 - Verbal praise.

- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of youth.
 - Arms around shoulders.
 - Holding hands during prayer.
2. Inappropriate forms of affection: The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with youth because they have the potential to be misunderstood and many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse:
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
 - Kisses on the mouth, or any kissing with the intent to arouse.
 - Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas.
 - Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms/areas.
 - Occupying a bed with a youth.
 - Touching knees or legs of youth.
 - Wrestling with youth.
 - Tickling youth.
 - Any type of massage given by a youth to an adult.
 - Any type of massage given by an adult to a youth.
 - Any form of unwanted affection.
 - Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing" or "You look really hot in those jeans", or encourage emotional involvement and dependency.
 - Giving gifts or money to individual youth without parental permission and awareness.

Reporting Requirements

1. Adult leaders (paid and volunteers) shall report any violation of Youth Protection Standards immediately to the Pastor, Chairman of the Deacons or Chairman of the Personnel Committee.
2. After an appropriate and thorough investigation, the Pastor, Chairman of the Deacons, or Chairman of the Personnel Committee shall take appropriate action. Disciplinary action shall be taken only by the Personnel Committee and/or the Deacon body, but any individual found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including permanent separation from Church youth activities.

Investigations will be conducted on a confidential basis wherever possible.