

**Child Protection Policy
For
Second Avenue Baptist Church**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes (a) child . . . welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5).

Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones . . . it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to ensure both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. Children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences and conventions can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members, adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. Thus, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

PURPOSE: It is the purpose and intent of Second Avenue Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment in which to teach and care for the children of our church and community.

GOAL: Our goal is to protect children from any form of abuse by employees or volunteers in this church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child”, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling, penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include physical abuse, verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

DEFINITION OF A MINOR: A minor is any individual under the age of 18 years.

The procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision to, have custody of or who have direct interaction with minors in church facilities or church-sponsored activities.

This policy will address five (5) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and volunteers, and our church: selection and screening process, supervision of workers, reporting procedures, a response plan and training.

I. Selection and Screening Process

- A. Church Employee – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with minors.

*Prospective Church employees will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate staff member, and/or the Personnel Committee chairperson. Prospects must have references checked and verified, and give written permission for a criminal background check. **A criminal background check will then be performed and confidential results will be kept in a separate, confidential, locked file in the Administrative Assistant’s office.** Any information indicating that the candidate has questionable background, poses a threat to others or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will result in the immediate removal of the individual candidate from consideration for employment with this organization.*

- B. Volunteer worker – anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position. All volunteers working with minors will be required to complete a confidential application form, be interviewed by an appropriate staff member and have references checked and verified. They must give written permission for a criminal background check if they are going to be working in the care of children or have custody or supervision of children. **A criminal background check will then be performed and confidential results will be kept on file with the signed application in the Administrative Assistant’s office.** In addition to the above requirement, a volunteer must be a member or regular attendee of Second Avenue Baptist Church for at least six (6) months prior to being eligible to volunteer in areas that minister to minors. The ministerial staff must approve any variation from this procedure.

Note: There will be no variations permitted for Criminal Background Checks. This will be performed on all Employees and volunteers who work with minors. “Grand fathering” existing volunteers is not permitted.

II. Supervision of Workers

A. Two Adult Rule

Two adults or in some cases one adult and older teenager (15 and up) will be used in the supervision of minors. However, two adults should always be present in high-risk settings including all events occurring off the church property and events on the church property at times that cause children to be in an isolated area with the caretakers. In addition, age-group ministers, appropriate team leaders and/or program directors will be present and available in the hallways where minors are present. Every effort will be made to use teenagers only in addition to the two adults in a classroom. Further, every effort will be made not to use any husband/wife teams in classrooms of children under three years of age or other non-verbal minors to comply with the two adult rule. A husband/wife combination may be used when a third qualified adult is also present.

B. View Windows

Every effort will be made to place preschoolers, children, and students in rooms with view windows for all teaching/learning activities.

C. Adequate Personnel

Every effort will be made to provide adequate personnel for supervision. Correct adult/child ration will be maintained, if at all possible. Those ratios are:

Babies not walking	2 babies to 1 adult
Walking – 2 yrs.	4 children to 1 adult
Twos & Threes	6 children to 1 adult
Fours to Kindergarten	8 children to 1 adult

Ratio for minors 6 years of age and above should be determined by the adult leadership, keeping in mind that the “two adult rule” must be followed.

D. Overnight Supervision

All overnight chaperones and supervisors will be cleared in advance with a completed **criminal background check on file** and will be required to comply with all outlined policies. The two adult rule will be upheld in all cases of overnight supervision.

E. Security Identification Procedure

A church nursery security identification procedure will be used for children up to four years of age. Two nametags with the child’s full name are prepared. One of the nametags is clipped to the child’s clothing and the other is given to the parent. The parent must produce that nametag in order to claim the child.

F. Work Restrictions

1. Children five years of age or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female
2. For children over the age of five, an adult should check to make sure the facility is safe, and then wait outside the restroom until the children come out.
3. Never touch a person's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.
4. Workers should avoid any appearance of impropriety, such as male adult sitting a female 12 year old on his lap, kissing or embracing others, etc.
5. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child. Children over the age of 12 may be released on their own with the permission of the parents, guardians, or person specifically authorized to pick up the child.

G. Discipline

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the workers' coordinator/supervisor or to a parent or guardian.

III. Reporting Procedures

All church employees and volunteers (workers) are considered to be "permissive reporters" and although are not required to report suspected child abuse to authorities, are under the law provided immunity for persons or entities that report abuse in "good faith". Observed, reported, or suspected child abuse or child molestation in the church shall be verbally reported immediately to the supervising director and/or pastor and written documentation shall follow. Any reporting to civil authorities will be by the pastor with the advice and knowledge of the church's attorney.

IV. Response Plan

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously, and the church staff will take appropriate action, including immediately notifying the Personnel Committee chairperson, Deacon chairperson, pastor, and/or any other internal authority regarding cases where there is reason to believe abuse or criminal acts have occurred.
- B. The church staff will not deny or minimize the incident. The Second Avenue Baptist Church pastoral staff will minister to all persons involved, as well as investigate, and cooperate with civil authorities.
- C. The appropriate church staff will document on a Notice of Injury form (in writing with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.

- D. Any employee of the ministry who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of an investigation (unless the employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, in which case they will be terminated in accordance with organizational employment practices).
- E. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of the investigation will be removed from their position pending the completion of the investigation.
- F. Any employee whose allegations are substantiated for any form of abuse will be removed from work with minors. The church will consult with legal counsel for advice if termination of employment is indicated.
- G. The Senior Pastor and Chairman of the deacons will designate the official spokesperson for the church. Consultation will occur with the church attorney and insurance company prior to any public comments. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media with regard to any actual or alleged incidents of abuse.
- H. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers will cooperate fully with any law enforcement or governmental agency that may be investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation in connection with activities of the church.

Annual Employee/Worker Review

1. This policy and procedures will be conveyed for review annually to all workers, employees, coordinators, supervisors, and leaders to whom it applies.
2. All ministry employees and volunteer workers who will be working in any capacity with minors will complete a brief renewal application every year. As part of this renewal, a new criminal background check will be completed every two years.
3. Should the renewal application/criminal background check show that any employee or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with minors, they will be immediately removed from their current position, and will not be considered for other positions involving work with minors.

Revision of Policy/Procedures

The Trustees will coordinate a review of this policy and procedures regularly (at least annually) with legal counsel, to the Personnel Committee, Children's Committee and Youth Committee. The policy and procedures should then be updated to incorporate new laws and procedures in accordance with bylaws of the church. Any such modification should be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification and should also be reviewed as part of the annual renewal application.

V. Training

The Trustees are responsible for providing training with regard to this policy and procedures on a semi-annual basis.

Lesson objectives for training workers with children and youth should include the following:

- A. Provide a basic orientation to the facts about child abuse and the church.
- B. Present a rationale for the emphasis upon protecting young people from abuse in the church.
- C. Describe church policies governing ministry to minors.
- D. Encourage worker commitments to follow church policies.

Injuries or Illness

1. Workers who are ill (with a fever, or having a communicable disease, which can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable substitute (who has been approved as a volunteer worker through the above screening process) must be used to take the place of workers who are ill. A list of suitable substitutes should be developed and published for use in advance of the need.
3. Parents or guardians will be notified when their child is ill and the child will be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If this is not possible, then the child who is ill should be isolated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the person can be returned to their parent or guardian.
4. Reasonable steps should be taken to avoid contact by anyone with body fluids of any kind. Gloves should be worn to avoid contact with blood, when changing a diaper and when in contact with other body fluids (i.e., vomit).
5. Any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of an injury to a worker or child will take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person.
6. Persons who have received an injury which is obviously minor, should be given simple first aid, as needed, at the time of injury; however, absolutely no medication either orally or topically should be administered without a release from the parent or guardian in advance. The child's parent or guardian should be notified and given a notice of injury document when they pick up the injured person.
7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the injured person should be immediately notified, along with the worker's coordinator/supervisor. An ambulance should also be called immediately if warranted by the injury. A notarized release form signed by the parent or guardian should be on file in advance.

Violation of Policy or Procedures

1. Workers must promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their behalf or by others, which violates this policy or procedures.
2. Any coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader who becomes aware of a violation of the policy and procedures will take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers; and will remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted, or if the worker poses a potential threat to others.

Conclusion

In all our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal".