



# child protection policy

## Child Protection Policy

As approved by the Elder Board 8.10.2021

### I. Purpose and Responsibility

Faith Community Church (FCC) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth participating in our ministry activities, as well as our staff and volunteers. Likewise, we seek to minimize any vulnerability or unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our volunteers and staff may experience as they fulfill their ministry duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, our leadership team has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees within children's and youth ministries.

Ministry Directors are responsible for ensuring all of their volunteers are compliant with this policy, and FCC Staff will be responsible for running criminal background checks for active volunteers and staff as necessary and at least every three years.

### II. Adult (age 18+) Volunteer Screening Procedures

All individuals over the age of 18 who desire to volunteer to work with children or youth at Faith Community Church will be required to complete the online Children and Youth Ministry Worker/Volunteer Application. The application will be kept on file, electronically, in FCC's secure database. The applicant will receive the Worker/Volunteer Agreement & Release form; the Notice – Background Investigation Disclosure; A Summary of Your Rights; and the Background Check Authorization form via email through DocuSign. The two forms—the Worker/Volunteer Agreement & Release form and the Background Check Authorization Form—must be signed electronically via DocuSign. The Background Check Authorization form requests the name, social security number and signature of the applicant, among other information, which will be securely stored in DocuSign. The Background Check Authorization form also authorizes law enforcement agencies; public and private schools; federal, state, and local agencies and courts; credit bureaus; information bureaus; current and former employers; financial institutions; licensing agencies; governmental agencies; the military; and other individuals and entities to provide any information that is requested by a consumer reporting agency, such as Protect My Ministry, and/or requested by FCC.

All adult volunteers will be required to watch a child protection video training and take the test at the end of the training. The training will be sent to the applicant via email; the email will come from Protect My Ministry, FCC's background check and training vendor, at an email address of [message@mobilizemyministry.com](mailto:message@mobilizemyministry.com). Test results will be sent to the Ministry Directors, as well as the Child Protection Administrator. Applicants are required to pass the test with a score of 80% or higher in order to qualify to serve in children's and youth ministries.

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The Ministry Director will interview the candidate as appropriate about his or her background, faith and references, and may perform reference checks in order to fully vet the volunteer. Successfully completing the application process approves an individual to serve in any children or youth ministry; individuals do not need to fill out an application per ministry.

Any applicant whose criminal background check results in a history of adverse information may not be allowed to serve in children's and youth ministries. That Ministry Director will seek to understand the details of the offense to see if the individual has repented and turned from the behavior. The Ministry Director, in collaboration with the other Ministry Directors and/or a pastor, will use his or her discretion in deciding whether to allow the individual to serve in children's and youth ministries. Please be advised that records of pending criminal charges and/or convictions are not an absolute bar to volunteering/employment at FCC. However, FCC will consider such information to determine if there is a substantial relationship between the circumstances of the pending criminal charge(s) and/or conviction(s) and the position(s) for which the applicant is being considered.

### III. Youth (under age 18) Volunteer Screening Procedure

Youth (under the age of 18) desiring to volunteer in FCC's children's and youth ministries will be required to complete a Children and Youth Ministry Worker/Volunteer Application, and electronically sign the Volunteer Agreement and Release form via DocuSign, which will be emailed to the applicant after the submission of his/her application. An alternate child protection training will be conducted to encourage youth volunteers to know the dangers and signs of child abuse/molestation. They will be trained in the FCC Touching and Toileting Procedures. They will be encouraged never to be alone in a room with a child but instead to be in the presence of others and to keep activity, as best as possible, in plain view with doors open when an adult leader is not present. Documentation that a youth volunteer has received the training will be kept by FCC and recorded in FCC's secure database. FCC desires to keep children safe while also keeping youth volunteers from being wrongly accused of inappropriate behavior.

When a worker/volunteer turns 18, he or she will be required to complete the remaining steps of the adult application process: electronically sign the Background Check Authorization form to get a background check run; and watch and complete the child protection video training and exam, passing the exam with a score of 80% or higher.

### IV. Waiting Period

In order to assist newcomers to Faith Community Church, there will be no waiting period required prior to the time an individual may serve. Newcomers are welcome to serve as soon as they have been fully vetted by Ministry Directors per the process described within this policy

### V. Supervision

#### Early Childhood

At least two care providers must be provided at every function or program requiring childcare. One is designated as the lead and is fully trained to take the lead role. The second care provider is present to assist the lead care provider. The number of care providers is increased in accordance with the state of Wisconsin's child to care provider ratio requirements. Two or more leads must be assigned to monitor children in areas outside the location of a ministry service or event that is in progress. All care providers assigned must have been previously approved through FCC's ministry screening process per this policy. Workers should arrive 15 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at

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their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children should be released to find their parents or wait unattended.

### Kindergarten - High School Youth

At least two adults (individuals 18 years old or older) must be present at every function or program involving children or youth. In the case of high school youth, volunteers must be over the age of 21. Two or more adults must be assigned to monitor children and youth activities in areas outside the location of a ministry service or event that is in progress. The adults assigned must have been previously approved through FCC's ministry screening process per this policy.

Workers should arrive 5-10 minutes before a scheduled activity. All Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade leaders must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No child K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade should be released to find their parents. No child K-12<sup>th</sup> grade should wait unattended for transportation.

## VI. Discipleship Care

If, in the course of ministry and discipleship activities, an individual presents a need for spiritual/emotional care, a team approach—by at least two adults—is encouraged as best practice. If only one individual is available to care for the individual, the meeting should be conducted in view of another worker through a window or an open door. Care of a minor should be done in an informal manner, limiting the length of time and frequency. If the individual providing the care determines additional care or counseling is required, he or she will work with the Ministry Director and pastoral staff to determine appropriate next steps.

## VII. Touch and Toileting Policy

### **Touch: When caring for Infants – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

1. Touching the genitals or buttocks area is NEVER acceptable (diapering excluded).
2. Keep hugs short. A side or back hug, high five or verbal praise is preferred.
3. An adult should avoid being alone in a room with one child.
4. In classrooms and the nursery, the doors should be open or the sightlines through the windows unobstructed at all times.
5. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety such as sitting older children on their lap and kissing.

### **Toileting: When caring for children 2 years – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade:**

1. An adult or helper should avoid being alone in a restroom with one child.
2. An adult or assistant volunteer should escort children to the restroom. He/she should wait outside until the children are finished; the doors to the restrooms may be propped open so the adult can see and hear what is going on inside.
3. An adult or assistant should NEVER be alone in a closed restroom with a child. If a child needs assistance, care should be given in the presence of another adult or volunteer with appropriate discretion attending to the needs and privacy of the individual.

### **Toileting: When caring for children 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

1. An adult or assistant should avoid being alone in a restroom with a child.
2. Second - Fifth grade children may leave the room unaccompanied to use the restroom. However, if at all possible, this should be deferred until the time these children are back in their parent's care.

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## VIII. Discipline

No form of physical discipline is allowed, i.e., ear pulling, spanking slapping, hitting, grabbing, shaking or otherwise physical discipline. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.

Disciplinary problems must be reported to the Ministry Director, activity coordinator, or to a parent or guardian immediately. Any discipline issues should be dealt with by the Ministry Director in plain view or at a minimum in a room with an open door preferably with other adults present or in plain view.

## IX. Injuries or Illness

Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.

A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process per this policy—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.

Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If immediate return is impossible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.

Reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva or other bodily fluids should always be taken.

Ministry Directors and workers who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.

Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury.

Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or Ministry Director. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

## X. Recordkeeping

All ministry functions involving children and youth should maintain an attendance list for every function.

Ministry workers must complete an Incident Report whenever a more than minor injury occurs during a ministry function. Promptly turn in the Incident Report to FCC's Financial Director or Campus Pastor within 24 hours.

## XI. Obligation to Report and Permissive Reporting

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Any person who has reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, or who has reason to believe that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur must **immediately** report this information in person or by phone to a Pastor or the Ministry Director (Youth, Children's or Early Childhood) of the ministry in which you serve. The office number at Faith Community is 715-386-4070. The staff member you contact will work with you in contacting the proper authorities. ***Never promise any child or student that you will keep secret any conversation.*** Nothing herein is intended to, or should be interpreted to, discourage, dissuade, or prohibit, permissive reporting under Wis. Stat. § 48.981(2)(c). Reports under this section should also be promptly made to the St. Croix County Department of Health and Human Services at (715) 246-8260.

## XII. Notice of Injury, Abuse or Molestation

Volunteer or paid ministry workers who become aware of any injury, abuse or molestation occurring during or connected with any ministry activity must immediately inform their activity coordinator, Ministry Director or next highest authority. The Pastor for Missional Leadership and/or Lead Pastor should also be immediately notified.

Ministry leaders/directors that become aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or molestation has occurred. The Ministry Director will ensure that an attorney is immediately contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the church should report the abuse or molestation to law enforcement authorities. The written opinion should be obtained quickly (within 24 hours if possible) after the ministry leader/director first becomes aware of the situation. The attorney's advice should be acted upon immediately, including reporting the incident to the authorities. An attorney also should be contacted immediately if the ministry leader/director becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant by a parent or guardian.

Ministry Directors must promptly notify FCC's insurance carrier upon notice of abuse or molestation as well as Converge Great Lakes, FCC's denominational headquarters.

## XIII. Internal Investigation

Faith Community considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated by Ministry Directors, always with the assistance of legal counsel and civil authorities.

Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established practices of our church ministry.

Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation. Faith Community will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within our church if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employees is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

## XIV. Communicating with Law Enforcement and News Media

All Ministry Directors, employees and volunteers of Faith Community Church will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse or molestation.

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The leadership of Faith Community will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the church. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.

Faith Community's Communications Director, a staff member or our attorney will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

## **XV. Renewal**

All volunteers and employees working within children's and youth ministries may be subject to have a background check run annually in order to be approved to serve within their ministry.

Should any volunteer or employee become unsuitable for working with children or youth due to issues at home, erratic behavior at church or in the community, they will be removed immediately from their current position and will not be considered for positions involving work with similar groups.

## **XVI. Revision of Policy and Procedures**

The leadership of Faith Community Church, with the assistance of legal counsel will review this policy and the procedures established within it as necessary. Policies and procedures may be modified. When changes are made, Ministry Directors and leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.

## **XVII. Violation of Policy or Procedures**

Ministry workers must promptly notify their activity coordinator or Ministry Director when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.

Ministry coordinators, supervisors and Ministry Directors who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

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