

Safeguarding Policy

Faith Christian Fellowship

Introduction

As a community, Faith Christian Fellowship is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors of abuse, and holding any who abuse power accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9,12). Our community seeks to embody God's call for justice and His care for the vulnerable.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime) when someone in a position of power, status, privilege and trust violates or exploits someone who may be powerless to stop it. Sadly, abuse is a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16). We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse to protect the vulnerable.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience FCF as an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

For further information, consult the "Report Of The Ad Interim Committee On Domestic Abuse And Sexual Assault To The Forty-Ninth General Assembly Of The Presbyterian Church In America (2019-2022)," or the most updated version of this document. The 2019-2022 version can be found at this link:

<https://pcaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2301-AIC-on-Domestic-Abuse-Updated.pdf>

Definition of Abuse

In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor or other clergy, elder, deacon, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit, oppress, or in any way violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g. a child, someone who is sick, elderly, disabled, student, immigrant, someone with lesser power in the relationship, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc. Consult [Appendix A](#) for definitions of specific types of abuse.

Policy

Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated at Faith Christian Fellowship. Faith Christian Fellowship will appoint a Safeguarding Team tasked with abuse prevention training and responding to policy violations (see [Appendix B](#) for specific details regarding Safeguarding Team duties). The church will screen all pastors, officers, ministry leaders, staff, and volunteers in order to increase the safety of the church community (see [Appendix C](#) and [Appendix D](#) for details).

Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of Faith Christian Fellowship for effective prevention of and response to abuse. The Safeguarding Team should be a group of 3-5 church members and should be at least 50% women. It is preferred that the team includes individuals who have a legal or counseling background, are members of church leadership, and are representatives of those serving in the youth/children's ministry. Team members commit to a 3 year term of service and are appointed by the Session with the recommendation of the WLT. See [Appendix B](#) for additional specific duties of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will often work in conjunction with the Session and potentially other ministry leaders as needed (see [Appendix E](#) for specific responsibilities).

Training

All new pastors, staff, volunteers, and officers will receive training on the Safeguarding policy from the Safeguarding committee.

Pastors, officers, staff, and volunteers shall receive annual briefings and updates on the policy. Youth and elementary age children will receive at least annual safety training by Children's and Youth Ministry directors.

The aspirational goal is for all members and attendees of the FCF community to engage in initial and ongoing Safeguarding training (roughly every 3 years), either virtually or in person.

Responding to Policy Violations

Faith Christian Fellowship takes all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety seriously. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy or has any concerns related to vulnerable persons should inform a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

1. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and consult as a team as appropriate. Documentation of concerns and policy violations will be kept as hard copies in a locked filing cabinet in the Business/Accounting office. In order to accomplish this documentation, a copy of the general Safeguarding Policy Incident Report and a copy of the Injury/Incident Report for Children and Youth can be found in [Appendix F](#) and [G](#) of this document.
2. The Safeguarding Team will collaborate with the Session to determine next steps, such as conversations with the victim and/or alleged perpetrator or initiating an investigation. The Safeguarding Team may suggest to the Session that they engage an outside entity for independent consultation or investigation (see [Appendix H](#)).
3. The Session will consider the recommendations of the Safeguarding Team and take action as appropriate.
4. The Safeguarding Team will lead efforts on continued offering of support to the parties involved, as needed. At the very least there will be a follow-up conversation with the person who initially brought the report to the Safeguarding Team.

Privacy for all parties involved will be maintained as much as possible.

No Safeguarding Team member or Session member who is either accused of misconduct or related to an alleged perpetrator will handle any reported allegations or subsequent investigation.

When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911.

Responding to Policy Violations that must be reported to Department of Social Services

Suspicion of Abuse Involving a Minor: If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger), this information must be reported to Baltimore City Child Protective Services (CPS) at 410-361-2235 (available 24 hours a day) or the local county Department of Social Services (DSS) office where you believe the abuse may have occurred (see the Maryland Department of Human Services website for a complete listing of local offices:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/lo>

[cal-offices/](#)). Reports must be made immediately. See Maryland Department of Human Services website for current information on reporting:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/>

Suspicion of Abuse Involving a Vulnerable Adult: If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable suspicion of abuse against a vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse, or abuse against an adult with developmental disabilities), a report should immediately be made to the appropriate agency. To report abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult or an elderly person call 800.332.6247. Additional information on reporting abuse of elder adults can be found here:

<https://health.maryland.gov/ohcq/SiteAssets/Pages/Consumer-Information/Elder%20Abuse%20Brochure.pdf#search=abuse%20vulnerable%20adult> Information on reporting abuse of adults

with disabilities can be found here:

<https://health.maryland.gov/dda/Pages/Report%20Abuse.aspx>

Framework for Discipline of Policy Violations as enacted by the Session

1. Session members will receive reports of inappropriate situations or experiences that have occurred at Faith Christian Fellowship.
2. The Session will be responsible for administering disciplinary action in accordance with the Book of Church Order.
3. If any situation involves a Teaching Elder, then the Session is responsible to contact the Chesapeake Presbytery, who will respond to the allegations. Session may decide to involve an outside entity for independent investigation or consultation (see [Appendix H](#)).
4. Session members will respond in the following ways:
 - a. When the reported infraction does not involve illegal activity, Session members will warn the alleged perpetrator that there is a report of problematic behavior and will work with the alleged perpetrator to correct the behavior. Session members will continue to follow up with the victim and alleged perpetrator to ensure that there have been behavioral changes.
 - b. When the reported infraction involves potentially illegal behavior, the Session will encourage the alleged victim to report to the appropriate authorities or the Session will make that report itself if warranted (e.g., in the case of child abuse or abuse of a vulnerable adult), and will cooperate with outside agencies to ensure the safety of all involved. The Session will initiate appropriate follow up communication with the victim.
5. Session will admonish the alleged perpetrator when there is continued failure to change, and will monitor the situation to determine if further actions are warranted.

Session will document the steps taken in the above process and any final decisions.

Further Response Protocols

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations. See [Appendix B](#) for more information about the duties of the Safeguarding Team.

It is also the responsibility of FCF leaders, Safeguarding Team, and FCF community to respond to survivors with care, respect, and support. See [Appendix I](#) for specific suggestions on how to care for survivors.

Policy on Known Sex Offenders

Faith Christian Fellowship is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders who demonstrate evidence of repentance to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, their ongoing repentance over time, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts or current recommended practice, deem appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. No assessment will begin if the victim(s) of the perpetrator are still in our church as any victim should be free to participate in FCF gatherings without their perpetrator present.

Session members will use the following process to assess the conditions that the known offender must meet in order to participate in the FCF church body:

1. Interview the known offender
2. After the individual signs a release of information ([Appendix J](#)), leaders will confer with other relevant parties to learn more about the offender's mental health history and treatment (e.g. family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.)
3. Acquire records relating to the offender as needed
4. Assess repentance and cooperation with measures to reduce risk of offensive behavior, utilizing expert or current recommended practice as needed. When a known offender is judged to have a meaningful reduction in risk of offensive behaviors and has some connection to the church, those who have responsibility to minister to him or her will have specific training on working with sex offenders.
5. Set level of participation, accountability, and safeguarding requirements. This will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

No one who is convicted of or who has admitted to abusing a minor may work with minors or vulnerable persons in the ministry of our church, have any access to minors in our church (on or off church property), or hold any position of power or trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry with minors. Any adult who is a convicted or admitted sex offender who attends group

activities shall agree to have their name known to the congregation and shall abide by all accountability and safeguarding requirements.

Appendix Table of Contents

Pg. 8-12	Appendix A : Definitions of Specific Types of Abuse and Related Terms
Pg. 13	Appendix B : Duties of the Safeguarding Team
Pg. 14-15	Appendix C : Screening of Pastors, Officers, Ministry Leaders, Staff, and Volunteers
Pg. 16	Appendix D : Training of Members
Pg. 17	Appendix E : Responsibility Assignment Matrix
Pg. 18	Appendix F : Safeguarding Policy Incident Report
Pg. 19-20	Appendix G : Injuries During Children’s Ministry Activity
Pg. 21	Appendix H : Considering Independent Consultation and Investigation
Pg. 22-23	Appendix I : Caring for Survivors
Pg. 24-26	Appendix J : Authorization for Release/Exchange of Information
Pg. 27-29	Appendix K : FCF Children/Youth Leader Participation Form
Pg. 30-33	Appendix L : D-Group Mentor Application
Pg. 34	Appendix M : Sample Background Check Agreement
Pg. 35	Appendix N : Sample Safeguarding Pledge
Pg. 36-37	Appendix O : Expectations for Maintaining Healthy Boundaries
Pg. 38-39	Appendix P : Potential Indicators of Child Abuse

Appendix A: Definitions of Specific Types of Abuse and Related Terms

Sexual Abuse of a Child

Sexual abuse of a minor occurs when someone who has temporary or permanent custody engages in any sexually charged behavior with that minor, including:

Sexual Penetration: Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.

Sexual Contact: Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include the touching or making the person touch, or making the person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

Non-Contact Sexual Acts:

- observing a person's nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity
- recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons
- exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals
- within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, clergy-congregant, adult-child) communicating romantic or sexual desire, interest, or sexually stimulating content toward a person

Sexual abuse of a minor must be reported to Child Protective Services:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/>

Consent

Consent is words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit "no" does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as "freezing" or "fawning" - does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: minors, adults with certain developmental disabilities, certain vulnerable adults (e.g. elderly or ill), or those within a power differential (e.g. with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.^[1] Deception or manipulation of a person also renders that person unable to consent.

A child/minor cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult. An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not just an “affair” or just a “relationship” but an egregious abuse of power.

Adult Consensual Relationships

If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual relationship with an adult under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within Faith Christian Fellowship, they must contact the Pastor and the Session for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate ways to address and mitigate the power dynamic.

Sexual Assault

Sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.
- Attempted rape.
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator’s body.
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

Sexual Harassment

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) provides a legal definition of sexual harassment. It is: “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Because we want Faith Christian Fellowship to be a place of safety, any unwanted sexualized behavior (either within a power differential or not) is unacceptable. Additional forms of

harassment can include bullying and acts of discrimination. Such actions may fall beyond the purview of this policy, but can be directly reported to a member of the Session to help mediate the situation.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence)

A pattern of behavior where a person in or who has been in an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.^[2]

Emotional Abuse

A pattern of controlling behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Financial Abuse

The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or his/her financial resources for another's profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception; coercion or undue influence; or, illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly in particular are often targeted for financial abuse.

Child Neglect:

Child neglect is when adults who are responsible to care for a minor do not give the child what is necessary to ensure the child remains safe and is thriving. Examples include:

- Physical: failure to provide a safe environment, including lack of provision of necessary food, shelter, or appropriate supervision. In Maryland, minors may not be left alone under the age of 8 without adult supervision. No minor under the age of 13 may independently (without an adult present) babysit a minor younger than the age of 8.
- Health: failure to provide necessary physical and mental health treatment, permitting the minor to use alcohol or other drugs, etc.
- Educational: failure to educate a minor or attend to special education needs, etc.
- Emotional: inattention to a minor's emotional needs, etc.

Physical Abuse of a Minor

Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking or striking with an object) perpetrated by someone who has permanent or temporary custody of the minor (such as parent, teacher, scout leader, babysitter, youth leader, etc.). If a minor is injured during an episode of intimate partner violence (that is occurring between other individuals), whether intentional or accidental, that is also reportable. For current Maryland law regarding child abuse, see:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/>

Spiritual Abuse

A form of emotional abuse using religion. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's agency or value
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond accountability
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality

Stalking

A pattern of unwanted, fixated, and obsessive behavior which is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states.

Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails
- Following or spying on the victim
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason
- Leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

For further elaboration, consult the “Report Of The Ad Interim Committee On Domestic Abuse And Sexual Assault To The Forty-Ninth General Assembly Of The Presbyterian Church In America (2019-2022).”

<https://pcaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2301-AIC-on-Domestic-Abuse-Updated.pdf>

Appendix B: Duties of the Safeguarding Team

- Implement and oversee compliance with the Faith Christian Fellowship Safeguarding Policy
- Assist church staff and ministry leaders in managing compliance with Safeguarding Policy, including verification of screening and training requirements for different groups within the church (see [Appendix C](#) & [D](#))
- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the Faith Christian Fellowship Safeguarding Policy
- Brief all staff, volunteers, and ministry leaders on the behavioral expectations, policy, response procedures, and potential consequences (suggested yearly)
- Highlight the policy and make it available to all members on a yearly basis, including expressing the importance of coming forward to report any concerning behavior
- Receive, document, and respond to reported policy violations or concerning behavior
- Collaborate with the Session regarding the response to any allegations of abuse
- At least one member of team to complete continuing education related to abuse from a qualified organization (such as a state mental health licensing board) every 2-3 years and inform rest of team of any updates
- Meeting required 1-4 times per year
- Lead efforts on continued offering of support to the parties involved, as needed
- Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local/national expert help (see below for examples):
 - Turnaround Inc (410-837-7000)
 - The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE)
 - The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673)
 - SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).
- Ensuring all potential crimes against minors or vulnerable adults have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Working with the Session to facilitate cooperation with any investigations
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed

Appendix C: Screening of Pastors, Officers, Ministry Leaders, Staff, and Volunteers

Faith Christian Fellowship shall utilize the following screening tools, as delineated in the table below:

- A written application including questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable. See [Appendix J](#) and [K](#) for Children’s Ministry application & Youth Ministry application.
- References
- A background check that includes the following information conducted by Church Administrator and paid for by Faith Christian Fellowship:
 - Local criminal record check
 - State criminal record check
 - FBI criminal record check
 - State central child/dependent adult abuse registry check
 - State sex offender registry check
 - *Note: Staff and volunteer background checks should be updated every 3 years.*
 - See [Appendix M](#) for a sample background check agreement.
- Confirmation of education and employment (for employment candidates)
- An interview that includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable, and the Faith Christian Fellowship Safeguarding Policy.
- Verification of training in our Safeguarding policy
- Pledge to uphold Safeguarding policy ([Appendix N](#))

	Background Check	Interview	Written application	Confirmation of Education & Employment	References	Training in Safeguarding Policy	Pledge to uphold Safeguarding policy
Staff (including Pastors)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Officers (Session, Deacons)	X	X			X	X	X
Ministry leaders (WLT, WDT, heads of ministries)	X	Optional			Optional	X	X
Volunteers who work primarily with youth under 18	X	Optional	X		X	X	X

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child, or others, in any way or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work or serve as a volunteer at Faith Christian Fellowship. In the absence of a conviction, if any

information comes to light that could pertain to a violation of the Faith Christian Fellowship's Safeguarding Policy, the Safeguarding Team and the Session will be notified by the person who receives that information so that the Session, in consultation with the Safeguarding Team as needed, can evaluate further.

Appendix D: Training of Members

Faith Christian Fellowship shall publicize and utilize the following training tools for all members:

- The completion of a membership course including review of our Safeguarding policy and respectful, sensitive discussion about the topic of abuse. It is imperative that FCF creates an environment of safety in which those who have been victims can feel secure.
- A commitment to the Faith Christian Fellowship Safeguarding Policy

Appendix E - Responsibility Assignment Matrix

R - Responsible: person or team responsible for this role, task, or situation

A - Accountable: holding another person or group accountable for a role, task, or situation

C- Consulted: ask to provide additional information or to render a decision about a particular role, task, or situation

I - Informed: notified that a role, task, or situation occurred

Tasks	Safeguarding Team	Church Office	Session	Ministry leaders
Safeguarding Policy	R	I	A	I
Staff/volunteer Screening	A	R (staff)	I	R (volunteers)
Member receiving Safeguarding policy	R	I	A	
Training	R	I	A	A
Policy violation documentation	R,A	I	R,A	I (as appropriate)

Appendix F : SAFEGUARDING POLICY INCIDENT REPORT

Date: _____

Victim's Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

Parent or Guardian's Name (if victim is a
minor): _____

Phone Number:

Email address:

Description of Incident(s), including dates & times: _____

Name of alleged perpetrator: _____

Victim's Signature

Action Taken: _____

Name & Signature of individual receiving the report

Follow up after initial contact (including dates & names of those providing follow-up):

Appendix G : INJURIES DURING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ACTIVITY

A formal report should be completed for injuries that occur during any Children's Ministry Activity. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Head injuries
- Bites
- Cuts and scrapes
- Bruises
- Falls

If a child is injured:

Treat the injury, using supplies in the first aid kit if necessary. *Note: We do not dispense any medications;* this includes over-the-counter creams and ointments. If the child needs more attention than we can provide (i.e. basic first aid), please alert the parent.

- ◆ Complete the Injury/Incident Report form.

- ◆ **Make an additional copy by taking a picture of it. Send it to the Children's Ministry Director.**

- ◆ Give form to the child's parents to take home. (Only if you have taken a picture of it and sent it to the Director)

- ◆ When the parents arrive to collect her/his child, briefly discuss the incident and provide the form to take home. Or speak to the parent directly after the activity. (Make sure the Director was sent a copy of the incident report to her phone)

- ◆ If the family wishes to discuss the incident further, offer to have the children's director contact them during the week. Inform Children's Ministry Director about the followup.

- * **If there was a need to fill out the form, be sure to inform the director of the incident along with a picture of the form.**

INJURY/INCIDENT REPORT

Parent Copy

Church Copy

Date: _____

Time: _____

Injured Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Description of Incident: _____

Action Taken: _____

We feel your child will be okay.

We advise seeking further
medical attention.

Name of staff/volunteer

Parents Signature

If you have any questions, please contact a Children's Ministry Director.

Appendix H: Considering Independent Consultation and Investigation

In response to allegations of abuse or harassment, especially when the allegations relate to pastors, elders, deacons, or other leaders, it is strongly advised that Faith Christian Fellowship should consider independent consultation or investigation. Some examples of these scenarios include:

- Authorities decline to investigate a report of abuse even though there is evidence of wrongdoing.
- The alleged offender is not charged with criminal wrongdoing by the authorities after an investigation, but sufficient concerns remain whether the alleged offender engaged in wrongful conduct that may disqualify him/her from continued participation in the organization.
- There is a serious pattern of misconduct denied by the alleged perpetrator.
- The alleged offender is a member of senior leadership (e.g. a Session member, Deacon, Pastor, or Ministry Director) or the Safeguarding Team.
- The alleged victim(s) requests an investigation or there is a strong belief that there may be other victims.
- The organization wants to investigate and assess how it responded to the allegations of abuse in order to better understand how it could have responded more effectively and to improve for the future.

When the Session declines to engage an independent consultation or investigation, they, along with the Safeguarding Team shall document all related information along with an account of their decision.

When the Session decides to engage an independent investigation, it must be conducted by an organization or persons outside of Faith Christian Fellowship, especially when the allegations relate to clergy or other leaders. The outside entity must be experienced in investigating cases of the specific form(s) of abuse or misconduct in view.

Upon completion of an investigation, the independent investigating body will deliver to the Session a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis, and recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations of the report, by the Session, according to the values and employment practices of our organization and in communication with the Safeguarding Team.

Appendix I: Caring for Survivors

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support.

This support will include:

- Listening and staying calm
- Affirming without judgment
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal, grief, and confusion)
- Respecting their privacy
- Encouraging and empowering their agency
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal, or other professional advice, but will focus on personal support and empowerment.

We will be careful to avoid causing further harm or re-traumatization, and under no circumstances - even when the abuse is alleged and not proven - will we:

- Place any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim
- Probe for intimate details of the abuse
- Express disbelief
- Attempt to silence the victim
- Encourage noncompliance with the law
- Express support for the perpetrator
- Urge meeting with, reconciliation with, or forgiveness of the perpetrator

Receiving a disclosure is an honor, not a burden. It is evidence of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. Faith Christian Fellowship encourages anyone receiving an adult's abuse disclosure to be guided by the following responses:

DO Say

Thank you for telling me.

That sounds really difficult/must have been so difficult.

DON'T Say

Why are you telling me this?

Why didn't you _____
(run/scream/stop him etc.)

I'm so sorry this happened to you.

How can I help?

Take as much time as you need.

I am here.

The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.

It is okay to be angry.

It's understandable you're feeling that way.

Your reaction is not an uncommon response.

You're not going crazy. These are normal responses following abuse.

It wasn't your fault.

What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?

You need to forgive and move on.

It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.

It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.

Try to be strong.

Out of tragedies good things happen.

You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.

I know how you feel.

Perhaps you misunderstood...

Appendix J: Authorization for Release/Exchange of Information

This form provides a representative of Faith Christian Fellowship with permission to communicate with individual providers (e.g., therapists, health care providers, etc.) regarding your current or past treatment.

Section I:

I, _____ (name), give my permission for _____ (name of provider) to share the information listed in Section II of this document with the person(s) or organization(s) I have specified in Section IV of this document.

Section II:

I give the above provider permission to:

- Disclose my health record including the following (check as appropriate):
 - Mental health records
 - Alcohol/drug abuse treatment records
 - Criminal records
 - Other (specify): _____

Form of disclosure:

- Electronic copy or access via web-based portal
- Verbal communication (e.g., telephone)
- Hard copy

Section III: Reason for Disclosure

Please detail the reasons why the information is being shared. If you are initiating the request for sharing information and do not wish to list the reasons for sharing, write "at my request."

Section IV: Who Can Receive My Information

I give authorization for the information detail in Section II of this document to be shared with the following individual(s) or organization:

Name & title (e.g., pastor, elder):

Organization: Faith Christian Fellowship

Address: 505 E. 42nd Street, Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 410-323-0202

Email: _____

I understand that the person(s)/organization listed above may not be covered by state/federal rules governing privacy and security of data and may be permitted to further share the information that is provided to them.

Section V: Duration of Authorization

This authorization to share my information is valid:

- From _____ (date) to _____ (date)
- All past, present, and future periods
- From the date of the signature in Section VI until the following events:

I understand that I am permitted to revoke this authorization to share my information at any time and can do so by submitting a request in writing to:

Organization: Faith Christian Fellowship, Attention: Session

Address: 505 E. 42nd Street, Baltimore, MD 21218

I understand that:

- In the event that my information has already been shared by the time my authorization is revoked, it may be too late to cancel permission to share my information.

- I understand that I do not need to give any further permission for the information detailed in Section II to be shared with the person(s) or organization listed in Section IV.

Section VI: Signature

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Appendix K: FCF Children/Youth Leader Participation Form

All information will be kept confidential. This information is needed from all applicants involving the supervision of minors who participate in our children/youth activities.

TODAY'S DATE: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

_____ Last Name First Middle

Present Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Cell Phone _____ Land Line _____

Work _____ Email _____

Vocation/Job Title _____

COLLEGE _____ DEGREE _____

MINISTRY INFORMATION

CIRCLE PROGRAM/S you are volunteering for:

Friends of Jesus Nursery Children's Sunday school Summer Camp

Youth D-Group Youth Sunday school Other _____

CHURCH WHERE YOU ARE A MEMBER

Membership at FCF is required to be a Lead Teacher in any children's/youth ministry. Do you plan to become a member or associate member of FCF??

YES _____ WHEN? _____ NO _____

PAST EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH / OTHER CHURCH MINISTRIES

List Gifts, Talents, Past Leadership Experiences, Training. Etc.

REFERENCES: NO RELATIVES PLEASE

NAME _____ NAME

ADDRESS _____ ADDRESS

PHONE _____ PHONE

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN? _____

PLEASE EXPLAIN ANSWER

The information contained in this application/form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, former employers or churches listed in this form and anyone identified by such references, former employees or churches to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to follow the policies and procedures of Faith Christian Fellowship and the staff and elders who oversee the Children's/Youth Ministry.

I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Request for Criminal Records Check & Authorization

Criminal records checks are conducted on all adults working in children’s ministry at Faith Christian Fellowship. The company used by FCF is Protect My Ministry.

I hereby request any police agency/department to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state and federal. I hereby release said police agency/department from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature

Print name

Maiden name if applicable _____

Print all aliases _____

Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Today’s Date _____

The following information is requested of each applicant when working with minors. Because of the sensitive nature of this information, please detach this page, place it in an envelope, seal it, and return the envelope to person in charge of the ministry you are volunteering with the preceding application. The information will be kept confidential.

Name _____
Last First Middle

Have you ever been convicted or pleaded guilty to a crime other than a minor traffic violation?
Yes ___ No ___ if yes, please explain, attach separate page if needed.

Have you ever been accused and/or convicted of physical or sexual abuse? Yes ___ No ___
Have you ever been treated for drug and/or alcohol abuse? Yes ___ No ___
Pertinent medical information that could influence time with minor (list medications)

Appendix L: D-Group Mentor Application

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScLdq0YPxB1KoR0Rq_kuLELQKcPpEaU_tM9UaNKL88b_drGtQ/viewform

Thank you for your interest in being a D-Group Mentor!

We will need you to fill out this form for our records as well as a background check and training video which will be emailed to you upon completion of this application.

Upon completion please email youth@fcfchurch.org for the background check and training to be sent to you virtually.

Email

Phone Number:

Address:

Legal Name:

Gender:

Date of Birth:

Citizenship Status:

Current Employment Status:

Do you have your own or will you be needing transportation assistance on a regular basis?

Would you be willing to pickup/drop off youth on a regular basis from our activities?

Which position(s) are you interested in?

Middle School: Monday's 6:30-8:30pm

Highschool: Sunday's 6:30-8:30pm

Floater between the two

Briefly describe your relationship with Jesus:

Would you be interested in sharing your testimony at one of our monthly 'Testimony & Worship Nights'?

Briefly Describe your Denominational Affiliation & Church History:

Where do you currently go to church?

If not currently attending, why or why not?

Do you have any previous experience working with youth or other skills that would translate to being a mentor at D-Group?

Do you have any life, work, or other skills you are willing to donate time as a teacher for the youth in our programs?

What positive traits will you bring to the table at D-Group?

Are there any 'negative' traits we should be aware of?

Why would you like to be a Mentor at D-Group?

Do you have any moral obligation to our code of conduct and social media lifestyle agreement for Mentors?

If yes, please specify which number(s) and why below:

I understand that by being a volunteer leader at Faith Christian Fellowship, my behavior outside of the ministry I serve including online is a direct reflection on myself, my position, this institution, and my relationship with the Lord. My aim is to know Jesus and lead like Him to the best of my ability.

I promise to abide by the following standards while I serve as a volunteer FCF:

1. I am able to friend/follow students on social media with the exception of Snapchat. I will allow students to request, follow, or friend me first.

- 2. I will be cautious about one-on-one interactions (including social media/text). If an interaction seems too personal or makes me uncomfortable, I will stop responding immediately and notify my supervisor (Julian Hague).**

- 3. I will be thoughtful about the words I use, the jokes I share and the things that I follow or like online. I acknowledge that my activity online may be visible to everyone who follows my feed, and I accept the responsibility and weight of those choices.**

- 4. I acknowledge that everything I post should be in line with my profession and life lived as a follower of Jesus Christ.**

- 5. I understand that everything that I post on social media is like a digital tattoo; even if I were to delete something, it will still be accessible forever by someone & can be screenshotted. (Even snapchat saves all its images.)**

- 6. I will obey the law while operating online in light of harassment, bullying, defamation, and discrimination.**

- 7. I will not slander the staff, leadership, or ministry of FCF or any other ministry or organization that FCF is affiliated with. If conflict arises amongst volunteers or staff I will take the issue to who I have it with and should they not receive I will bring two or three others in leadership to confront them with the issue at hand. (Matt. 18:16)**

- 8. I will refrain from pornography. If I have had a struggle in the past, I will confide in a brother or sister that I trust with the aim of healing & accountability. (James 5:16)**

- 9. I will refrain from drinking alcohol if under 21 years of age. If an adult, I will choose to drink responsibly, refrain from excessive drinking or drunkenness, and will not drink or provide alcohol or illicit material to underage minors. (1 Pet. 5:8)**

- 10. I will refrain from the use of any and all illegal substances.**

- 11. I will act professionally online. If I am questioning the appropriateness of something that I would like to share online, I will seek counsel from another person I trust before I post.**

- 12. I understand that I am a mandated reporter in the State of Maryland. If I hear of child abuse of any kind as outlined by the state of Maryland - I will due my due diligence to document and report all I have heard to Child Protective Services no matter who the perpetrator is in relationship to myself or the youth in the care of FCF.**

Do you consent to an online background check and to watch a safety training video (one hour length with quiz after) within two weeks of filling out this form?

Emergency Contact Name & Phone Number:

Any food allergies or health notes:

I acknowledge that active games are an option to participate in at our youth group activities. I will assume the risk of any activity I participate in and will not hold FCF or its constituents liable for any injury that may befall from participating in any activity at a youth group or church event.

I acknowledge

Please provide two references with names and phone numbers:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix M: Sample Background Check Agreement

I hereby request any police agency/department to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state and federal. I hereby release said police agency/department from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature

Print name

Maiden name if applicable _____

Print all aliases _____

Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Today's Date _____

Appendix N: Sample Safeguarding Pledge

I affirm that I have reviewed the Safeguarding Policy of Faith Christian Fellowship Church and I commit to upholding it to the best of my ability.

Signature

Date

Printed name

Appendix O: Expectations for Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether with an adult or minor, is always welcomed by the person and accountable to others (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?)
- Minors who need assistance in the restroom outside of the Children's Ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the Children's Ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by a second screened adult.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a minor who is not their own child in an isolated area (including giving rides).

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness)
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes or stories (including messaging, other communication, or sharing videos/media)

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. "Where would you be comfortable meeting up?")
- Always respect the "no" of others in setting personal boundaries.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, Session members, ministry directors, staff, or volunteers at Faith Christian Fellowship:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten

Appendix P: Potential Indicators of Child Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury
- These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is consistently dirty or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs
- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Stays at school outside of school hours
- Frequently absent or significant academic struggles
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs

