

University Baptist Church Guidelines for Children/Youth Workers

Section One: Introduction

This document presents the policies of University Baptist Church Fort Worth, Texas (“UBC” or the “Church”) relevant to issues of safety for the minors involved in UBC ministries and programs. It signifies our recognition of the importance of providing a safe and caring atmosphere in which our minors and volunteers can develop a closer relationship with God. Our goal is to provide all minors with an environment that uplifts, encourages and enables them to become whom God created them to be. We desire to surround minors with adults whom God has gifted and called to be a part of this growth. With these policies and guidelines we seek to uphold our spiritual, ethical, moral and legal responsibilities. We take seriously our policies to prevent abuse and promote safety, and we will work to see that they are followed. These measures include, but are not limited to, screening employed and volunteer workers for past offenses involving sexual or physical abuse of anyone, providing regular training for employed and volunteer workers, using a “Two-Leader” Rule, maintaining standards of appropriate classroom discipline and keeping classrooms open to staff, worker, and parental visitation at any time.

Section Two: Definitions

Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws

1. Definition of child abuse or neglect as defined by the Texas Family Code:
 - a. Child abuse is defined to include acts or omissions which cause or permit:
 - i. Mental or emotional injury to a child.
 - ii. Physical injury or threat of physical injury to a child.
 - iii. Failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent action by another person that results in physical injury to a child.
 - iv. Sexual contact with a child.
 - v. Failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual contact with or in the presence of a child.
 - b. Neglect includes:
 - i. Leaving a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of harm.
 - ii. Requiring the child to use judgment or take actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities.
 - iii. Failure to obtain medical care for a child.

- iv. Failure to provide a child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child.

2. Sexual Misconduct:

Sexual misconduct claims include all crimes involving sexual conduct under the Texas Penal Code. They include indecent exposure, indecency with a child and sexual assault including rape. They also include conduct that may not violate a penal statute but is still sexually oriented such as sexual harassment and sexual suggestion.

3. Duty to report ... the Texas Reporting Statute:

- a. Any person who learns of or has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person must report that belief to a local or state law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (Reference Section 7, paragraph 2b).
- b. An oral report must be made within 48 hours upon learning of the abuse or neglect or the likelihood of abuse or neglect. A written incident report (Reference Section 7.2) must be made within five days to the same agency or department.
- c. The report shall be non-accusatory, meaning the identity of the victim of the abuse or neglect must be identified but the person making the report is not required to speculate as to the person who committed the abuse or neglect.

4. Liability for failure to report:

A person failing to report child abuse or neglect commits a Class B Misdemeanor punishable by fines up to \$1,000 and/or confinement for up to 180 days. Additionally, a person who is the victim of child abuse and his or her family may bring a civil claim against the church and/or its agent (the person who failed to report the crime) as required by law.

5. Immunity:

A person making a report or assisting in the investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect is immune from liability, either civil or criminal, that might be incurred. This means that a person who reports child abuse and is later sued by any of the parties including the parents of the child or the accused perpetrator of the crime, can defend themselves on the basis that their actions were absolutely protected by this immunity statute and the reporter should not be liable for damages relating to the reporting.

6. Clergy privilege:

- a. The Texas Rules of Civil and Criminal Evidence provides that communications between clergy and an individual consulting with him or her for the purpose of seeking spiritual advice in the clergy's professional capacity is considered privileged.

- b. There is, however, an express exception which provides that the privilege disappears in the event the clergy member learns of child abuse or neglect, and the clergy is required to report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute.
7. Church liability
 - a. The church is potentially liable to civil action if, as an employer, it failed to make inquiries of past employers (where names and addresses have been disclosed) who employed the employee within the last five (5) years, concerning the possible occurrence of sexual exploitation by the employee.

UBC Definitions

1. Minor/child: A person under the age of 18 years who has not been legally married or emancipated.
2. Adult: Anyone not a minor/child
3. One-On-One: When a worker has the potential of being alone with a minor during a UBC sponsored program. This includes transportation during a UBC sanctioned event.
4. Parent: The natural or adoptive mother or father or legal guardian who has custody of the child.
5. Leader/worker: An individual who is approved to serve in a paid or unpaid position within the church or within a church-sponsored program for minors.
6. Classification of leaders/workers: In order to screen leaders/workers appropriately to their responsibilities, the Church ministerial staff person responsible for each division will categorize leaders/workers into two categories - primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibility and risk, not to the ages of the minors being served.
 - a. Primary leaders/workers: Includes all paid staff members plus those volunteers serving UBC in regular programmed activities (e.g. Sunday school teachers, etc.). Primary leaders/workers should meet the primary screening standards and must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
 - b. Secondary leaders/workers: Includes persons who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances (i.e. volunteers who see minors only in a group setting, on church premises, or who interact with minors in the presence of an approved primary leader/worker). This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities. All volunteer leaders/workers under the age of eighteen (18) will be considered secondary workers.
7. Authorized Representative: The person who brought the minor to the UBC program.
8. Screening Process: The process by which determinations regarding people who desire to work with UBC's minors are made. There are provisions for two levels of screening based on the person's role/involvement with UBC minors.

- a. **Primary volunteer leaders/workers:** The screening process for Primary volunteer leaders/workers will include a review of the completed Leadership Profile form (Ref. Appendix B), review of the applicant's criminal background check (Ref. Appendix C), possible contact with an applicant's references (mandatory for all paid staff), and a recommendation by appropriate staff regarding the applicant's fitness for working with minors.
 - b. **Secondary leaders/workers:** The screening process for Secondary leaders/workers will include a review of the applicant's criminal background check (Ref. Appendix C) and a recommendation by appropriate staff regarding the applicant's fitness for working with minors.
9. **Application Appeal Committee ("Appeal Committee"):** A committee led by a Church ministerial staff member that is not involved in the program that denied an applicant's eligibility and the chairs of the youth and children's committees.
 10. **Appeal Process:** The process by which an applicant may appeal the decision to deny eligibility to an applicant. The applicant will submit his or her appeal in writing to the Church ministerial staff member designated to lead the appeals process. The Appeal Committee will review all collected information, meet with the applicant and issue a final decision regarding eligibility.
 11. **Six-Month Rule:** Volunteers will be permitted to work with minors after they have attended UBC for at least six months. The applicable Ministerial staff member may make an exception to this rule for someone who has undergone the full screening process but has not attended for six months. However, the Ministerial staff member must justify the exception in writing and place that documentation in the applicant's file, which will be maintained with all of the worker application files in a locked file cabinet.
 12. **Two-Leader Rule:** Two leaders should be present during any minor's activity; at least one leader shall be an adult.

Section Three: General Guidelines for Care Provided at UBC

1. The Two-Leader Rule will be followed. Parents must not leave children in any classroom unless two workers are there to receive the child. The parent should stay with the child until a second worker arrives.
2. Staff, parents, or workers may visit any minor's classroom at any time.
3. UBC will make reasonable efforts to obtain and maintain a list of emergency contact information for all minors who attend a church activity.
4. Meeting rooms for minors will have windows in the doors to aid in monitoring, or the doors will be kept open.
5. When assisting young children in the bathroom, workers will keep the door at least partially open.
6. For special events (including, but not limited to community events, e.g. VBS) people who have not yet applied to be leaders/workers may want to volunteer. These people will be considered to be secondary volunteer leaders/workers and may participate:
 - a. at the discretion of a church minister, and
 - b. when possible, they are partnered with primary volunteer leaders/workers

Section Four: Recruitment Policies

1. UBC will use the Six-Month Rule in regard to volunteer workers.
2. UBC will require all potential primary leaders/workers to complete the screening process. A criminal records check will be run on all paid and volunteer workers before they begin work in these areas. The criminal records check will also be run on all current paid and volunteer workers in these areas.
3. All primary leaders/workers desiring to work with minors will be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted by the minister of the program in which the applicant will work. A team of interviewers may be used. Church policy concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect must be discussed during the interview.
4. At a minimum, every three (3) years, following the implementation of this policy, UBC will conduct criminal background checks on all leaders/workers.
5. The results of the background checks will be stored with the application files maintained by the church staff. The administrative assistant who maintains UBC membership records will also maintain a list of approved primary/secondary workers.
6. Anyone who has committed, whether convicted or not, any offenses involving sexual or physical abuse of anyone, as well as anyone who refuses to sign the Leadership Profile form, will not be permitted to work with minors.
7. Anyone who is denied eligibility to work with minors may appeal this decision.

Section Five: Staffing and Supervision Policies

1. Supervision
 - a. UBC will provide a reasonable ratio of workers to minors. Activities will be cancelled if two leaders are not available.
 - b. If a minister or other worker wants to meet privately with a minor, that person should obtain parental permission or should use the Two-Leader Rule.
2. Worker training
 - a. Each worker will be given a copy of this “Guidelines for Children/Youth Workers” policy. They must sign a statement indicating they have received and read this policy before they can begin working with minors (Ref. Appendix D).
 - b. Periodic training sessions will be offered to workers.

Section Six: Field Trips, Special Events, and Overnight Trips

1. All leaders must be approved.
2. UBC must obtain signed consent and medical release forms for each minor participating in a special event in which the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) are not present. On all overnight activities, there must be adequate/appropriate supervision – both in number and in gender.
3. The leader and/or driver will have the necessary medical and emergency care forms for the minors under his or her supervision.

Section Seven: Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse or Neglect That Occur Within the Church

1. Reporting policy

It is the policy of the church to report any incident of abuse or neglect toward any minor in the church. This would include participants in temporary childcare programs.

- a. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
- b. Notify your supervisor, the supervising minister, and pastor immediately.
- c. The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of duties involving minors until the official investigation has been completed.
- d. Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- e. The pastor or his agent will inform the victim and victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation. If abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response. (Church legal counsel should assist in this determination).
- f. In an instance where abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- g. In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the church should take action based on the advice of law enforcement officials or legal counsel.
- h. The pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation.

2. Reports required

Any worker of the church who has cause to believe that a minor's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedure:

- a. The worker shall report such belief to the pastor or a member of the church staff and will complete an Incident Report (Paragraph 3 below).
- b. The worker will report within 48-hours to one of the following:
 - (1) Local law enforcement (911)
 - (2) The Texas Abuse Hot Line (1-800-252-5400 then press 3 for a case worker). Within five (5) days, a written report must be provided to the same agency the worker telephoned.
- c. The pastor or his agent will notify the parents of the minor (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect).
- d. The pastor, or his agent, in consultation with the chairperson of the Personnel Committee and/or the pastor's agent will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- e. The pastor, or his agent, will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

3. Incident report

The person making a report should identify:

- a. The name and address of the minor.
- b. The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the minor.
- c. Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

4. Confidentiality

- a. All reports of abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the church shall be cause for immediate dismissal.
- b. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

5. Investigation of alleged abuse or neglect

- a. No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the minor, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a minor has been abused or neglected.
- b. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

6. Suspension of church related duties

- a. A person accused of abuse or neglect will be suspended from all church related duties involving minors. The Personnel Committee is not authorized to conduct an investigation of the incident but is allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident.
- b. The person accused should be suspended on 'paid leave' until the investigation is completed. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to his/her prior position.

7. Preservation of records

- a. Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect occurred, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity, shall be transferred to the pastor or the pastor's agent. They will review them to determine if the documents are complete in accordance with church policy. If any documents are missing, they shall make a written notation and transfer the documents to the church business administrator who shall retain them until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed. Once all investigations/actions are complete, records will be retained per UBC's retention policy.

8. Ministerial care

- a. The ministerial staff shall encourage and assist the minor and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care, and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate pastoral care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest.
- b. All persons shall act towards the minor, the parents and the accused in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.

9. Liaison with the community

- a. The pastor, or his appointed agent, will serve as the church's sole access to the media. The church should emphasize to the public its position on abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all minors.
- b. Position Statement – Having a carefully prepared statement is far superior to making no comment. The statement below is suggested for use as a public response in any allegation of abuse until all of the facts are uncovered and the case reviewed:

The safety of the minors entrusted to our care is a top priority at UBC. UBC has taken precautions to protect the minors entrusted to our care. We are distressed by an accusation of abuse. We are cooperating fully with the (insert name of appropriate agencies and authorities) leading the investigation into this matter. Due to the ongoing investigation into this matter, UBC is unable to provide any further information or make any additional comments at this time.

- c. UBC will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.

Appendices:

- A. Storage of Application Forms
- B. University Baptist Church, Fort Worth Leadership Profile Form
- C. Authorization For Release of Information
- D. Acknowledgement of Receipt of Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws and University Baptist Church Guidelines for Children/Youth Workers

APPENDIX A STORAGE OF APPLICATION FORMS

1. All application forms should be returned to the minister under whom you will be volunteering or the minister with whom you would like your interview conducted. The staff member receiving the form is responsible to complete reference checks, background checks and applicant interview (if needed).
2. Application Forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the record storage office. Ministers allowed access to the forms shall be limited to:
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Minister of Music
 - c. Minister to Families
 - d. Minister to Students
 - e. Minister of Administration
 - f. Church Administrative Staff at the direction of the Pastor or aforementioned ministerial staff.

Each time a record is accessed, a record will be kept of the date and the person accessing the form.

3. Applicants are allowed to review their personal files. Each time a record is accessed, a record will be kept of the date and the person accessing the form.
4. Only a company that has been licensed and bonded will be used to complete criminal record checks. A copy of the final report will be placed in the applicant's file by the minister approving the application. Criminal records checks may be re-run at any time.
5. Forms will be filed by the administrative assistant who maintains UBC membership records.
6. Leaders approved to work with minors will be identified in the Shelby Data Base as acceptable volunteers for any ministry that would invite them to work with minors.

APPENDIX B UNIVERSITY BAPTIST CHURCH, FORT WORTH LEADERSHIP PROFILE FORM

This form is to be completed for all positions (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or care of minors. **This is not an employment application form.** Persons seeking a position in the church as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this Leadership Profile Form.

General Information

Print Full Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Day Phone () _____ Evening Phone () _____

E-Mail Address _____ Cell Phone () _____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Marital Status _____ Spouse's Name _____

Emergency Contact _____

Are you a member of University Baptist Church? _____ How long? _____

List the names and addresses of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years:

Church's Name	Address	Dates Attended
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Please write a brief paragraph summarizing the circumstances surrounding your acceptance of Jesus Christ as your Savior. Use an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.

Please write a brief paragraph about your relationship with Christ and how you see Him at work in your life today. Use an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.

Please describe some of the gifts and talents you have and how you see them being used in different ministry areas.

Have you attended any training or conferences related to this ministry? Please list in chronological order beginning with most recent.

Confidentiality

University Baptist Church recognizes the need to ensure the confidential nature of the answers to each of the following questions. A locked filing cabinet labeled "Volunteer Leadership" will hold every record received by the church related to the approval of each volunteer leader. Individuals may access their personal file; otherwise, access to the "Volunteer Leadership" cabinet will be

limited. Each time an individual's file is accessed, a record will be kept in a logbook of the date, time, and person accessing the file.

Personal Information

Answering yes to any questions listed below does not automatically exclude you from working with minors. It will, however, necessitate a personal interview by one of the ministerial staff members. Please return this form to the minister under whom you will be volunteering so an interview can be arranged.

Have you been accused of improper behavior with a minor (as defined in Section 2)? If so, please give details below:

Have you received counseling or treatment for improper behavior with a minor or problems relating to improper behavior with a minor? If so, give details below:

Have you been arrested? If so, give details below:

Are there any criminal charges currently pending against you? If so, please give details below:

Have you received counseling or treatment as the perpetrator for problems relating to physical violence, child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, and/or family violence? If so, please give details below:

Have you received counseling or treatment for substance abuse? If so, please give details below:

Is there any additional personal information that you would like to share with the ministry staff (including spiritual, physical or psychological health)?

WORKER'S STATEMENT

I have read all the guidelines and policies and agree to observe the safeguards listed in this profile. I agree to be bound by the by-laws and policies of University Baptist Church and to refrain from any unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Personal Information - To be used for criminal background check.

Print Full Name	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)
Phone Number	Driver's License Number
Other Names Used in Past Seven Years (maiden, nickname, etc.)	Social Security Number
Address	City, State, Zip
Additional Residences in Past Seven Years	

Reference Information -

Two references are required. If possible, provide one reference who is a member of University Baptist Church. If you have recently joined from another church, provide a reference from that church.

Name (Reference #1)	Phone Number	E-mail Address
Address	City, State, Zip	
Name (Reference #2)	Phone Number	E-mail Address
Address	City, State, Zip	

Release Authorization

I hereby authorize University Baptist Church of Fort Worth to obtain information relating to my criminal history record through any agency, entity, or organization having such information. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudication. I understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time.

I authorize all persons who may have information relevant to this check to disclose such information to University Baptist Church, or its agent, and I hereby release all persons from liability on account of disclosure. I understand that all information gathered would be considered strictly confidential except as otherwise agreed.

Signature	Date
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APPENDIX D

Acknowledgement of Receipt of

Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws

and

University Baptist Church Guidelines for Children/Youth Workers

Statement

I have been given a copy of both the Texas child protection definitions and laws and University Baptist Church Guidelines for Children/Youth Workers.

I have read and understand both documents. I understand that my services as an employee of University Baptist Church or as a volunteer worker who works with minors at University Baptist Church is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

Signature _____

Name _____
please print

Date _____