



Johnson Ferry Baptist Church
Caring Well Child and Youth Protection Policy
July 2023

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I. Purpose of Child and Youth Protection Policy

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church exists to help people find truth, belonging, and purpose in Jesus. With our mission in mind, it is the purpose and intent of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for all children and youth as well as their families. Constant protection of those who are most vulnerable is of utmost priority. Johnson Ferry Baptist Church therefore has zero-tolerance for any form of abuse of children/youth (physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological). The Johnson Ferry Baptist Church Child and Youth Protection Policy therefore exists to educate and inform every one of the safeguards put in place that empower life-changing ministry, while at the same time, keeping everyone safe.

This JFBC Child and Youth Protection Policy identifies children/youth in the 5 categories listed in this section.

- This protection plan is broken down into six sections:
 - (Birth – 5th Grade)
 - Children's, Preschool, Childcare, Children's & Preschool Worship & Arts
 - (6th – 12th Grade)
 - High School, Middle School, Student Worship & Arts
 - Sports & Fitness (All Grades)
 - Spring, fall, winter sports, worship through dance, summer camps
 - Wee School (All Grades)
 - Johnson Ferry Christian Academy (All Grades)

II. People Definitions

Adults are individuals eighteen years or older.

Minors are individuals under eighteen years of age (under Georgia law and for most state laws).

- Child is identified in this specific policy as between the ages of 0-12
- Youth is identified in this specific policy as between the ages of 12-18
 - The age of 18 is included for youth who are still in high school even though considered an adult under Georgia law.

Staff are the paid employees of the church, including JFCA and Wee School.

Volunteers are adults who work with children/youth and are not in the employment of the church. Volunteers can include but are not limited to lay leaders, childcare workers, team leaders, hall monitors, teachers, coaches, coordinators, vendors, etc. The term 'volunteer' will be used throughout this protection plan as an all-encompassing term for anyone who serves the children/youth and is not church staff.

Helpers are minors who are at least one age group older than the children they are assisting and are assisting in some area of preschool/children's ministry alongside at least two non-related adults.

III. ETHICAL STANDARD

It should be noted that for Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, our desire is for relationships among members and guests to flourish well beyond the day-to-day ministry of the church. We seek daily to live in direct community with each other, and as a result, the body of believers here at Johnson Ferry will almost daily be involved in what constitutes as an endless array of informal gatherings with fellow believers that will often include children/youth. Examples could include but are not limited to attending sporting events, vacations, trips, meals, etc.

It is therefore the expectation that all senior leadership, staff, and volunteers seek to always live a life in every scenario that is above reproach. Through your position as a senior leader, staff, or volunteer, you are given the blessed opportunity to reside in a position of authority, and in this instance a position of authority over children/youth. Consequently, we are all held to a higher standard in every aspect of life that involves in this particular scenario, all interactions with children/youth.

Such a standard leads to the expectation that any and all interactions with a child/youth that could be deemed questionable should be reported to the Caring Well Hotline.

IV. Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of Children and Youth

Training

All employees and volunteers are required to annually attend one of JFBC's ministry specific training and equipping sessions before they are able to volunteer with children/youth. Training is applicable to both new and existing volunteers. Parents with questions about training are welcome to attend these sessions. All JFBC staff, regardless of direct/indirect contact with students, will receive training on children/youth protection policies.

- Training annually will include mandatory reporting requirements, reporting procedures, signs of abuse and effects of abuse, definitions of various forms of abuse, grooming, importance of being proactive with child/youth safety and protection, code of conduct/expectations, and consequences of violation.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, JFBC has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers who work directly with our children/youth.

- All employees regardless of position, as well as all volunteers, before serving, will be required to complete a Safe Harbor application, having at least two independent references checked. All employees regardless of position, as well as all volunteers are also required to participate in a thorough criminal background before serving. Safe Harbor approval is required for renewal every three years.
 - A background check is completed at the local, state, and federal level.
 - State and Federal Sex Offender Databases are utilized as well.

- In addition to the Safe Harbor application, 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 leader.
 - Exemptions to the membership requirement apply to JFCA, Wee School, and Childcare. All JFCA, Wee School, and Childcare employees and volunteers must be able to articulate that they have a personal relationship with Jesus via their Safe Harbor application, and in accordance with our Employee Handbook, agree to our JFBC membership expectations.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- In addition to the above volunteer requirements, if a youth (6th grade – 12th grade) desires to be a volunteer working with children, his or her parent or guardian must sign the Safe Harbor application in the appropriate place indicating that the parent or guardian knows no reason why the youth should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other children.

JFBC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete the Safe Harbor application; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for youth/children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

- JFBC may consider specific charges that would disqualify an applicant from serving in children/youth ministry as well as case-by-case assessment of charges that are dated/non-violent criminal charges (e.g., traffic violation, under-age drinking, possession of a fake ID, possession of marijuana, misdemeanors not related to abuse that are dated, etc.)

Any volunteer, staff or elder (or any JFBC member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by either an applicant, as well as a current staff member or volunteer must report that knowledge to the Safe Harbor Administrator. He or she must also be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities. Any individual involved with the care of children/youth is to immediately notify JFBC if they are charged or convicted of a criminal offense or are named in a civil lawsuit that contains allegations of abuse, assault, or any other behaviors involving children/youth.

V. Supervision for Children/Youth Ministries at JFBC

- **Birth – 5th Grade**

All information listed within this section of the plan, unless noted otherwise, applies to children specifically from birth – 5th grade. This section of information applies directly to Preschool Ministry, Children's Ministry, Childcare, and Children's & Preschool Worship & Arts.

Protecting the Children During Arrival and Departure

Arrival and Departure Times

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any program or event, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before services/connect groups begin.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of a program/events conclusion, volunteers will ask the Preschool/Children's Coordinator to assist with connecting the child to his/her parents.

Note: Children from birth through 3rd grade are required to be picked up by an adult/guardian using the child's identification sticker. Children in 4th and 5th grade do not require a parent/guardian to retrieve their child from the classroom.

A parent or designated guardian is required to be in the church building at all times while their children are checked-in.

Parental Authentication Identification System

In order to protect the children in our care, each child should be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian.

Parent/guardian will receive an electronic printed sticker for each child with a child-specific identification code. Visitors will receive this at their first visitor check-in. Members/Prospects will receive it each time they check in their child.

Upon signing the child in, the child will receive a label with the child-specific identification code. The intent is for the child's identification number is to be used to match the parent with the child.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The Preschool/Children's Ministry volunteer will bring the child to the door, remove the child's label, and match it to the child-specific identification code to the sticker that the parent/guardian provides before releasing the child.

a. For parents who have either lost or misplaced their sticker, volunteers must check their driver's license or state ID card. If a parent does not have their ID card, a children's/preschool coordinator will assist with the pickup of the child.

2. Volunteers will REMOVE the child sticker from the child before the child leaves their room. Half of the sticker is to be placed on the classroom roll.

3. If we have information from a court order that denies a parent the ability to pick up or drop off a child, such information will be fully enforced by the Children's/Preschool Minister. Such information will be stored within the HR Department.

The exceptions to this are:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of a staff member at Johnson Ferry who will notify the parent/guardian of the circumstances at the earliest possible time.

2. Siblings 5th grade and younger are not allowed to pick up a sibling 3rd grade and younger without an adult also being present.

Protecting the Children While They Are in Our Care

Two Adult Mandated Volunteer Rule

At least one of the following will be present or nearby, and available when and where children are present for JFBC specific programs and events.

- Children's/Preschool Minister(s), Children's/Preschool Coordinator(s), Preschool/Children's Volunteers, Hall Monitors, and/or Greeters

Two (2) non-related adult volunteers must be present in the room at all times when children are present during church activities. Every effort will be made to assure that one adult is never left alone with a child. A husband/wife, parent/child, siblings working in the same room will be considered as one adult. In situations where a husband/wife, parent/child, and siblings serve together, one additional adult volunteer should be present in the classroom.

Any situation which requires a disciplinary meeting with a child should require that the Children's/Preschool Minister be notified first. During such a meeting the Children's/Preschool Minister as well as a parent/guardian should be present. If disciplinary action is needed on trips or events away from the church, the parent/guardian should be notified of necessitated disciplinary action as soon as possible.

View Windows/Open Doors

When children's classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

Child-to-Volunteer Ratios

In addition to always having at least two volunteers present, the following ratios are maintained during all regularly scheduled programs and events of the church:

- Children 0 – 11 months: One adult for every six children
- Children 12 – 23 months: One adult for every eight children
- Children 24 months – 2 years: One adult for every ten children
- Children 3 years – 5 years: One adult for every fifteen children
- Children ages K-5: One adult for every twenty children

Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio unless and until additional volunteers are added. If for any reason the ratio is exceeded,

Ministry Coordinators should be notified and asked for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

Connecting with Children Individually

In discipleship situations where a staff member or volunteer needs to meet one-on-one with a child, such meetings should always occur in public spaces where either an additional non-related adult or children are present, not behind closed doors. If a more private setting is required, such as an office, classroom, or conference room, another non-related adult should be present at all times. These interactions should be observable, accountable, and interruptible. If it's necessary for a male adult to meet with a female child in a public setting, it is advisable for an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a female, to always be present. If it's necessary for a female adult to meet with a male child in a public setting, it is advisable for an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a male, to always be present.

Diaper Changing and Rest Room Procedure

0 Months through 2 Years Old

Volunteers will change diapers as needed during Sunday morning services/connect groups. Only women are allowed to change diapers. Diapers should be changed, when possible, in the presence of at least one other adult volunteer.

2 Years Old through Pre-K

During class, children will use the restroom located between the classes on their own. If assistance is required, an adult female volunteer will aid.

K to 3rd Grade

Children needing to use the restroom shall go with another child of the same age and sex. It is best practice for an adult volunteer to accompany the pair to the restroom and wait outside the closed bathroom door until the children are finished. If an adult volunteer does accompany a child to the restroom, the adult volunteer is asked to wait outside the restroom until the child is ready to return to the classroom.

4th & 5th Grade

Children needing to use the restroom are encouraged to go with another child of the same age and sex.

Children or Teenagers in the Classroom

Helpers are children/youth who are at least one age group older than the children they are assisting and are assisting in some area of Children's Ministry alongside two adults.

These helpers fall into three categories:

1. Auxiliary Helpers (boys and girls; K-5th grade) - helpers who are coming with their parent/guardian to a serve alongside of them. These helpers do not count towards the adult-

child ratios. Helpers will be supervised by two non-related adult volunteers in the same room. Auxiliary helpers are not required to go through ministry training or be Safe Harbor approved.

2. Auxiliary Helpers (boys and girls; 6th grade through 12th grade) - helpers who are seeking to serve alongside two adult volunteers. These helpers do not count towards the adult-child ratios. Helpers will be supervised by two non-related adult volunteers in the same room. Auxiliary helpers are not required, but are encouraged to go through ministry training. Auxiliary helpers from 6th grade through 12th grade are required to be Safe Harbor approved before serving.
3. Qualified Helper (boys and girls; 12th grade, 18 yrs. of age) - Helpers who have been recruited by the staff to serve in Preschool/Children's ministry. These helpers, seniors in high school who have already turned 18, may count towards the adult-to-child ratios. All Qualified Helpers require Safe Harbor approval before serving. Helpers will be supervised by the non-related adult volunteer(s) in the same room. Qualified helpers are required to go through ministry training.

- **6th Grade – 12th Grade**

All information listed within this section of the plan, unless noted otherwise, applies to youth specifically from 6th Grade through 12th Grade. This section of information applies directly to Middle School & High School Ministry, and Student Worship & Arts.

Two Adult Volunteer Rule

At least one of the following will be present and available in the welcome center outside Student Center North & South when youth are present for JFBC programs and events.

- Student Minister(s), Student Associates, Adult Student Volunteers, Hall Monitors, and/or Greeters.

Two (2) non-related adult volunteers must be present within student life groups, or, nearby during church activities. Every effort will be made to assure that one adult is never left alone with a youth.

Any situation which requires a disciplinary meeting with a youth should require that the Student Pastor be notified first. During such a meeting, the Student Pastor as well as a parent/guardian should be present. If disciplinary action is needed on trips or events away from the church, the parent/guardian should be notified of necessitated disciplinary action as soon as possible.

Connecting with Youth Individually

In discipleship situations where a staff member or volunteer needs to meet one-on-one with a youth, such meetings should always occur in public spaces where either an additional non-related or additional adult or children are present, not behind closed doors. If a more private setting is required, such as an office, classroom, or conference room, another non-related adult should be present at all times. These interactions should be observable, accountable, and interruptible. If it's necessary for a male adult to meet with a female youth in a public setting, an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a female, should always be present. If it's necessary for a female adult to meet with a male youth in a public setting, an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a male, should always be present.

- **Sports & Fitness**

All information listed within this section of the plan, unless noted otherwise, applies to both children/youth. This section of information applies directly to sports leagues (fall, winter, spring), fitness classes, dance classes, summer camps, and holiday camps.

Screening Procedure for Coaches

To ensure safe and quality care, JFBC has established a screening procedure to approve all coaches who work directly with children/youth:

- Before serving, all volunteers will be required to complete a Safe Harbor application, have references checked, and a thorough criminal background check completed. Safe Harbor approval is required for renewal every three years.
 - A background check is completed at the local, state, and federal level.
 - State and Federal Sex Offender Databases are utilized as well.
- Membership at Johnson Ferry is not a requirement to coach within sports leagues here at Johnson Ferry. However, it is a requirement that all coaches designated as head coaches be able to articulate via their Safe Harbor application that they have a personal relationship with Jesus. While it is Johnson Ferry's desire for both the head coach and the assistant coach to have a personal relationship with Jesus, a personal relationship with Jesus is not required for an assistant coach.
- Due to the public location of practices and games (JF Fields, Activity Center, Student Centers), the two non-related adult rule does not apply to Sports & Fitness programs and events where children/youth are involved.
 - All practices and games will always take place in a public setting where other adults and children/youth are present.
 - If a coach at any point desires to provide children/youth with individual coaching, approval from the Sports & Fitness Associate Pastor is required. During such coaching sessions, at least one additional non-related adult, or one additional child/youth should be present.
- Any situation which requires a disciplinary meeting with a child/youth should require that the Associate Pastor, Sports & Fitness be notified first. During such a meeting the Associate Pastor, Sports & Fitness as well as a parent/guardian should be present. If disciplinary action is needed on trips or events away from the church, the parent/guardian should be notified of necessitated disciplinary action as soon as possible.

Fitness and Dance Instruction

- If providing individual fitness or dance training for children/youth, Fitness and Dance instructors should always have at least one parent or one additional nonrelated adult present.

Connecting with Children/Youth Individually

- In discipleship situations where a staff member or volunteer needs to meet one-on-one with a child/youth, such meetings should always occur in public spaces where either an additional non-related or additional adult or children are present, not behind closed doors. If a more private setting is required, such as an office, classroom, or conference room, another non-related adult should be present at all times. These interactions should be observable, accountable, and interruptible. If it's necessary for a male adult to meet with a female youth in a public setting, an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a female, should always be present. If it's necessary for a female adult to meet with a male youth in a public setting, an additional nonrelated adult, preferably a male, should always be present.

Please note the final two sections involve our two schools here at Johnson Ferry Baptist. The two schools are Johnson Ferry Christian Academy and Wee School. Due to the nature of how these two programs operate, some of the policies and procedures are different in nature to accommodate the format that is most effective for teaching in what Johnson Ferry Baptist Church considers to be solely an educational setting.

- **Johnson Ferry Christian Academy**

All information listed within this section of the plan, unless noted otherwise, applies to children and youth specifically from Kindergarten through 12th Grade. This section of information applies directly to Johnson Ferry Christian Academy.

Adult Teacher Rule

Due to the nature of the environment for which JFCA operates, all classroom settings only require one adult teacher to be present. It is important to note that all classroom settings have multiple children present at all times when classes are in session.

If a teacher has an opportunity to advise or tutor a student one-on-one, this should not be done in a classroom setting, but instead, in a public space where other adults or children/youth are present. These interactions should be observable, accountable, and interruptible.

View Windows/Open Doors

When Johnson Ferry Christian Academy or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

- **Wee School**

All information listed within this section of the plan, unless noted otherwise, applies to children specifically from 9 months through 5 years old. This section of information applies directly to Wee School here at Johnson Ferry.

Two Adult Mandated Teacher Rule

Two (2) non-related adult volunteers must be present in the room at all times when children are present during Wee School activities. Every effort will be made to assure that one adult is never left alone with a child.

If a teacher has an opportunity to advise or tutor a student one-on-one, this should not be done in a classroom setting, but instead, in a public space where other adults or children/youth are present. These interactions should be observable, accountable, and interruptible.

View Windows/Open Doors

When Wee School classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

VI. Rules and Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth

1. Child Discipline & Physical Touch

Appropriate Discipline

All Children's and Preschool ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom without permission from a preschool/children's team member. Correction should be discreet; take place in the classroom (not in the hallway); and never outside of the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.

Preschool and Children's Ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any of the following forms of discipline.

- DO NOT spank, shake, kick, punch, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap, hit, or otherwise physically punish the children.
- DO NOT make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.

- DO NOT shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
- DO NOT deny food or rest as punishment.
- DO NOT relate discipline to eating, resting, or sleeping.
- DO NOT leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
- DO NOT place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.
- DO NOT allow discipline of children by children.
- DO NOT criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups.
- Do not speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, the volunteer should ask the ministry coordinator to determine possible next steps including reaching out to the parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be contacted so the child can be removed. Once a child is removed from a ministry or classroom setting, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the Children's or Preschool Minister. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

Appropriate Physical and Verbal Interactions

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help everyone to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children/youth and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children/youth and not the adults.

Appropriate Physical Interaction	Inappropriate Physical Interaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Attaching or clinging to legs • Any type of massage • Any form of unwanted affection • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

- In general, adults will need to limit physical touch opportunities with children/youth. Male adults need to be wise with regards to physical touch of both genders, especially female children/youth and vice versa. Female adults need to be wise with regards to physical touch of both genders, especially male children/youth.
- Never touch a minor out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline other than the process already noted above is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.
- Appreciation and respect for boundaries that children/youth communicate to adults is always important to listen to and follow.

Verbal Interactions: The way we speak to one another shows God's love and care for the world. Staff, lay leaders, and volunteers can use their words in ways that connect people to God. They should not speak in any way that is, or could be construed by any observer as, inappropriate. Johnson Ferry's guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions for staff and volunteers are:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Reinforcement • Family-friendly jokes • Encouragement • Praise • Prayer • Active listening ("What I'm hearing you say is...Is that what you meant?") • Responding calmly when someone is yelling or using inappropriate language • Disrupting instances of inappropriate speech or touch quickly and effectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Request that the behavior stop and immediately take measures to protect any vulnerable people involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters • Involving those you minister to in the personal problems of ministers, employees, and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Engaging in heated arguments or yelling (even when yelled at) • Off-color or sexual jokes • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Shaming or humiliating • Belittling • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate • Derogatory remarks about a person, a person's family or others, of their races, ethnic group, age group, sex, gender, or religion

2. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Utilizing Technology to Connect with Children/Youth

The following are guidelines that must be followed when connecting with children/youth in all situations that involve electronic communication. Electronic communication includes but is not limited to text messaging, group messaging, video calls, messaging via social media, etc.

- Electronic communication of all types with children who are in 5th grade and younger is strictly prohibited.
- For youth in 6th grade through 12th grade, adults are not allowed to have contact with youth before 7 a.m. and after 10 p.m. Only in cases of emergency should staff or volunteers respond to a phone call or message from a youth between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- The only method of contact between adults and youth should always be via group message, not individual message. Group messaging should include one additional non-related adult or at least two youth.
- Before initiating contact with youth in a group chat setting, adults should first notify parents/guardian of their intent and purpose for creating a group chat.
- Video call encompasses but is not limited to Facetime, Skype, Zoom, etc.
 - No Adult is permitted to meet one-on-one via video with a child/youth. There must be at least two (2) non-related adults present during a video call, or, 2 or more children/youth present at all times during the video call.
 - No Adult is permitted to use the private chat function of a video call to communicate privately with a child/youth one-on-one. If utilization of a chat function is necessary, either an additional non-related adult must be added or another child/youth should be added.
- If a child/youth seeks to contact an Adult privately (individually) through text message, social media, or email, the adult should use discretion when responding. If the content of the message dictates a brief response regarding date, time, and location of an event, you are able to respond. If a child/youth is seeking to start a spiritual or personal conversation with an adult, the adult should suggest an opportunity to meet in-person in a public setting. At no time should an adult initiate/contact a child/youth privately (individually), as this is a violation of the child and youth protection policy. If such an instance were to occur, the child/youth should not respond.
- Electronic communication that's one-on-one with youth who are currently employed with Johnson Ferry Baptist Church is allowed only in circumstances where communication is necessary for work purposes only.

Social Media Guidelines

- Staff and volunteers should not at any point invite or accept friend/follow requests from children who are in 5th grade and younger. Staff and volunteers should not at any point connect or communicate via email, messaging, and social media with children who are in 5th grade or younger.
- JF staff and volunteers are discouraged from initiating friend or follow requests for youth (6th grade through 12th grade) to be friends on personal social networking sites. Staff and volunteers are also discouraged from accepting friend/follow requests from youth with whom no personal direct connection exists. We understand there may be exceptions (a relative, a friend's child, etc.).
- If a youth seeks to contact an Adult privately (individually) through social media, the adult should use discretion when responding. If the content of the message dictates a brief response regarding date, time, and location of an event, you are able to respond. If a youth is seeking to start a spiritual or personal conversation with an adult, the adult should suggest an opportunity to meet in-person in a public setting. At no time should an adult initiate/contact a youth

privately (individually), as this is a violation of the child and youth protection policy. If such an instance were to occur, the youth should not respond.

- Staff and volunteers should not post on their own social media accounts photographs or information pertaining to children/youth that is not explicitly ministry related. Photographs and information pertaining to children/youth should not at any time single out or give preferential treatment to one individual over another.
- Direct messaging youth one-on-one via social networking sites is strictly prohibited.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of Children/Youth

- Ministry opportunities will at times provide situations where an adult may need to transport a child/youth who is not their own child to and from a ministry event. In situations where transportation of a child/youth is required, there is a requirement to have either two non-related adults riding together in the vehicle or at least two children/youth riding together in the vehicle. This is required for children and youth of all ages, including youth who are 18 years of age but have not yet graduated from high school. For children from birth through the completion of preschool, two non-related adults are required in the vehicle at all times when transportation is necessary to and from a ministry event.
 - Ministry events in this context refer not only to designated JFBC programs and events, but also, social gatherings. Social gatherings could include, but are not limited to hosting children/youth in your home and connecting with children/youth over meals.
- If a child/youth doesn't have their own mode of transportation, the adult should work to help the child/youth find either alternative transportation or an additional non-related adult to help accompany the child/youth home.
- If the situation is an emergency (e.g., immediate need to go to the hospital), and there are no other alternatives, the adult driver should notify the child/youth's parent/guardian to make them aware that the adult will be providing the child/youth transportation. In addition, before providing transportation, the adult should also notify a ministry team leader in connection with the age group of the child/youth.
- If a child/youth requires transportation via plane to leave before a designated event is scheduled to conclude, two non-related adults should accompany the child/youth home. At least one of the two adults should be of the same gender as the child/youth.
- Children/youth must be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops may be made.
- All adult drivers should be at least 21 years of age, and be licensed and insured.

4. ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

- Under no circumstances should an adult distribute drugs, tobacco, or alcohol to a child/youth. Drugs, tobacco, and alcohol put both adults and children/youth in compromising situations which can lead to potential situations of abuse.
- During overnight events, Johnson Ferry will provide nurses if necessary to distribute prescription drugs to children/youth. Unless designated by JFBC, no adult should distribute prescription drugs to a child/youth. Adult leaders are able to provide over-the-counter medicines to children/youth.

5. OFFSITE EVENTS

Hosting Groups, Individuals, and Events off Campus

- When hosting groups, individuals, and events off campus, the same policies listed within this policy apply. Programs, events, and socials hosted in homes, or at an alternative site require either more than one adult or multiple children to be physically present. Two related adults in the home together will be considered as one adult. Even if two non-related adults are present, it is never advisable to meet in a private setting such as a home with a child/youth on his/her own.
- When events occur off campus (e.g., overnight camp/day camp) where high school and middle school age students are placed in positions of authority over children, the same expectations apply. All children's groups should have at least two middle school or high school age group leaders.

Overnight Programs and Events

- During overnight and weekend trips, when children/youth are placed in individual rooms, adults should always use caution before entering into a child/youth place of sleep without another adult also being present. An adult should always request to have another adult present before entering. Male adults should refrain from entering a female designated room while female adults should refrain from entering a male designated room.
- During mission trips, adults will at times be either required or requested to stay in a hotel room with children/youth. In this scenario, at least two non-related adults should stay in a hotel room with children/youth. There is never a scenario where one adult and one child/youth would share a room together. Adults and children/youth should never share the same bedding. Children/youth should not share a bed. One bed for each person should apply.
- In situations where bathrooms are communal, adults should be directed to a specific space which is designated as only for adult use. In instances where the only option available is for adults and children/youth to share a communal bathroom, adults and children/youth should always have on clothing that fully cover private areas. Wearing only a towel in public areas is prohibited. Adults and children/youth should never shower together. Children and youth should also never shower together.
- High School and middle school leaders on overnight trips must also have at least two non-related adults in housing situations where children and youth are participants.

6. POST-GRADUATION

Connecting with Children/Youth after Graduation

- Due to the nature of how an adult's relationship is formed with a child/youth through ministry here at JFBC, it is best practice to show extreme wisdom regarding relational dynamics even after graduation. Our desire is for adult leaders to still have opportunities for discipleship with former students. However, it's important for adult leaders to make wise decisions regarding the nature of relationships post-graduation.
- An adult male should interact with female graduates in the same manner they would with female children/youth. The same can be said for female adult leaders. Female adult leaders should interact with male graduates in the same manner they would with male children/youth.

7. GIFTS FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH

Gift guidelines

- While it is deemed appropriate on certain occasions (Christmas, birthdays, graduation) to share gifts with children/youth, adults should never single out one child/youth to provide gifts to over another. Gifts should never be given in secret. The overall cost of a gift should be reasonable so as not to cause suspicion of additional motives.
- If a child/youth should ever solicit funds due to financial circumstances that require a need, the family of the child/youth is to be referred to Pastoral Care.

8. DRESS CODE

Dress Code/Personal Appearance

JFBC asks that all staff and volunteers dress modestly and appropriately in what they choose to wear to work or to volunteer. All JFBC staff and volunteers should be clean and neat in appearance.

9. RESTROOM UTILIZATION FOR ADULTS

It is to be understood that when programs and events involving children/youth are taking place at Johnson Ferry, certain restrooms on campus will be designated at certain times as "only for use of children and youth." Areas in the building which are designated as such include:

- Restrooms located on the first floor adjacent to preschool classrooms as well as restrooms in-between classrooms.
- Restrooms located on the second floor adjacent to children's classrooms.
- Restrooms located in the welcome area adjacent to Student Center North and Student Center South

All restrooms when designated will have signage on the exterior door notifying everyone of which specific restrooms are for child use only. Restrooms between classrooms in the Preschool area are for child use only at all times, even when programs and events are not occurring.

When JFCA is in session, signage will also be placed on exterior restroom doors on both the second and third floor notifying adults of which specific restrooms are for children/youth use only.

When programs and events involving children/youth are not taking place, restrooms located in the welcome area adjacent to Student Center North and Student Center South are accessible to all ages.

It should also be noted that middle school and high school age students should refrain from using restrooms designated for Preschool and Children's Ministry.

10. Peer-to-Peer Abuse

- Peer-to-peer abuse may involve children/youth of similar ages, or there may be a big age difference. Much like adult-to-child abuse, peer-to-peer abuse can take many forms, including:
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Financial abuse
- Definitions of abuse can be found in the Appendix C.
- Often, these situations escalate from bullying, and involve some form of power imbalance (e.g., age differences, physical size, and popularity).
- JFBC staff and volunteers need to be aware of scenarios and situations where children/youth are capable of abusing other such children/youth. In such cases, utilization of the Johnson Ferry reporting hotline is necessary for both accountability for the abuser(s) as well as comfort and healing for the abused.
 - Comprehensive, Engaged Supervision: Peer-to-peer abuse tends to be opportunistic and happens when there is a lack of supervision. Be sure that youth are in the presence of staff at all times. That means maintaining ratios and being actively engaged with all youth. Bathrooms, cabins and locker rooms require enhanced supervision, as these high-risk locations can be seen as a more private area that the instigator believes will make it easier to go undetected.
 - Be Aware of Blind Spots and Unstructured Time. Peer-to-peer abuse also tends to occur in “easy-to-cover” locations and during unstructured times. Be aware of blind spots (e.g., play structures, seats on the bus, and even items of clothing) that can provide cover for acts of abuse. Because of the potential for distraction, relatively unstructured transition times at the beginning or end of programming or during transportation can present added dangers.
 - Watch for Red Flag Behaviors. Peer-to-peer abuse often escalates from bullying, so having a robust anti-bullying culture is key. (See below for specific bullying resources.) Address physical aggression or verbal teasing early, especially when a

specific individual has been repeatedly targeted. Speak with Executive leadership to determine the appropriate way to intentionally follow-up with the victim to make sure they are feeling safe. It's also important to watch for any form of inappropriate sexual behavior or language, which may be a sign of abuse.

- Plan for Power Imbalances: Abuse often occurs when one youth holds some form of physical or social power over another. We, as adults, can help avoid such imbalances turning into potentially abusive situations by planning seating arrangements, organizing group work, or in how we supervise bathroom breaks. In general, seat youth of similar ages and sizes together, and be sure to break up groups where red flag behaviors have been observed or are suspected.
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11. BULLYING

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. JFBC will not tolerate any bullying behavior, neither from senior leadership, staff, volunteers, or members; nor from one child, youth or adult toward another child, youth, or adult.
2. Bullying can take on various forms, including:
 - Physical bullying is when one person engages in or threatens physical force against another person (e.g., hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another).
 - Verbal bullying is when someone uses their words to hurt another (e.g., belittling or calling another person a hurtful name, utilization of crude or sexual jokes, and unwelcomed comments).
 - Nonverbal or relational bullying is when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
 - Cyberbullying is the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
 - a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
 - b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
 - c. Pretending to be someone else to make that person look bad.
 - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
 - e. Hazing is an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
 - Sexualized bullying is when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language innuendos.
3. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying.
4. This policy applies to all participants in Johnson Ferry's programs and services, as well as external parties that utilize Johnson Ferry's facilities.

12. Response to Child Pornography

If a staff member, volunteer or member of JFBC is suspected of or admits viewing, producing or distributing child pornography:

- He or she will be immediately removed from all ministry related activities or programs that involve children/youth.
- Allegations or self-admission will be immediately reported to the Executive Director, Operations.
- The Executive Director, Operations will contact local authorities to share knowledge and information obtained regarding suspicion or admission of viewing, producing or distributing child pornography.
 - It is illegal to share child pornography, even for investigative purposes. If a JFBC employee or volunteer comes into possession of child pornography, he or she should not share images with others, but instead, give possession of images (electronic/print) directly to authorities.
- Minors under the age of 18 should also be aware that possession and distribution of (electronic/print) compromising photos or videos of another minor is illegal. Sharing images could result in arrest and conviction of possession and distribution of child pornography. If a minor comes into possession of photo(s) or video(s) of another minor, it should be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately.
- Regarding the church's response, the Caring Well Committee will follow the outlined steps mentioned in the JFBC Reporting Policy.

APPENDIX A: Registered Sex Offender Policy

Registered Sex Offender Policy

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, we seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption, and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept in our midst those who have violated the most sacred morals of our society-at-large, to provide them refuge, peace, example and support in their recovery and penitence. We commit to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation, collectively and individually, and the community we serve.

We accept that there are risks being born in our deliberate association with and ministry to sex offenders who are considered outcasts among the community-at-large as evidenced by the many constraints placed upon their interaction with the community. We agree to honor the needs of the congregation and our community to have reasonable assurance that a sex offender in our care will not have an opportunity to re-offend.

We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our congregation with utmost care which shall include the following elements:

1. Documented understanding of the statutory limitations applying in the State of Georgia to the movement and activities of a sex offender, considering the programs of the church. (e.g., Sunday school and Wednesday nights which serve children and "vulnerable adults".)
2. Consider and understand the character of the crimes which have resulted in requiring an individual to register as a sex offender, the passage of time without repeated conduct or

behavior and the risk and opportunity of re-offending that is presented by the programs of our congregation.

3. Document understanding of limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. As recommended by Pastoral Care, the opinion of a mental health professional regarding the suitability of the person to participate in the life of the church shall be obtained. In all cases where probation is in force, we shall obtain the explicit approval of and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender shall be honored in all cases.

4. Understanding that, with respect to a person who is an employee, volunteer or in a position of church leadership, who has previously been convicted for acts of sexual misconduct as defined by insurance contracts, knowledge by church leaders and managers of such prior conviction will have the effect of voiding coverage for the individual employee, volunteer, or church leader and for the church for future acts of sexual misconduct by that person.

Given that criminal convictions are a matter of public record, there shall be no expectation of secrecy on the part of the offender. As a condition of participation in our faith community, the offender must agree that the leadership of the church shall make it known to the members, constituencies, and customers of the church that we have accepted among us a registered sex offender. The conditions and limitations that apply to participation in the life of the church shall be known to all.

With the advice of legal counsel, and in all cases, the conditions of participation by a registered offender shall be defined by a “limited access agreement” executed by the offender and church. Such agreement shall be approved by probation authorities as may be necessary according to paragraph 3., above. The agreement shall be reviewed annually to validate on-going eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender shall be considered as grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations shall apply:

1. Victims in the congregation – In such case as the victim of a RSO (registered sex offender) is a member of the congregation, employee or is a client of other services provided by the church, the RSO shall not be permitted to attend the church or church activities.

2. Clergy-penitent privilege – “Clergy-penitent privilege” is a “Rule of Evidence” defining or limiting information which clergy may reveal in a court of law only. “Clergy penitent privilege” does not prevent clergy from informing the congregation of matters which may be relevant to their safety; it does not require clergy to hold information in secrecy.

3. Ordained minister(s) shall assume responsibility and take extraordinary care to understand the scope and limitations of clergy-penitent privilege in the State of Georgia and the parameters of confidence and privilege as defined by our denomination. Authorized clergy shall inform the leadership of the church of the general principles of confidence and privilege under which (s)he performs his/her clerical duties.

4. Escorts – Conditions of limited access for an RSO will commonly require that the offender have an escort while on the church premises or at church events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort shall not be a spouse, partner or relative of the offender.

5. Approval and Supervision

- a. With the advice and prior approval of the Caring Well Committee, a Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) may be signed only by the Senior Pastor.
- b. The Caring Well Committee and escorts who shall be named in the Limited Access Agreement, shall be responsible for the general supervision of the Petitioner in all the latter's activity in relation to the church. Elements of supervision shall include the following:
 - Knowledge of the terms of the Limited Access Agreement, including activity limitations placed upon the Petitioner.
 - Knowledge of the Petitioners' offense history sufficient to understand the risks of association with the church and its ministries.
 - Willingness to assert activity limitations and to report any violation of restrictions placed upon the Petitioner.
 - Willingness to intervene in any onset of a risky or problem behavior.
 - Willingness to report all cases of non-compliance to the Executive Director,
- c. Operations.
- d. The Caring Well Committee shall assess, prior to selection, whether a proposed escort is able to fulfill the above elements of supervision.
- e. Professional privacy – Members who are employed in certain occupations may have a statutory obligation to maintain privacy around the criminal history of their clients who may also be members/prospects. Such members shall decline to accept leadership roles which may put them in a position of decision-making regarding individuals who may be their professional clients.
- f. Juveniles – While the criminal record of a juvenile is ordinarily concealed by the courts, the church may come to know the juvenile's history by other means. Honest disclosure by a juvenile and parents in the volunteer application and screening process may reveal that a record exists without knowing the specifics. While a limited access agreement will be required for the juvenile, as for others, every precaution will be taken to preserve the privacy and confidentiality which the law affords a juvenile. In instances where the offender is a juvenile, a mental health provider as well as other professionals may be utilized to determine a safety plan and set of guidelines.
- g. If a scenario arises where a registered sex offender departs Johnson Ferry to seek out membership elsewhere, Johnson Ferry will fully disclose known information to any church that the registered sex offender may seek to attend.

APPENDIX B: STEPS FOR REPORTING ABUSE AT JFBC

Initial Process for Handling Abuse Accusations When the Victim Is a Child (Under the Age of 18)

1. Privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance when processing accusations of abuse, especially those where a minor is involved. Only the HR Director, Executive Director of Operations, Elders, and the Caring Well Committee will have access to information regarding the victim's suspected case of abuse. Additional parties with access to information include a trained trauma-informed and licensed therapist, our Pastoral Care team, as well as the Pastor/Minister and Executive Pastor who oversees the area of ministry where the minor is directly involved.

2. If an individual has personally experienced or has knowledge of a situation where suspected abuse has occurred, especially in cases that are directly or indirectly related to child abuse against a church leader, the team member or volunteer is required by state law, within 24 hours of first knowledge to report the matter to state authorities. Team members and volunteers should also provide a report utilizing the Caring Well hotline phone number, which can be found on the main page of our website. Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, which includes JFCA and Wee School, is considered by the state of Georgia to be a mandatory reporter for any suspected cases of abuse involving a minor. As a mandated reporter, we are required to alert the Department of Human Services (Division of Family & Children Services) within 24 hours of first alert regarding suspected abuse. The Human Resources Director reports the allegations to the state of Georgia as required within the first 24 hours of first notice. In situations where the minor is perceived to be in imminent danger, the Human Resources Director in conjunction with the Executive Pastor, Operations will contact local authorities.
 - <https://oca.georgia.gov/training/mandated-reporting>
3. If the reporter or suspected victim is perceived to be in imminent danger, please initially dial 911 before utilizing the Caring Well Hotline to report suspected cases of abuse.
4. This policy prohibits retaliation against claimants and reporters, including JFBC employees who bring, in good faith, abuse accusations or who assist in the investigation of such accusations. Any such employee shall not be adversely affected in terms or conditions of employment, nor discriminated against or discharged because of such activity.

APPENDIX C: Definitions of Abuse

The following definitions are given to further assist the church in understanding the types of behaviors that might constitute inappropriate conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, and so forth:

1. **Child Abuse** means:
 - Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means;
 - Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;
 - Endangering a child;
 - Sexual abuse of a child;
 - Sexual exploitation of a child.
 - <https://cjcc.georgia.gov/what-child-abuse>
2. **Sexual Abuse** means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor or adult who is not such person's spouse to engage in any act which involves:
 - Grooming;
 - Molestation;
 - Sexual harassment;

- Showing or possessing pornography;
- Words/conduct that have sexual connotation around an individual of any age who does not welcome, consent to, is unable to consent due to age or incapacity, or who assents due to the offender's use of power or positional authority, etc.
- <https://www.rainn.org/articles/child-sexual-abuse>

3. Physical Abuse means:

- Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or adult;
- Offensive or harmful contact with a minor or adult;
- Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult;
- Physical misconduct can include, but is not limited to pushing, grabbing, punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with hand or other object), burning, or otherwise causing physical harm or threat of physical harm.

4. Harassment/bullying means:

- Pattern of behavior in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them;
- Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones;
- Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintance;
- Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person;
- Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.

5. Neglect means:

- Failure or refusal by a caregiver to provide food, water, shelter, medical care etc., leading to harm or potential harm to a child.