



ABUSE PROTECTION PROGRAM AND POLICY FOR MINORS AND ELDERLY

Purpose

It is the purpose and intent of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children, youth and elderly members and participants of our faith family.

Goal

Our goal is to protect children, youth and the elderly from abuse, molestation or any type of inappropriate behavior by employees or volunteers in this church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

Definition of Child Abuse

The State of Georgia has defined child abuse as physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker by other than accidental means, neglect or exploitation of a child, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child. Further, child abuse may occur in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in an 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.

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 verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Definition of a Minor, Disabled Adult or Elderly Adult

In Georgia a minor is any individual under the age of 18 years and is referred to as minor, child, children and/or youth in this policy. Georgia statute addressing mandatory reporting for suspected disabled adult/elder abuse, a "disabled adult" is a person 18 years of age or older who is mentally or physically incapacitated, has Alzheimer's disease or has dementia, and an "elder person" means a person 65 years of age or older.

Scope of this Policy

The policy and procedure set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or the elderly, or who have opportunity to have contact with minors or the elderly in or at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church facilities or church sponsored activities.

This policy will address five (5) areas that are critical for the protection of all affected individuals and our church: employee and volunteer selection process, employee and volunteer training, operating practices, mandatory reporting procedures, and response to allegations.

Administration of the SAFE HARBOR policy is handled in the office of the Executive Director, Business Operations. The Human Resources Director keeps all records in confidential files.

The church requests that staff and volunteers seek to understand and willingly participate in the application process. Support of the SAFE HARBOR program includes praying for God's protection of our children and the church.

I. SELECTION PROCESS

A. General - It is the policy of the church to not allow any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults to work in any ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. All candidates for employment or volunteer positions will be required to complete all steps of the SAFE HARBOR selection process. The selection process includes completing an application to serve, signing in acceptance and agreement to the policy, providing three references of character and completing a criminal background check authorization and consent form.

B. Employee - anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with children, youth, and/or the elderly.

1. All church employees will be required to complete a confidential application form, will be interviewed by an appropriate church staff person, have references checked, and a thorough criminal background check completed.
2. All records, forms and reports regarding employees will be maintained in the Human Resources office.

C. Volunteer - anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of children, youth, and/or the elderly.

1. All volunteers will be required to complete a confidential application form, may be interviewed by an appropriate church staff person, will have references checked, and a thorough criminal background check completed.
2. In addition to the above requirement, a volunteer must be a member of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church or regular attendee for at least six (6) months. A volunteer who has not been a member or regular attendee of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church for at least six (6) months does not meet these membership requirements and may serve only upon recommendation of the appropriate age-group ministry.
3. All records, forms and reports regarding volunteers will be maintained in the Human Resources office.

D. Minors - In addition to the above volunteer requirements, if a minor desires to be a volunteer working with other minors, his or her parent or guardian must sign the confidential application in the appropriate place indicating that the parent or guardian knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.

II. TRAINING

A. Employees

1. All employees will attend a New Employee Orientation session that will familiarize them with the Safe Harbor program. If the employee will serve with children, youth or the elderly, they will receive additional age-group/ministry specific guidelines regarding the church's protection policies for safety, security, child discipline and reporting.
2. The church provides annual refresher training to all employees to further increase awareness of children, youth and elder protection and to enable ministry staff to be effective leaders of ministry volunteers.

B. Volunteers

1. All volunteers will receive initial training and annual refresher training about the Safe Harbor program and age group/ministry specific guidelines regarding the church's protection policies for safety, security, child discipline and reporting.

III. PROTECTION POLICY

A. Two-Adult Rule

Age-group ministers, division directors, hall monitors, greeters and/or program directors will be present, or nearby, and available on each floor and in the hallways where minors are present. Every effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present in the room, or nearby, with preschoolers, children and youth during church activities. Every effort will be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with a minor. A husband and wife working in the same room will be considered as one adult for the purposes of this policy.

B. View Windows/Open Doors

Preschoolers, children and youth should be placed in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.

C. Over-Night and Local Activities

All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all of the SAFE HARBOR policies during Johnson Ferry Baptist Church sponsored over-night activities and local activities.

D. Out-of-Town Activities

All participants should have written parental consent and a medical release form in order to participate in out-of-town activities. Consent forms must be completed for each trip. Medical release information may be completed for one-year periods and renewed annually. All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all Johnson Ferry Baptist Church policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in SAFE HARBOR during Johnson Ferry Baptist Church sponsored out-of-town activities. (See Age-Specific Guidelines.)

E. Preschool Security Policies and Age-Specific Guidelines

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church has a detailed, working preschool security policy which is available for review in the Preschool office. Similarly, each of the other ministry areas may produce age-appropriate guidelines that apply to their children, youth, and adult workers. All employees and volunteers should conscientiously follow all age-specific guidelines in the ministry area(s) where they serve. Questions about specific ministry area policies should be directed to that ministry office.

F. Weekday Programs

Due to the professional relationship of the teacher and youth, parents understand that only one teacher may be present in certain learning or artistic performance programs.

G. Elderly Programs

Volunteers should visit same gender shut-ins who are in private homes only with the permission of the major care-giver and should not transport the shut-in except with care-giver permission. The same level of respect and consideration should be given the shut-in as any able-bodied adult.

IV. MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any employee or volunteer having reasonable cause to believe that suspected minor or elderly abuse has occurred shall report or cause such reports of such abuse to be made as provided in the mandated reporter Georgia statutes. Any "Child Service Organization" includes the church thereby giving responsibility to all employees and volunteers to report appropriately.

The reasonable cause shall be reported immediately to the Supervisor. The Supervisor will inform their appropriate Executive and/or Human Resources Director. The Executive, Executive Director and Human Resources Director will ensure a quick and appropriate response, including reporting to law enforcement and/or associated agencies as appropriate and necessary.

Reporting abuse or inappropriate behaviors or relationships can precipitate severe consequences to those involved, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse of inappropriate behaviors or relationships can have severe consequences to a child or elderly person at risk.

V. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

A. All allegations will be taken seriously. Church staff will take appropriate action to report allegations in accordance with the reporting requirements of the state of Georgia, insurance policy requirements and advice of legal counsel.

B. The official spokesperson for the church will be the Senior Pastor or his appointee. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media regarding such matters.

C. The church staff will thoroughly document all works in handling any incident.

D. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. Johnson Ferry Baptist Church will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.

E. To provide time for objective investigation, the church may suspend from serving any member or volunteer who is accused of inappropriate behavior or abuse of children, youth or elderly.

VI. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Refer to the Pastoral Care office and/or the Elders for disciplinary process.

VII. AMENDMENT OF POLICY

The Church Elders may amend these policies as they deem necessary.

VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2002

IX. REVISION DATE(s)

April 26, 2019

February 28, 2019

February 22, 2012

July 7, 2009

May 1, 2003

