



Youth Ministry Policies

Proposed April 7, 2024



YOUTH MINISTRY POLICIES

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will be finalized after approval

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WELCOME

Welcome to First Baptist Icard!

At First Baptist Icard, we take our responsibility to care for children and youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members providing services to youth from 6th through 12th grades at First Baptist Icard. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children and students, protecting students, you, and the mission of First Baptist Icard.

After you have carefully read these policies, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page. If you have questions, please contact your ministry director.

Thank you for serving, loving and protecting our students.

Sincerely,

The Elders of First Baptist Icard

FIRST BAPTIST ICARD STUDENT SAFETY SYSTEM

Because we desire to protect students involved in our ministries, all volunteers and staff members must complete the First Baptist Icard screening process, including a background check. All volunteers must be approved by the student ministry staff in order to serve.

STEP ONE: SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

All staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in “grooming” a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip you with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behaviors, First Baptist Icard requires all staff members and child-serving volunteers to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. This training may be completed live or online and must be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: SCREENING PROCESS

Staff members and volunteers serving with children are required to complete the First Baptist Icard Screening Process, which includes:

- Employment Application (employees only);
- Safety Application
- Face-to-Face Interview
- Reference Checks

A volunteer must attend First Baptist Icard services for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children.

STEP THREE: POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Please review these policies and sign the last page indicating that you have read and understood the material, and agree to comply with our policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

All staff members and volunteers working with children must undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

CHILD PROTECTION

First Baptist Icard supports and maintains a **zero tolerance** policy concerning child abuse and neglect. It is a violation of North Carolina law for any volunteer or staff member to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any child participating in First Baptist Icard programs.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Student ministries maintains the highest standards in order to protect both the volunteers and students in our ministry. Anyone working with children or students at First Baptist Icard is subject to the supervision and evaluation of the ministry staff and must follow these guidelines. Staff members and volunteers in supervisory positions must diligently enforce all policies.

First Baptist Icard Elders reserves the right to dismiss volunteers who fail to follow the policies and guidelines.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing any act considered by the church to be harmful to a student will be immediately suspended from participation in ministry to youth. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement, Child Protective agencies or the Church.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from *future* participation in all activities and programming involving minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving minors at First Baptist Icard.

Staff members and volunteer leaders should discuss immediately with an Elder any inappropriate action or breaking of this policy and will seek counsel from the church leadership and attorney, if needed.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

First Baptist Icard is committed to protecting the students in this ministry from any form of abuse. First Baptist Icard has a Zero-Tolerance Policy that prohibits any act of sexual, emotional or physical abuse. This zero-tolerance policy requires all First Baptist Icard employees and volunteer leaders (those who work directly with students) to immediately report any occurrence (or suspected occurrence) of child abuse to a member of our Elders. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Please report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an Elder such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard children in the program.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Burke County CPS Emergency Response Hotline:

828-764-9600

Because many adults are unfamiliar with North Carolina reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, First Baptist Icard utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a First Baptist Icard staff member reports the suspicion or allegation *together* with the individual who saw, heard or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED, OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR CPS *DIRECTLY*. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from First Baptist Icard before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline. In addition, a report may be made without involving or informing First Baptist Icard personnel.

While not required by state law, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors of a colleague or coworker) to one of the Elders. This request is intended to assist the church in properly protecting children involved in First Baptist Icard programs.

When in doubt, report.

PEER TO PEER ABUSE

Peer-to-peer sexual abuse is children molesting or abusing other children. Those who work with students in our youth ministry must be vigilant to watch for this type of abuse. Please take time to read the attached article on Peer-to-Peer abuse that is an appendix to this policy before signing the final page of the policy. **ALL ACTS AND/OR SUSPICIONS OF PEER-TO-PEER ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO AND ELDER AND ALL STATE LAWS FOR REPORTING ABUSE MUST BE FOLLOWED.**

BUILDING SAFETY

Every youth ministry volunteer is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during youth programming. No student will ever be left unattended in a ministry area during regular programming, class or activity. All students should be easily observable during regular programming, class, or activity.

SUPERVISION

Only screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and students should be in areas where ministry to students is occurring. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, the Associate Pastor of Students should be notified immediately.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise students at all times.

Avoid being alone with an individual student in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of students, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single student, move to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a middle school student is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a student alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you. After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Avoid distractions that would impact your ability to effectively supervise students and maintain situational awareness (i.e., use of cell phones, wearing headphones).

SECURITY

After every ministry programming event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

STAFF MEMBER / VOLUNTEER TO STUDENT RATIO

First Baptist Icard is committed to providing appropriate supervision in all ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker-to-student **minimum ratios** will be observed:

1 - 10 students	at least 2 staff members or volunteers (2 adult rule)
11 - 29 students	at least 3 staff members or volunteers
30+ students	at least 4 staff members or volunteers

First Baptist Icard practices the “Two Adult Rule” which requires a reasonable number of adult leaders (minimum of two) to be maintained when supervising students. A married couple or two family members would only account for “one” in this “Two Adult Rule”. Any time an event or trip involves both genders, there will be at least two adults from each gender present, or the event or trip will be canceled. For regularly scheduled programming on church premises, the ratio listed above will be necessary with at least one male and one female chaperone.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their student’s program will be required to complete the First Baptist Icard volunteer application and screening process.

Parental Contact

Parents will be contacted if a student becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in ministry programs.

DISCIPLINE

No physical discipline may be used for behavior management of students, including spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors.

In the event of a fight or physical altercation, verbally redirect those involved and avoid physical intervention unless necessary for the safety of *other* students. In these instances, staff members and leaders are allowed to restrain a student with appropriate physical force, as needed. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and a Student Ministry Staff Member. Any behavior problems will be handled in the following sequence:

1. The student will be asked to correct the behavior.
2. A staff member will talk with the student to discuss the problem behavior.
3. Parents will be notified of discipline or behavior problems.
4. The student will not be allowed to attend a ministry event. (This is a final measure, but not desired.)

If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. Any damage of property will be reported to parents, who will be responsible for repairs, including damage incurred at off-campus ministry events.

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in First Baptist Icard ministry programs.

At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor. There is no "harmless put-down" where bullying is concerned.

1. *First Offense:* Issue a warning to the student and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense:* Pull the offending student(s) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let the student know that the next step is communication with a pastor and the student's parents. Notify an Elder of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.
 - a. Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that a student who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable.
DO NOT SINGLE A STUDENT OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP: be discreet.

3. *Third Offense*: Send the student to a Lead pastor for a phone call to his or her parents and possible removal from the trip, camp or event.

RESTROOM POLICIES

Be aware if a student repeatedly leaves to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a pastor. In public contexts, send students to use the restroom in groups of at least three, when possible.

EMPLOYEE / VOLUNTEER POLICIES

TOBACCO USE

Please abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of students or their parents, or during First Baptist Icard ministry activities or programs, whether on campus or away. First Baptist Icard is a tobacco-free facility.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising minors during any First Baptist Icard program or activity.

NUDITY

Never be nude in the presence of students in ministry programs. In the event a situation arises that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member leading the event will submit a plan to the Elders concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Please dress in modest, comfortable attire. Please do not wear thin-strapped shirts or low cut shirts while you are serving. First impressions are important; please take this into consideration when you are serving.

- No revealing swimsuits
- No revealing / form-fitting clothes
- No shirts with low necklines or that show midriff
- No short dresses, skirts or shorts

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Meeting the emotional or spiritual needs of students may occasionally involve interaction on an individual basis. Please observe the following guidelines when interacting with minors:

The Two Adult Rule should be diligently followed during ministry programs: do not interact *alone* with an individual student in any room or building.

In the event you find yourself alone with a single student, move to a room or area occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

One-to-one meetings with an individual student must occur at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. *Example:* If a student desires additional conversation after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present, or into a public space.

If a closed-door meeting must occur, it should occur on church property, with a second adult present. The door must remain unlocked, and any window treatments *open*.

Never hold a one-to-one meeting with a student who is the opposite gender.

Any ongoing meetings with students (such as counseling, one-to-one discipleship, etc.) should be discussed with a Student Ministry Staff Member, and should comply with the Two Adult Rule OR occur in a public, easily observed location.

Staff members and adult volunteer leaders may not date (or have *any* sort of romantic interaction with) students in the student ministry.
Student Leadership Team ... create plan.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program.

However, it is expected that from time to time student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students the church's views on these topics.

Students may have questions/struggles in this area and desire to confide in a trusted adult leader for guidance. Proceed with great caution, teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.

- Avoid discussing anything of a sexual nature with students of the opposite gender.
- If a student's questions or comments on a sexual matter become too detailed or explicit in a group setting, the leader should use discretion and set up another time to meet with this student. For any follow up meeting: inform a student ministry staff member *first*, comply with the Two Adult Rule OR meet in a public, easily observed location.
- When in doubt as to whether a conversation could be interpreted as a "sexually oriented conversation," treat the conversation as such and follow this policy. When possible, clarify the question/topic with a Student Ministry Staff Member.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Sexually oriented materials (images or videos) are prohibited on church property or in the presence of students participating in any ministry program.

PHYSICAL INTERACTION / APPROPRIATE DISPLAYS OF AFFECTIONS

Appropriate touch is needed and encouraged, but it is vital that staff members and volunteer leaders do not blur or cross the lines. In light of this, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Physical contact in any form should be above reproach, for the benefit of the student, and never based upon *your* emotional needs.
- Your personal behavior must foster trust at all times.
- Pat a hand, shoulder or back in an encouraging manner.
- Side hugs: in public view and kept brief. When hugging someone of the opposite gender, hugs should be limited to side-hugs.
- Look for opportunities to give plenty of “high fives” and “fist bumps”, unless this makes a student feel uncomfortable.
- Shake hands, or put an arm around the student’s shoulder, briefly.

AVOID the following interactions:

- A sexual relationship with a student is never acceptable.
- Never touch a student in sensitive areas (breasts, buttocks, genitals) even if a student has been injured in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or over clothing.
- No sitting on laps.
- No hand-holding, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
- Never touch in anger or disgust.
- Never touch in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid touching a student between the navel and the knees.
- Never carry a student piggy-back, or on your shoulders.
- Never kiss a student, or give (or receive) a massage.
- Never place hands beneath a student’s clothing to play, rub, or comfort.
- Never tickle, participate in ‘horse-play’ or wrestle with a student.

Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant student, except in cases of necessary restraint for the protection of the child or others.

A student’s preference *not* to be touched must be respected.

Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of others. It is much less likely that touch will be misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

VERBAL INTERACTION

Verbal interaction with students should be positive and uplifting. All verbal interaction should be encouraging, constructive, and mindful of our mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of students.

To this end, do not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Do not swear in the presence of students.

In general, verbal interaction should occur in a location where others may observe what is happening. At no time should a student and adult disappear behind a closed door, or interact in an area which cannot be seen by others.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

All communication with students must be above reproach and indicative of healthy boundaries. As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the student ministry leader or a parent.

TEXTING

Texting between ministry leaders and students is permissible only as outlined below. In general, texts should occur in 'group' form, whenever possible. Though students will often reply individually, make effort to text in group form and encourage replies to the group. When possible, ministry leaders should send and receive texts using a ministry-provided device/account.

Prudent judgment must be used in the timing and content of texts. **Do not text before 7am or after 10pm** unless the texting occurs as part of a programmed ministry activity. Do not share photos and/or videos of a sexual or suggestive nature.

Avoid discussion of ANY sexual topic via texts.

Do not post inappropriate or off-color content, or comment on inappropriate or off-color posts. When in doubt, treat a post as inappropriate.

No social media or texting communication may occur with a student of the opposite gender.

COMMUNICATION APPLICATIONS

It is permissible for the ministry to use applications that have messaging features (i.e., Instagram, Facebook Messenger) – a ministry account. At least one other ministry leader must have credentials to access the application and regularly review the messaging, comments and postings.

It is not permissible for ministry leaders to use personal accounts to direct message students. All group and direct messaging to/from students should be above reproach, available for supervisory access and originate from a ministry account – not a personal account.

In the event a student direct messages a ministry leader's personal account, the ministry leader will transfer the thread to the ministry account for reply, if necessary. All students will be counseled to direct communication to the ministry account.

Avoid discussion of ANY sexual topic via social media.

Do not comment or reply to a student's post that is inappropriate or questionable. All interaction should be above reproach and reflect the integrity and values of First Baptist Icard Student Ministry.

No individual social media or texting communication may occur with a student of the opposite gender.

The use of Snapchat (or other similar applications) with students is not permitted.
The use of Houseparty (or other similar applications) with students is not permitted.

Applications that allow anonymous messaging are not permissible.

'HOOK-UP' APPLICATIONS

Though the use of relationship applications are commonplace and acceptable, Ministry leaders are prohibited from participating in Meet & Date or Meet & Chat applications (those applications intended to facilitate sexual encounters).

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

As a ministry leader, maintain a high moral standard in your social media presence. Inappropriate social media content may be a basis for suspension from participation in student ministry at First Baptist Icard. Please be cautious about the content of the posts on your personal social media. Please ensure that photos or videos posted on social media reflect First Baptist Icard ministry guidelines related to alcohol, tobacco and modesty (dress, posture and content).

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when ministry workers are involved in the transportation of students:

- Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place must be avoided.
- Avoid transportation circumstances that leave only *one student* in transport.
- Avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
- Absent an emergency, **cell phones may not be used by drivers** while transporting minors (other than navigation applications for directions). In an emergency, stop the vehicle to use the cell phone, unless a stop cannot safely occur. Texting or other cell phone use is strictly prohibited while driving.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive First Baptist Icard owned or rented vehicles.
- In transportation, the TWO ADULT RULE or 'RULE OF 3' must be followed.
- Avoid transporting a single student.
- Never be alone in a vehicle with a student of the opposite sex.
- Never instruct a student to drive other students to a ministry event.
- Transport only the number of students for whom you have seatbelts.
- Seatbelts should be worn at all times while in the vehicle.
- No one should be double-buckled.
- Use extra caution when driving students.

OUT-OF-PROGRAM CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

First Baptist Icard safety standards established to protect students and ensure healthy relationships should be respected *outside* ministry programs as well. In addition to ministry safety standards, the following policies should be respected in all interactions with students occurring *outside* ministry programs.

- Never be alone with a minor in an unobserved context or location.
- Limit connections by gender. Do not initiate or maintain contact with students of the opposite gender.
- Any dating or sexual relationship of any kind with a minor is strictly prohibited.
- **Never** spend the night at a student's home or invite a student to spend the night at your home.
- Do not spend the night in an 'away' location with any student (vacation, etc.).

PLANNING EVENTS FOR GROUPS

When planning a group event outside of regular programming, volunteer leaders should keep parents and staff members informed of details and abide by First Baptist Icard policies. Some events may require a release form.

OVERNIGHT EVENTS

Some Student Ministry activities/events require overnight sleeping arrangements for students, staff members and volunteers (i.e. camp, mission trips, etc.). All programmed overnights must be approved by the Elders and receive permission from parents. No overnights are allowed on First Baptist Icard property unless part of a ministry-sponsored event. No overnight between any church staff member or volunteer and an *unrelated* minor may occur in any context. If pre-existing family relationships exist wherein overnights may occur between 'family friends', these relationships must be communicated to the Elders.

For each overnight event, Student Ministry staff must create a child safety plan that will supplement this policy document to provide specific child protection steps unique to the event (activity, travel, location, other groups present).

MEDICATION

Do not administer medication of any kind to any student while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs. For certain trips or activities (i.e., mission trips, beach/ski retreats), First Baptist Icard will bring a medical professional that will dispense appropriate medications consistent with other policies and signed parent permission forms.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Associate Pastor of Students

Staff members and volunteer leaders are required to read and understand this student safety policy. Additionally, each staff member and volunteer leader must execute an acknowledgment form that this policy has been read, understood, and will be followed. Staff members and volunteer leaders who fail to adhere to this policy may be asked to step down from their role.

I have received and read a copy of First Baptist Icard Student Ministry Policies and Procedures on the date listed below, and I understand the importance of the matters set forth herein. I understand and agree to abide by these policies during my service at First Baptist Icard.

I understand that these policies may be modified or eliminated at any time by First Baptist Icard.

While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between First Baptist Icard and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed.

Staff member or volunteer's name (please print)

Staff member or volunteer's signature

Date

Appendix 1

Policy for the Safe Use of Images of Children

1. Introduction

Churches enjoy and welcome publicity. Photographs and video add color, vibrancy, life and interest to articles promoting church activities, events and initiatives. Making use of photographs for publicity materials and to promote the church in the press can encourage and attract engagement with the church and celebrate the church's achievements. Images must however be used in a responsible way. As a church we need to respect the right to privacy for children, young people, and parents and to be aware of potential safeguarding issues.

FBI will take every reasonable effort to minimize risk by following the guidelines detailed in this document and by securing appropriate consent for the use of images.

This policy applies to the use of photographs and video in church publicity materials, on its website, social media and in the press. Its implementation is the responsibility of all church officers, activity leaders and volunteers. Parents and visitors will be made aware of this policy.

2. Safeguarding

There may be a risk when specific children can be identified in photographs or video, or connected to regular attendance at a particular location. For that reason, FBI has developed this policy to make every effort to minimize risk. In the event of the inappropriate use of children's photographs the will follow the appropriate safeguarding procedures.

3. Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

Photographs and video images of people are classed as personal data under the terms of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Therefore, using such images for church publicity purposes requires the consent of either the adult or young person concerned or, in the case of children, their legal guardians. Young people aged 13-17 are able to give consent themselves under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

FBI will not display images of children or young people online, in publications or in a public place without such consent. The definition of a public place includes areas where visitors to the church have access.

4. Photographing and Filming Church Events and Activities

Where photographs are taken at an event attended by large crowds, this is regarded as a public area so it is not necessary to get permission of everyone in a crowd shot, but individuals should not then be identified in accompanying text from such an image without consent. Signage will be displayed to make people aware that photography or filming is taking place so that they can take appropriate actions to avoid being in any images or so they can advise an appropriate church officer as to their position on use of their image in publicity.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act does not apply to photographs or films taken for personal use by family, but FBI requests that parents do not take photographs of any children but their own at church events or activities to safeguard other children. First Baptist Icard will have designated photographers at church events and activities who will be aware of which children or young people may not be photographed, so we ask all other adults to refrain from photography beyond family shots.

FBI ask that parents and other adults and young people do not film church events or activities as they will not have full awareness of which children may or may not be filmed, and there could be risks to the safety of children or families if such video appeared online without appropriate checks in place. People must not try to film, even discreetly, as while they may feel that they are filming only their own child, other parents cannot tell what they are filming, and it could cause significant distress and disruption of an event. First Baptist Icard will endeavor to have designated film makers at church events and activities who will be aware of which children or young people may not be filmed. Please support us as a church to follow this guidance to enable us to sensibly protect the families in our care. On occasions, commissioned photographs or video may be captured of children on outings, activities or events, or performing in church productions. The church will inform parents where arrangements have been made for a commercial photographer/film maker to capture such an event. Where a commercial photographer is used, the church will:

- provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behavior, and secure storage and retention;
- issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times;
- make the photographer aware of any restrictions on who can be photographed;
- not allow unsupervised access to children or one-to-one photo sessions at home.

If children or parents have any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography, they should report them to the Elders who will handle them in the same manner as any other safeguarding concern.

5. Appropriate Use of Images in Church Publicity Materials

FBI will:

- ensure that images are stored securely and used only by those authorized to do so;
- ensure that electronic images are stored on a secure computer or device to which members of the public have no access;
- not use an image of any child who is subject to known child protection arrangements;
- secure parental consent for the use of children's photographs, or consent from the young person if aged 13 or over; and,
- ensure that children are appropriately dressed in any used images.

6. Church Website

The advice for using photographs on a website is no different from their use in any other kind of publication or publicity material. However, FBI is aware of the potential risk of inappropriate use of images because of the lack of control over who might see the image and the wide extent of the misuse of the Internet by certain people. Young people and parents/guardians need to be aware that images on the Internet may be re-used by third parties without the knowledge or agreement of FBI. FBI will seek the consent of young people or parents regarding the use of images on the Internet. Children's names will not be included in photographs of children published on the church website or in social media unless agreed beforehand by the young person or parents of the children concerned.

7. The Press

First Baptist Icard will provide names of children to accompany photographs published in newspapers and magazines only where the young person, parent or guardian have provided their consent.

8. Consent

FBI will seek the consent of young people and parents/guardians regarding the use of images of children. Records of these consents will be retained securely.



PEER-TO-PEER CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE RISK:

Protecting Children from Other Children

By Gregory Love & Kimberlee Norris

Where child sexual abuse is concerned, peer-to-peer abuse provides the curveball of sexual abuse risk.

To recognize and address it properly, a ministry must be watching for it.

Common fact patterns

Peer-to-peer sexual abuse — children molesting or abusing *other children* — unfolds in predictable patterns.

Some years ago, we were asked to assist a church in correctly responding to a child sexual abuse scenario. This ministry served very young children in a horseshoe-shaped building with a fence across the top of the horseshoe, creating a courtyard. The fenced area contained a playground for children surrounded by windows looking into the play area. In the center of the playground was a play structure with panels near the base, creating a box-like cube. One Sunday, while two staff members sat 20 feet away, a 7-year-old boy enticed a 4-year-old girl into the cubed play structure and sexually molested her there.

Later that day, the little girl shared with her parents — in a vague and inarticulate manner — what she had experienced that morning in the play structure. The girl's parents believed her (which doesn't always occur) and contacted a ministry supervisor. Ministry leaders, in turn, contacted our firm.

In assessing the situation, we interviewed the two staff members who supervised the playground, who were present on the day in question.

During the interview, these staff members were courteous and concerned but became defensive when asked about the *possibility* of sexual abuse occurring on the playground several days before, saying, "That's not possible." When asked why they were convinced that sexual abuse couldn't occur on the playground, they replied, "We have a fence." In this circumstance, these conscientious ministry workers believed sexual abuse could only originate from *outside the fence*.

What these ministry workers did not grasp is that the majority of sexual abuse risk arising in a ministry context occurs *inside the fence*. These staff members had received minimal sexual abuse training: from



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their standpoint the risk of abuse, to the extent it existed *at all*, came from *outside the church*. They had no training or understanding regarding the preferential offender (see prior article at www.churchexecutive.com/archives/stop-sexual-abuse-2) or peer-to-peer sexual abuse: sexual abuse occurring at the hands of *other children*.

Where child sexual abuse is concerned, *we cannot reduce a risk we do not understand*. This truism is particularly apt in addressing and preventing peer-to-peer sexual abuse. In our experience, peer sexual abuse is the least understood and expected risk likely to be encountered in ministry contexts: the *curveball*.

Peer sexual abuse is not prevented by a background check, child check-in system or six-month member rule.

What about the two-adult rule? In the fact pattern above, two adult staff members supervised the playground — the church was following the two-adult rule. Unfortunately, these two adults had no real understanding of the risk of peer sexual abuse, much less how to prevent it. Peer sexual abuse is shockingly prevalent: offender studies indicate that convicted male abusers begin their predatory behavior, on average, at 13 or 14 years of age. The majority of convicted male abusers admit their first offense occurred *before* reaching 18 years of age. US Department of Justice reports indicate that *one out of three* reported cases of child sexual abuse are peer-to-peer abuse allegations.



Peer Sexual Abuse: Sexually harmful behavior between children involving an aggressor and a child who does not seek or want the sexual interaction.

What's more, peer abusers tend to take opportunities where they find them; where they spend time anyway — school, sports, camp, younger cousins or siblings, and church. Children who have been sexually abused tend to act out in a sexual manner with other children. Even very young children can act out in a sexually harmful context.

So how should a ministry act to reasonably address this known risk? Ministry staff members must be trained to understand and recognize scenarios where this risk is higher: anywhere *clothes come off*, for any reason (e.g. the restroom), any location on your church campus which is *less easily seen* (e.g. play structures) and any activity *less easily supervised* (e.g. *any activity involving swimming or group play*). Effective training must define peer sexual abuse, address where it is more likely to occur and how to correctly respond.

Responding to an allegation

Responding correctly to peer sexual abuse allegations requires an exercise of judgment, and ministry leaders must avoid two common misconceptions.

Error: No sexual behavior between children is harmful — simply indicative of curiosity or *play*.

Error: *All* sexual behavior between children is dangerous and harmful.

Some childish behaviors are predicated upon natural sexual curiosity. In the course of normal human development, children commonly engage in harmless sexual curiosity or play. This behavior, thought innocent, should always be redirected.

What constitutes harmful sexual behavior between children?

Any adult sexual behavior that children should have no knowledge of or experience with should be reported to child protective services. This is because these behaviors are typically learned behaviors resulting from interaction between an adult (or older child) and a child, and the abused child is replicating these learned behaviors with other children. The purpose of a report is to get appropriate resources to the children impacted, redirect the harmful behavior and determine where the sexual conduct *began*: generally at the hands of an *adult* who has abused a child.

Clearly, any coerced or forced sexual behavior is harmful. In most jurisdictions, criminal prosecution of peer sexual abuse requires three elements: an *aggressor*, a *non-aggressor* and an *imbalance of power* favoring the aggressor. The imbalance of power is typically age, but size, mental acuity or the existence of a disability can create the imbalance. In most states in the US, a three-year age gap between children creates a *presumption* of an imbalance of power.

One indication that sexual behavior between children is something other than simple curiosity or play is when the behavior is hidden or accompanied by a sense of shame or culpability. When a child is hiding behavior or enticing another child into a closet or other unseen area, the conduct is problematic.

Peer sexual abuse must be reported

Although peer sexual abuse constitutes *one third* of all reported sexual abuse in the US, peer abuse tends to be underreported. One reason it isn't reported is the belief that mandatory reporting requirements do not apply to children who sexually abuse other children. Untrue: mandatory reporting requirements are driven by the age of the *victim*, not the age of the abuser.

Peer sexual abuse fire drill

Peer abusers are opportunistic — they take opportunities where they find them and where they spend time *anyway*, including church programs. While on church property or participating in church programs, children must be safe and protected — sometimes from other children. Church staff members are responsible for the safety and welfare of *each* child participating until that child is returned to a parent or caregiver.

Like fire, peer sexual abuse is a foreseeable risk. Where this risk is concerned, a church's primary protection is *effective training* coupled with intentional supervision.

Many ministry workers believe that peer sexual abuse won't happen in their church or ministry. This illusion is dangerous to both the ministry and the children it serves. Because peer abusers are opportunistic, greater opportunity exists in church programs staffed by workers who don't understand or acknowledge the reality of this risk.

The first step to a better understanding of this risk is effective training: when staff members learn the facts, they are better equipped to protect children in their care. **CE**

Kimberlee Norris & Gregory Love are partners in the Fort Worth, Texas law firm of Love & Norris [www.lovenorris.com] and founders of MinistrySafe, providing child sexual abuse expertise to ministries worldwide. After representing victims of child sexual abuse for more than two decades, Love and Norris saw recurring, predictable patterns in predatory behavior. MinistrySafe grew out of their desire to place proactive tools into the hands of ministry professionals. Love and Norris teach the only graduate-level course on Preventing Sexual Abuse in Ministry as Visiting Faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary.