



# Southside Baptist Church Ministry Policies

## Children & Students

Dear Children's & Youth Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Southside Baptist Church!

At Southside Baptist Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Southside Baptist Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

***Southside Baptist Church Leadership***

# Southside Baptist Church Policies & Procedures for Family Ministry

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## **Overview of Southside Baptist Church Safety System**

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, Southside Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Southside Baptist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervising ministry staff member. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Southside Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete Southside Baptist Church's Screening Process, which includes:

- an Employment Application (employees only);
- a Safety Application (employees and volunteers);
- a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers); and
- references to be checked (employees and volunteers).

\*A volunteer must attend Southside Baptist Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children or students.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Southside Baptist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or students' activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

# Child Safety Policy

## DESIGNATIONS

An **Immediate Supervisor** is the person a staff member or volunteer reports directly to.

The **Overseeing Minister** is the called and recognized minister of the church (not a ministry director) tasked with overseeing a specific ministry area (ex: a Children's Minister, Student Minister, Family Minister, Associate or Lead Pastor, etc.).

A **Director** is a person other than a called and recognized minister of the church who oversees a specific ministry area (ex: a children's director, student director, family director, etc.).

The **Designated Overseers** are a specially called and recognized group of the church. An Overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, not a recent convert, and well thought of by outsiders.<sup>1</sup> At a minimum, this group will be comprised of a plurality of male, called and recognized ministers of the church.

The **Executive/Lead Pastor** designation refers to the Executive Pastor first. In the absence of an Executive Pastor, this designation refers to the Lead Pastor.

## ABUSE TOLERANCE

Southside Baptist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Southside Baptist Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

## REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Southside Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV).

Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Southside Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Family Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive/Lead Pastor and the Designated Overseers.

## **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Family Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at Southside Baptist Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Southside Baptist Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at Southside Baptist Church.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

According to Alabama Law, any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or who observes any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse shall be required to report orally, either by telephone or direct communication, immediately followed by a written report, to DHR, law enforcement, or the District Attorney.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Department of Human Resources provides forms: Written Report of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (DHR-FCS-1593) for making reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect (CAN). Individuals considered Mandatory Reporters are required to make written reports and should use CAN forms. Forms are available through the county and state offices of the Department of Human Resources. (This form is available at the Alabama Department of Human Resources, (334) 242-9500 or also available for completion and [www.dhr.alabama.gov](http://www.dhr.alabama.gov)).

It is the policy of Southside Baptist Church that ALL suspicions or allegations of abuse, regardless of state law requirements, should be reported.

### **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

Southside Baptist Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

## **Southside Baptist Church Safety Committee**

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Southside Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee which will meet once each quarter.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Southside Baptist Church's ministry to children, students and their families to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

### **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Executive/Lead Pastor
2. Overseeing Minister
3. Children/ Student/Family Director(s), and/or
4. Any appointee of the Designated Overseers.

### **MEETINGS**

The Executive/Lead Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Southside Baptist Church policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Southside Baptist Church Designated Overseers regarding safety issues.

## Southside Baptist Church Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interaction with children.

1. **Each supervisor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
2. **Overseeing Minister** conducts written performance evaluations every six for individuals in paid staff positions.
3. **Overseeing Minister** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
4. **Executive/Lead Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a children's and student's ministry programs at least once each quarter.
5. **Executive/Lead Pastor** meets with the Overseeing ministers/directors at least once monthly to discuss the ministry, including safety training and procedures.
6. **Designated Overseers** meets with Overseeing Minister once each year to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
7. **Overseeing Minister** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs occurring weekly.

### **BUILDING SAFETY**

The Overseeing Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the children's and students' areas are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the children's area or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is cleared prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).



Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

### **WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS**

Southside Baptist Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all children's ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Children</b>
Nursery	2	6
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	10
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	14
Elementary	2	18

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Overseeing Minister. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

### **DISCIPLINE**

It is our policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).

- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Overseeing Minister.

## **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE**

### ***Nursery children***

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### **Diapering**

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

#### **Toilet training**

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child’s progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”).
- 6) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
- 7) “Accidents” should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children’s area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

### ***School age children***

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

### **Special needs**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

### **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any Southside Baptist Church program or activity.

### **MEDICATION**

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Southside Baptist Church programs.

### **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers serving in Southside Baptist Church ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Overseeing Minister or supervising staff member concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

### **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children or students while participating in ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.

2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Southside Baptist Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.
5. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

### **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Southside Baptist Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in ministry programs.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Southside Baptist Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Southside Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in children's and students' ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Ministry Staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in all ministry settings must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.

6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with or in the presence of children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

### **TOBACCO USE**

Southside Baptist Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Southside Baptist Church activities or programs. Southside Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

### **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

### **RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Southside Baptist Church ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or Overseeing Minister before releasing the child.

Southside Baptist Church utilizes Realm as a check-in system. Once checked-in, labels are printed matching the child with the parent, legal guardian or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.

### **SUPERVISION**

Staff members and volunteers in Family Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

## Policies and Procedures

### Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Southside Baptist Church's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Southside Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Southside Baptist Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Southside Baptist Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of Southside Baptist Church policies and procedures manual.

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

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

[This page is to remain attached to Southside Baptist Church's Ministry Policies.]

## Policies and Procedures

### Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

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

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to the Executive/Lead Pastor.]