



## **First Baptist Church Waynesboro Policy and Procedure for Working with Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

During each baby dedication and baptism of a child or youth, the members of First Baptist Church Waynesboro (FBCW) promise to support that person (and his/her/their family) in Jesus Christ and to teach, strengthen, and nurture the individual's relationship with God. FBCW is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our minors and takes seriously these responsibilities. These promises of support also extend to vulnerable adults and those who help care for them.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting minors and other vulnerable persons from abuse of any kind. God calls us to create communities of faith where children, youth and adults grow safe and strong. It is our duty as a church to live this call to the fullest and best of our abilities.

### **PURPOSE:**

This policy is intended to protect minors and adults who work with minors and vulnerable adults at First Baptist Church Waynesboro. These practices enable our congregation to provide a physically safe, emotionally secure, and spiritually nurturing environment for all who attend services and activities of First Baptist Church Waynesboro. Minors are defined as anyone under the age of 18. Vulnerable adults are defined as any person 18 years of age or older who is impaired by reason of mental illness, intellectual or developmental disability, physical illness or disability, or other causes.

### **VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES**

- I.** The following screening procedures will be used for all individuals who wish to work with minors or vulnerable adults in FBCW programs and activities.
- II. Waiting Period:**
  - A.** Individuals must be actively involved (i.e. attending worship, participating in Sunday School, and/or engaging regularly in the ministries of FBCW) for at least 6 months before volunteering with minors or vulnerable adults. Membership is not a requirement, but active involvement at FBCW is.

### **III. Screening:**

- A. Any potential volunteers must contact the Associate Pastor for Spiritual Growth to talk about volunteer opportunities and review policies and procedures.
- B. Every person serving in a program that involves minors or vulnerable adults will be asked to complete a confidential application that will be maintained in a secure location under the direction of the Associate Pastor (or designee). The application process will include criminal background checks and sex offender record checks. Failure to complete this application process or conviction/expungement of a child abuse charge will preclude an adult from working with minors and vulnerable adults at FBCW. Background checks will be repeated at least every 3 years.
  - 1. Upon receiving the background check, the Associate Pastor will review it. Any items identified as a potential concern will be flagged.
  - 2. The Associate Pastor will share the results with the Senior Pastor and the two of them together will make a decision about whether or not the individual will be approved to volunteer.
  - 3. There will be no exceptions given for volunteers who have been convicted of the following:
    - a) Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults
    - b) Violent offenses, including but not limited to murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, battery, kidnapping;
    - c) Sexual exploitation of a minor or vulnerable adult; taking indecent liberties with a minor or vulnerable adult; solicitation of a minor or vulnerable adult; or
    - d) Possession or production of child pornography
  - 4. Additionally, persons having a DUI or DWI conviction in any state within the last 5 years of volunteer application shall not be allowed to act as a driver for any event involving minors or vulnerable adults
- C. Pastors reserve the right to conduct an interview with any volunteer applicant at any point during the screening process to gather additional information. Pastors may also request references.

#### **IV. Training**

- A. Once background checks are completed and approved, the volunteer will undergo a training and orientation with the Associate Pastor. Annual training will be required for all volunteers. Additional trainings will be offered as

needed.

- B. All volunteers will receive a copy of the FBCW Volunteer Handbook and will sign that they have read and review its contents.

## **V. Supervision**

- A. "Two Person Rule:" At least two approved adult volunteers will be present at all times and for every event or function involving minors or vulnerable adults during FBW sponsored programs.
  - 1. Every attempt will be made to have 2 adults in each room. If only one adult is available, then a second adult may be present on the hallway regularly checking on classrooms or may be in a room next door to the classroom with the single volunteer.
  - 2. Volunteers who are married will count as 1 volunteer. Attempts will be made to have two non-married volunteers in each classroom.
  - 3. Youth who are working with children will not count as an adult volunteer.
- B. Volunteers will not send children 5th grade and younger to find their parents.
- C. Volunteers will remain on site for any church-sponsored event until all children have been picked up by a designated adult (parent, relative, older sibling, babysitter, etc.). At least 2 volunteers must remain with children until all children have been picked up.

## **VI. Mandatory Reporting of Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

- A. Any FBCW staff member or adult volunteer who has reason to suspect that a minor has been abused (or such abuse has been disclosed by a minor to the adult), shall report the matter immediately to one of the Pastors. Documentation regarding the allegation shall begin immediately. As appropriate, allegations shall be reported to local/state agencies within 24 hours. To safeguard confidentiality and accuracy, the informed Pastor shall serve as the spokesperson to handle inquiries by the media and to inform the congregation if necessary.

## **VII. Issues Related to Registered Sex Offenders**

- A. See the "Policy Regarding the Attendance or Membership of Individuals under the Registered Sex Offender Status" included in this document.



## **Policy Regarding the Attendance or Membership of Individuals under Registered Sex Offender Status**

First Baptist Church - Waynesboro ("FBC") strives to demonstrate the love of Christ for the world by being a place that welcomes all people who seek to be a child of God. In order to be a safe place for all who attend FBC worship, activities, or any FBC sponsored event, any individual who is required to register or is registered pursuant to the laws of any state as a sexual offender ("Offender") must strictly comply with the following policy prior to and as a condition of any participation in the congregational life of FBC.

When any Offender desires to attend FBC, the senior pastor or designee will consult an independent child safeguarding specialist including but not limited to the Offender's parole officer ("PO"). Offenders are aware that whenever new members join the Church, new members will be made aware of all FBC policies including but not limited to the fact that FBC has an RSO attendance policy. Likewise, new members will be notified of the protocols set forth in this policy.

FBC reserves the right to deny or withdraw approval of attendance, participation, and/or membership to any individual who fails to comply with this policy. Furthermore, FBC retains sole discretion to deny or withdraw approval of attendance, participation, and/or membership to any person whose behavior, criminal conviction, and/or sexual offender status gives reason to believe that person would endanger others, regardless of policy compliance. Additionally, Offenders are disqualified from attending or participating in FBC worship services, activities or FBC sponsored events, if their victims are members or regular attendees of FBC. Failure to comply with FBC's request to vacate the campus or any FBC activity or sponsored event will result in reporting to law enforcement for criminal trespassing.

FBC policies seek to balance three priorities:

1. Safety of children and youth;
2. Peace of mind for parents;
3. Opportunities to worship and fellowship for everyone, including those persons with Registered Sex Offender ("RSO") status.

Three (3) requirements must be met to fulfill FBC's holistic pastoral care responsibilities to any Offender and FBC's congregation.

First, FBC requires an Offender to sign a release authorization with each person holding information involved with the Offender's rehabilitative care or legal accountability including but

not limited to the Offender's PO, therapist or counselors. FBC will require that these people release necessary information to FBC about an Offender's rehabilitative progress. FBC requires the insight of all professionals working with an Offender on how to best balance the Offender's interest in worship and the safety of FBC's congregation. FBC will encourage any such PO, counselor or therapist to contact the designated FBC representative if any concerns emerge in the Offender cooperation with their care. (See *Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") in this policy for more information.*)

Second, an Offender must refrain from any presence or involvement in FBC's children or youth ministries. This restriction includes (if applicable) checking the Offender's children in for children or student ministry events. This restriction will continue even if RSO status is removed.<sup>1</sup> Offender may attend worship services where children are present provided that the Offender's attendance team sponsor is present. No Offender will be able to attend any services or event at FBC if someone the Offender harmed is a member or regularly attends FBC worship, activities or sponsored events.

Third, an Offender must agree to have a member of the Offender's sponsoring attendance team present with Offender at all times whenever the Offender attends a FBC worship service, activity or sponsored event. Every member of the Offender's sponsoring team must be a certified sponsor. (See *FAQs*).

If an Offender agrees to the above requirements, the Offender must sign an Attendance Agreement (sample form attached), which will be kept in a locked file in the church office. FBC will periodically review the Offender's Attendance Agreement and make adjustments to it as needed. Any amendment, change or adjustment to the Attendance Agreement must be signed by the Offender for the Offender to be able to continue to participate in the life of FBC. The Attendance Agreement attached with this policy is a sample only and not intended to address all circumstances or permutations of any or every particular case. If an Offender has any questions about specific details of that Offender's Attendance Agreement, the Offender or his sponsor may contact FBC's representative assigned to that specific Offender.

While the facts and circumstances of every such case varies and each Offender's Attendance Agreement will need to be tailored to the specific concerns that particular individual Offender may present, FBC will strive to protect the congregation while preserving the Offender's dignity and confidentiality, and helping the Offender find a path for spiritual healing and growth that mutually respects the practical realities of the situation and our mutual yearning for a relationship with God and fellow believers in Christ.

<sup>1</sup> The Virginia Code does permit certain non-violent registered sex offenders to be removed from the sex offender registry after 15 years and provided certain conditions are met.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. *Are we required to have a policy that admits or allows sexual offenders to attend FBC?***

A: While there is no legal requirement that FBC allow a sexual offender to attend church services, our faith requires us to be open to all individuals who seek a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Having a policy in advance of any possible sexual offender asking to join our Church helps us to prepare for that possibility, create a safe space for all of our congregants of all ages, and helps to anticipate and avoid certain possible liabilities.

### **2. *How do I sign a release of information?***

A: In the sample Attendance Agreement included in this document, FBC has included language that will give us permission to speak with members of Offender's PO, counselor, therapist or other people working on the Offender's rehabilitative care or legal accountability. For these individuals to give permission to speak with the FBC representative, the Offender will need to sign an authorization form. FBC requires a copy of any such release.

### **3. *Who will be the FBC representative and what does that person do?***

A: A minister or lay leader of FBC will be assigned to oversee the Offender's Attendance Agreement and ensure that this policy and the Attendance Agreement are followed. The FBC representative may not be related to Offender. This individual will work with Offender to approve an attendance team of sufficient number to assure compliance with this policy and the Attendance Agreement.

### **4. *How are members of the Offender's attendance team selected?***

A: The FBC representative will work with Offender to approve an attendance team of sufficient number to assure compliance with this policy and the Attendance Agreement. Members of the Offender's attendance team are selected in part by the requirement that they be certified by the Commonwealth of Virginia pursuant to certain Virginia regulations. Only certified sponsors can be members of the Offender's attendance team.

### **5. *What is the purpose of the Offender's attendance team and what do they do?***

A: The attendance team will be in the Offender's presence at all times for all FBC worship services, activities and FBC sponsored events when the Offender is present. These team members can be family members and/or other church members that Offender knows and trusts. One or more members of the Offender's attendance team will meet Offender when Offender arrives on FBC's campus at a designated meeting place and will sign Offender in to record Offender's presence on FBC's campus. They will also assure that the Offender signs out at the end of a worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event. This individual will be with

Offender (within sight lines and no further than casual talking distance) at all times while Offender is on the FBC campus.

**6. *What is a child safeguarding specialist?***

A: A counselor such as a social worker from Child Protective Services or a parole officer skilled in working with child related offenders. Under Virginia regulations, these people are also known as “certified sex offender treatment providers”.

**7. *Will we make a distinction between nonviolent and violent sexual offenders?***

A: Each case where a RSO individual seeks to attend or join FBC will be considered individually as to both the sincerity of the individual making the request and the practicality of possibly including such an individual in FBC life. While there may be instances where someone on the RSO registry may be able to attend FBC worship services, activities and FBC sponsored events, there are other instances where an RSO registered individual would not be permitted to join FBC worship services, activities or FBC sponsored events. Certainly, wherever the victim of an RSO is already attending FBC, then the Offender would not be permitted to attend FBC regardless of whether the offense was violent or nonviolent.

**8. *What if no member of an Offender’s attendance team is able to attend the particular event, activity or worship service with the Offender?***

A: Then the Offender is not permitted to attend that particular FBC worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event. At least one of the attendance team members **must** be with Offender whenever an Offender attends a FBC worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event. This person will meet the Offender when the Offender arrives on FBC’s campus at a designated meeting place and will sign the Offender in to record the Offender’s presence on FBC’s campus. The attendance team member will also check the Offender out at the end of the worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event. This individual will be with the Offender (within sight lines and no further than casual talking distance) at all times while the Offender is on the FBC campus.

**9. *Why is it important for an Offender to sign in and sign out?***

A: Having the Offender sign in when first arriving on FBC campus or to an FBC sponsored event and signing out helps protect FBC from liability. It also helps protect the Trustees of the Church who are the individuals who will be sued if someone claims the Offender did something inappropriate. To some extent, signing in and out also protects the Offender. Signing in and out when on FBC campus or attending FBC sponsored events, helps provide evidence that an individual was or was not on the premises at a particular time and day should an allegation later be made.

***10. How frequently must a parole officer provide approval or review of approval for an Offender to attend FBC worship, activities or FBC sponsored events?***

A: For standing, reoccurring matters such as weekly worship services and Sunday School, quarterly business meetings and other such regular events, a “blanket approval” can be given by the Offender’s PO. Other non-reoccurring matters such as special FBC sponsored events like a picnic, concert or theater presentation, the Offender will need to obtain specific approval from his/her PO for that event or activity.



## **SAMPLE**

### **Attendance Agreement**

This Attendance Agreement, made this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_, by and between First Baptist Church – Waynesboro (“FBC”) and [name of offender] (“Offender”)

1. I will be assigned an FBC representative who is a member of FBC staff or lay leadership with the right to ensure that this Attendance Agreement is followed including both overseeing and enforcing the terms of this Attendance Agreement. The FBC representative may not be related to the Offender. I agree to meet with my FBC representative to review and assess my compliance with this Attendance Agreement whenever requested by my FBC representative.
2. I will fully cooperate with all expectations of my sentence stemming from my trial, including but not limited to meeting promptly and dutifully with my parole or probation officer, case manager, certified sex offender treatment therapist, or other professionals, as well as meeting all limitations imposed by any such professionals regarding my contact with any proscribed individuals or age group (collectively referred to as “Probationary Requirements”).
3. I have fully communicated all Probationary Requirements to my FBC representative and all members of my attendance team as my FBC representative may deem necessary. I have also provided the name and phone number of professionals overseeing my care, and signed a release authorizing any of them to speak with my FBC representative and release information about my case to the FBC representative. I will keep my FBC representative advised of any and all changes in either my Probationary Requirements or the names and contact information of professionals overseeing my case.
4. Prior to attending any worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event, I will obtain approval from my parole officer (or functional equivalent) (“PO”) to attend FBC. A copy of a signed authorization has been provided to FBC and is stored in a locked file in the church office. Approval by a parole officer or functional equivalent may vary according to the nature or frequency or type of worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event. For instance, approval of ongoing or frequently occurring activities such as Sunday school or worship services may be approved with a single approval (“blanket approval”) that may not require repetitive approvals. Other activities or FBC sponsored events, may occur infrequently or singularly in which approval for those infrequent or singular events will require individual approval from my PO.
5. I agree to provide a copy of the Department of Corrections Safety Contract as part of this Attendance Agreement and by doing so, I agree to incorporate all terms of the Department

of Corrections Safety Contract as additions to and as conditions of this Attendance Agreement.

6. I agree to provide a uniform resource locator (URL address) to my RSO profile emailed to all FBC ministers and emergency response team leaders.
7. I will not attend any FBC worship services, activities or FBC sponsored events without a member of my attendance team. FBC must approve any person serving on my attendance team. If no member of my attendance team is available, I will not attend any FBC worship services, activities, or FBC sponsored events. I acknowledge that a member of my attendance team must be present and in close proximity to me at all times when I attend a FBC worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event.
8. Upon my arrival at a FBC worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event, I will sign in on arriving and sign out upon leaving at a designated location (as agreed upon with my FBC representative, my attendance team and myself).
9. I will not serve in any role in a FBC ministry without prior approval from FBC.
10. I acknowledge and agree that all children and student areas of the FBC campus are off limits at all times, even if my own children are attending FBC and are present and participating in FBC's children or student's ministry or activities. I will neither ask nor attempt to supervise any children's activities nor enter a designated children's area at any time. I will not serve in the FBC children's or youth's ministries.
11. I will not attend a FBC small group or visit the home of a FBC family where children are present, without the parent knowing my conviction, RSO history, and giving prior permission for my entry into their home.
12. I will promptly leave any area on FBC property where children are present with the exception of a populated church foyer, sanctuary, fellowship hall, auditorium, or area where five or more adults are present.
13. I will not have any physical contact with a child at FBC, including, without limitation, sitting next to a child other than those related to me, holding a child on my lap, or being hugged or kissed by a child at FBC. If a child other than my relative approaches me to talk, I will politely acknowledge him or her and promptly leave the area.
14. I will stay within casual conversation distance with my attendance team member during all FBC worship services, activities or FBC sponsored events. This requirement includes using any restroom. A member of my attendance team must be in any restroom area with me at all times. Prior to using any restroom, my attendance team member will check to ensure no children are present before I enter. For individual restroom facilities my attendance team member will wait outside the door until I leave the restroom. FBC may designate which restroom(s) I may use. I understand that FBC may change restroom designations for me depending on need and particular circumstances.
15. I understand that my attendance team members will a) fully cooperate with any legal

inquiry pertaining to any alleged violation of this Attendance Agreement, and b) provide our sign-in and sign-out records should they be requested.

I understand the above conditions, provisions and limitations set forth herein. I submit to these conditions, provisions and limitations in return for achieving my wish to attend FBC worship services, activities and FBC sponsored events. I agree to abide by any and all instructions given to me by my attendance team members while on campus of FBC or while attending any FBC sponsored event. I accept that if I violate or breach any of the conditions or provisions of this Attendance Agreement, I understand that I will immediately and automatically be prohibited to attend any FBC worship service, activity or FBC sponsored event or be present on FBC property.

[Name of Offender]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

[Name of authorized FBC minister or lay leader]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_