



South Baptist Church *(A Reformed Congregation)*

85 Court Street
Laconia, NH 03246

603-524-7740

Child and Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

South Baptist Church (SBC) seeks to provide a safe environment for the children who participate in our programs, classes, and activities. We acknowledge 1) the high value that Jesus Christ placed on the sanctity of all human life, including children, during his earthly ministry and 2) the teaching present throughout the Holy Scriptures that we should give special care to those who are vulnerable or defenseless. It is thus our responsibility as Christians and as adults to consider the protection of children to be of utmost importance.

By implementing the below policies and practices, it is our goal to protect the children at SBC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

For the purposes of this policy, the term *“child” or “children” shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years*, unless otherwise stated. The term “volunteer” shall include all unpaid persons who interact with children in any formal, ministerial, and/or supervisory capacity, as part of the ministry at SBC. This policy applies to all volunteers and paid employees of SBC. A “sponsored activity” is an activity that takes place on the premises of SBC or in a location other than the premises of SBC that is planned by, coordinated through, or affiliated with the ministry of SBC, and for which adequate supervision for children is planned beforehand and provided by volunteers or staff members.

Parental Supervision

For the purposes of this section only, the term “child” or “children” shall apply to all persons under the age of sixteen (16) years. When children are not otherwise participating in Church events in which they are supervised by Church volunteers or paid employees, parent(s) or guardian(s) are responsible for ensuring that their child is supervised while on Church property or at other off-site Church ministry events.

Under no circumstances is a child or children to be left unattended in the building or on Church grounds. If a child is seen unaccompanied by an adult, it is incumbent on the witnessing individual to notify Church staff immediately and attempt to find the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

Selection of Volunteers

a) Six-Month Rule

Individuals must have regular involvement at SBC (including Sunday worship services, classes/Bible studies, home fellowship groups, social events and/or outside fellowship times) for at least six months before applying to work with children. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for evaluation of the suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application to be provided by SBC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file by the Pastor. Should the Pastor be compelled by a court of competent jurisdiction to disclose the contents of a file, he will lawfully comply. The Elders and Church employees may have access to review the file at the Pastor's discretion.

c) Personal Interview

Upon SBC's receipt of a complete application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant and Elders to discuss the applicant's suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references will be checked. These references may be either institutional or personal references, preferably from organizations or people that can testify to the applicant's previous work with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file by the Pastor. Should the Pastor be compelled by a court of competent jurisdiction to disclose the contents of reference check, he will lawfully comply. The Elders and Church employees may have access to review reference checks at the Pastor's discretion.

e) Background Checks

A criminal background check through the NH State Police is required for all volunteers. Additionally, background checks will be completed for all paid employees of the church, including the pastoral staff, whether or not they work with children. Before a background check is run, prospective volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to grant SBC permission to run the background check or any other reference checks, as SBC deems necessary, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Elders on a case-by-case basis in light of the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving, but not limited to, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, or indecency will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence by the Pastor. The Elders and Church employees may have access to review background checks at

the Pastor's discretion. Background checks will be conducted for all volunteers and paid employees every five years, or more frequently at SBC's discretion.

f) Teenage Volunteers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for individuals who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities.

The following guidelines apply to teenage volunteers:

- They must be at least 14 years of age.
- They must be screened with an application form and interview.
- They must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- They must abide by all of the policies set forth in this document, including receiving training regarding this policy.

Safe and Adequate Supervision

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult volunteers be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during programs and activities. If only one adult is in attendance, that individual must be a female. Each classroom will have a window for visibility purposes. Additionally, if only one adult is in attendance, the door to the classroom will remain open.

Teachers will record the names of all children and teachers in attendance for each class. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must stay on church premises for the entire time that a child is in our care. A parent or guardian must pick the child up from our care before the teacher will dismiss the child. All children must stay with an adult volunteer or staff member until dismissed from their class or program. If, a volunteer needs to leave the building before the class has been dismissed, and that would leave the class unstaffed, the volunteer should bring the children to their parents.

An Elder, Trustee, or staff member will conduct periodic, random checks of the various Children's Ministry classes that are held on Sunday mornings to ensure that these guidelines are being met.

Discipline Policy

No physical discipline (including, but not limited to, hitting, spanking, and slapping) may be used by any volunteer, staff member, or parent at any time. When a child misbehaves, an adult may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this is not effective, the parent should be notified and allowed to handle the situation.

In the event that a child harms another child, either intentionally or unintentionally, parents of both children involved should be notified by the volunteer at the time of pick-up. If any child displays a recurring pattern of aggressive or harmful behavior, the parents should be informed that their child's behavior is putting other children at risk and is not appropriate or acceptable for this setting. If the pattern of behavior continues even after this discussion, the Elders will be notified and will meet with the parents to discuss the issue.

Restroom Guidelines

Parents are encouraged to have their children visit the restroom prior to each class. Parents are responsible for all diapering and help with toileting, regardless of the age of the child, and will be asked to leave the service to care for their child if necessary. One or two individuals within the congregation will be identified as an established contact, and volunteers will communicate with this individual via cell phone if a parent needs to be asked to leave the service to care for his/her child.

Volunteers may escort older children who are able to use the restroom independently to the restroom, but the adult must first confirm that no one else is using the restroom at that time and must then remain outside of the restroom. In general, children from different classes should not use the restroom at the same time, in order to minimize children of different ages being in the restroom together. Teenage volunteers may not escort children to the restroom.

Accidental Injuries

In the event that a child receives an injury while in our care, the adult(s) in charge will immediately notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury. Care of the injury will be administered by the parent/guardian. If the circumstances warrant, an ambulance will be called.

A written incident report will be completed and signed by the involved volunteer/staff member, parents, and Pastor for any of the following situations:

- A. A child receives an injury that requires first aid or medical treatment;
- B. A child receives a bump or blow to the head, neck, or spine, regardless of severity;
- C. A child is transported by ambulance from SBC; or
- D. An unusual or unexpected incident occurs that jeopardizes the safety of a child.

These reports will be kept on file at the church for a minimum of 2 years.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at SBC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child in our care. In general, children with the following symptoms will not be permitted to attend a program or class:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours;
- Green or yellow discharge from nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our volunteers or staff to be ill will be separated from other children, and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be removed from the class or program.

Training

SBC will provide training on this child protection policy to all new volunteers and staff members and will also strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

All volunteers and paid church staff will receive a copy of this child protection policy annually and be asked to acknowledge in writing that s/he has read and will abide by the policy.

Known Sex Offenders

In an effort to protect every member of our congregation, the procedure below will be followed:

- When a new individual visits SBC, a church employee, officer, or Elder will run a check through the NH sex offender registry for that person's name. If the individual does have a current listing on the registry, the Elders will be notified and will review the individual's record. A letter from SBC's legal counsel (including a No Trespass Order) will be sent or given to the individual, indicating that our congregation is not equipped to meet or deal with the unique needs of a person with his/her background, and therefore s/he may not be in attendance at any program, service, or event held on SBC property.
- If a current member or attendee is added to the sex offender registry or is discovered to have been listed on the registry without the church's knowledge, the Elders will meet with the individual and develop an appropriate response plan.

Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect

a) Mandated reporters

New Hampshire law requires *any individual* who has reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected to immediately report those allegations to the Central Intake Unit of DCYF, by way of oral communication (1-800-894-5533). A written report must then be completed within 48 hours.

b) Defining child abuse and neglect

The first step in helping abused and neglected children is learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. According to NH RSA 169-C:3:

“Abused child” means any child who has been:

- a) Sexually abused; or
- b) Intentionally physically injured; or
- c) Psychologically injured so that the child exhibits symptoms of emotional problems generally recognized to result from consistent mistreatment or neglect; or
- d) Physically injured by other than accidental means.

“Neglected child” means a child:

- a) Who has been abandoned by his or her parents, guardian, or custodian; or
- b) Who is without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental, or emotional health, when it is established that the child's health has suffered or is likely to suffer serious impairment; and the deprivation is not due primarily to the lack of financial means of the parents, guardian, or custodian.

c) Warning signs of abuse and neglect

According to the NH Department of Health and Human Services, the following *may* be an indication that a child needs assistance:

Signs of physical abuse

- Bruises, welts, burns that cannot be sufficiently explained
- Injuries in places where children don't usually get hurt (back, neck, back of legs, face)
- Repeated injuries
- Withdrawn, fearful or extreme behavior

Signs of sexual abuse

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Frequent complaints of stomachaches or headaches
- Chronic depression
- Withdrawal
- Feeling threatened by physical contact
- Inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex
- Running away from home

Signs of emotional abuse

- Inability to play as most children do
- Sleep problems
- Antisocial behavior
- Behavioral extremes
- Lags in emotional and intellectual growth
- Self-destructive feelings or behavior

Signs of neglect

- Chronically dirty
- Chronic school absences
- Dress inadequate for weather
- Left alone at home or without supervision
- Left in the care of siblings too young or unable to baby-sit
- Often fatigued - even falling asleep in school
- Hunger
- Self-destructive feelings or behavior

d) Responding to allegations of child abuse

If a volunteer or staff member has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child, s/he must immediately call DCYF and notify the Elders, being sure to complete and submit a written report to the Elders (Form V) and to DCYF within 48 hours. Utmost care and confidentiality should be exercised: the reporting individual should not ask the child about the suspected abuse or neglect, nor should s/he discuss the matter with any other volunteer, staff member, member of the church, parents, or members of the community, excluding law enforcement and DCYF officials.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at South Baptist Church or during church-affiliated programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. All Elders of the church will be notified immediately, and the Elders will designate an individual to handle all subsequent proceedings related to the allegation. Legal counsel will also be notified and will identify and control all information related to attorney-client privilege in any subsequent proceedings.
2. The parents/guardians of the child will be notified immediately, unless a parent/guardian is alleged to have been the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct, in which case the other parent or guardian, if there is one, shall be notified immediately.
3. The volunteer, staff member, or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. He or she will be instructed to have no contact with the alleged victim.
4. All allegations of abuse shall be reported to the local police department and to DCYF. SBC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by the authorities, along with any related proceedings.
5. The church's insurance company will be notified, and the church will complete an incident report. Copies of any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
6. Legal counsel for the church, after consulting with the Elders, will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the church must refrain from speaking to the media on behalf of SBC.
7. The Elders may encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event that the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the Elders may encourage and assist that individual in securing appropriate pastoral care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. All persons will act towards the child, the parents and the accused in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.
8. Any person who is found guilty of alleged abuse or misconduct will be permanently removed from all ministry and/or employment positions within the church and may additionally be instructed that s/he may not attend SBC or *any* of its affiliated events or programs.

(Revised 10/05/21)

Appendixes to Child Protection Policy

- I.** Application for Volunteers who will Work with Children
- II.** Annual Acknowledgement by Staff and Volunteers
- III.** Reference Questionnaire for Applicant to Work with Children or Youth
- IV.** Incident Report Form
- V.** Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse or Misconduct Form

I. Application for Volunteers who will Work with Children

This application is to be completed by applicants for positions involving the supervising or teaching of children. It will assist the church in providing a safe and secure environment for all infants, preschoolers, children, and youth and those who care for them.

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Date | | |
| Full Name | | |
| Address | | |
| City | State | Zip |
| Home Phone | Cell Phone | |
| Date of Birth | Marital Status | Gender M F |
| Are you a member of South Baptist Church? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| If not, when did you make your profession of faith in Christ? | | |
| Please list all other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years. | | |
| | | |
| List all previous church work involving children/youth (include church name and address, type of work performed, and dates). | | |
| | | |
| Have you read SBC's Child Protection Policy? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Do you agree to observe and abide by all policies and procedures outlined in SBC's Child Protection Policy? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Why do you want to serve in this position/ministry? | | |
| | | |
| Please note: answering "yes" to either of the next two questions does not automatically disqualify you from working with children. An affirmative answer will only necessitate an interview. | | |
| Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or plead guilty or no contest to any crime? | | |
| Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Have you ever committed any act of child abuse or sexual molestation against a minor? | | |
| Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

References: Please list three persons who have known you for at least five years and who are familiar with your character and/or your work, particularly as it relates to supervision of children and youth. None of the references may be a relative.

Name

Address

Daytime Phone

Evening Phone

Length of time you have known the reference

How do you know the reference?

Name

Address

Daytime Phone

Evening Phone

Length of time you have known the reference

How do you know the reference?

Name

Address

Daytime Phone

Evening Phone

Length of time you have known the reference

How do you know the reference?

Applicant Statement

I certify that the information contained in this application is correct, complete, and accurate.

If allowed to work with children, I agree to be bound by the policies of South Baptist Church as outlined in the Child Protection Policy, and will conduct myself according to the understanding that, as a person of authority, it is my responsibility to avoid inappropriate behavior with children in my care. I have received satisfactory answers to all questions I have raised in relation to the Child Protection Policy

I give permission for SBC to conduct a criminal-court background check on me now, and at any time in the future. I further give my permission for any references checked to give South Baptist Church any information they may have regarding my suitability and fitness for children's or youth work.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application, I hereby release any individual, church, organization, employer, or any other person from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me or my family on account of compliance, or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

Signature _____

Date _____

Child Protection Policy
II. Annual Acknowledgement by Staff and Volunteers

Please read the copy of the *South Baptist Church Child Protection Policy* given to you and fill out the following.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Name | |
| Address | |
| Home Phone | Cell Phone |
| Email | |
| Position (check all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Worship <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____) | |

Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understand the Policy and that you agree to comply with the policies and procedures outlined therein.

I accept the responsibility to nurture the well-being and Christian faith of the children of South Baptist Church, and to care for them as Christ cares for me. I have read and understand the South Baptist Church Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by it.

I will dutifully report any suspected abuse or neglect as set forth in the Policy.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Printed name)

Child Protection Policy

III. Reference Questionnaire for Applicant to Work with Children or Youth

Your name was given as a reference for: _____,

who has applied for the position of: _____.

As a condition of acceptance as a volunteer who works with children, an applicant must have on file a record of at least two references. Please complete this questionnaire and return it by _____. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

To be completed by the applicant:

I further give my permission for any references checked to give South Baptist Church any information they may have regarding my suitability and fitness for children's or youth work.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application, I hereby release any individual, church, organization, employer, or any other person from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me or my family on account of compliance, or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

Signature _____ Date _____

1. How long have you known the applicant?

2. How do you know the applicant?

3. Have you observed him/her with children or youth?

If so, please describe your observations.

4. What attributes of this applicant best prepare him/her for work with children/youth?

5. Do you know of any conditions that make this applicant unsuitable for teaching or working with children or youth?

If yes, please describe.

6. To the best of your knowledge, has this person ever been convicted of or plead guilty or no contest to child abuse or any violent crimes or had a child/youth removed from his/her home?

7. Would you recommend this individual for approval to work with children or youth?

8. Additional comments:

(Signature)

(Date)

(Printed name)

(Phone number)

Please return this completed form to:

South Baptist Church
ATTN: Senior Pastor, Confidential
85 Court Street
Laconia, NH 03246
603-524-7740

Child Protection Policy
IV. Incident Report Form

Complete this report in any of the following situations:

- A. A child receives an injury that requires first aid or medical treatment;
- B. A child receives a bump or blow to the head, neck, or spine, regardless of severity;
- C. A child is transported by ambulance from SBC; or
- D. An unusual or unexpected incident occurs that jeopardizes the safety of a child.

*NOTE: There is a different form (Form V) to complete for allegations of child abuse.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Name and approximate age of child involved: | |
| Date of incident: | Time of incident: |
| Nature of injury/incident: | |
| Location of incident: | |
| Description of incident: | |
| Was the above information: <input type="checkbox"/> Reported to you by someone else? If so, who: _____ OR <input type="checkbox"/> Directly observed by you? | |
| Other witness(es) to incident: | |

Action(s) taken (check all that apply):

- Provided first aid – describe: _____
- Notified parent/guardian – who/when: _____
- Call placed to 911 – by whom: _____
- Taken to hospital – by whom: _____
- Notified church official – who/when: _____
- Notified authorities – who/when: _____
- Other: _____

(Printed name of person completing this report)

(Position)

(Address)

(Telephone number)

(Email address)

(Signature)

(Date)

(Signature of church official)

(Date)

(Signature of parent)

(Date)

For Office Use Only

Please file in Church Clerk file cabinet in church office.

Received By: _____

Date Received: _____

V. Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse or Misconduct

This form is to be completed by any church employee, volunteer, attendee or member who has reason to suspect abuse and/or neglect of a child or youth in attendance at South Baptist Church. Please fill in all applicable fields.

| |
|--|
| Today's date: |
| Address, including town and city: |
| Name of individual observing or receiving disclosure of alleged abuse: |
| Alleged victim's name and date of birth: |
| Date and location of initial conversation with (or report from) the alleged victim regarding the alleged abuse or misconduct: |
| Alleged victim's report to you during the initial conversation (please give a detailed summary): |
| Any observations you made of the alleged victim: |
| If there was an incident, include a detailed description of it as you recall: |
| Initial actions taken by you: |

Initial actions taken by others (please provide other individuals' names, involvement, and contact information (if known):

Persons notified (check all that apply – indicate date, time, by whom, and individual contacted):

- Parents: _____
- Pastor or Elder: _____
- Child Protective Services: _____
- Law Enforcement: _____
- Other: _____

Follow-up actions and additional information:

(Printed name of person completing this report)

(Position)

(Address)

(Telephone number)

(Email address)

This information is considered highly confidential. Do not discuss the information contained within this report with anyone other than SBC's Elders, DCYF, and local authorities.

Please return this completed form to:

South Baptist Church
85 Court Street
Laconia, NH 03246

For Office Use Only

Please file in Church Clerk file cabinet in church office.

Received By:

Date Received: