



Seattle First Baptist Church

Exploring what it means to follow the way of Jesus Christ

In this document 'youth' and 'child/ren' are considered anyone under 18 years old; 'we' and 'our' are considered any congregant, staff, and/or volunteer involved with Seattle First Baptist Church.

Goal/Purpose of Guidelines

Seattle First Baptist Church (SFBC) strives to provide a safe environment for youth. We care about their physical and emotional well-being. Our goal is to maintain professional and respectful levels of contact with youth at all church activities.

Adult Interaction with children:

1. The nursery is professionally staffed by at least two people
2. The Sunday School (aka Godly Play) is run each week by two adults
3. During Sunday School when a child needs to use the restroom, one adult will accompany him/her. The adult will check that the restroom is empty (including all the stalls) of other people before the child enters. The adult will wait outside until the child is finished and then accompany him/her back to the classroom.
4. The church conducts background checks on nursery staff and Sunday School teachers

Print, Electronic & Social Media

Our current general guidelines for SFBC publication and church social media account:

1. No posting photos of person(s) under 18 years old without parent's/guardian's permission.
2. No attributing names of person(s) under 18 years old

Led by SFBC's Communication Director, the church is in the process of establishing social media principles. These guidelines will be vetted by the Children, Families and Young Adults Commission before being approved by the diaconate.

Reporting Abuse or Neglect

For purposes of reporting child abuse and neglect, Washington law defines a child as a person under the age of 18. Washington law defines abuse or neglect as " the injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed, excluding conduct permitted under RCW 9A.16.100." RCW 26.44.020

SFBC's Employee handbook outlines the church's policy for both internal and external reporting obligations. Please see addendum.

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Last updated: 9.7.17

Addendum

Reporting Procedure for Abuse or Neglect Allegations

[as outline in SFBC's Employee handbook]

Definition of Abuse

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Child abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions. Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready. Child abuse and neglect includes both physical and non-physical aspects. The effects of child abuse are ongoing and affect the victim mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually.

The profile of a child molester is varied. Over eighty percent of the time, the typical child molester is someone known and trusted by the victim. Most abuse takes place in the context of ongoing relationships. Adult child abusers may be married and have children. The non-similarities in the molester profile means we should not make assumptions about who might be a child molester.

The Church recognizes that Washington law requires certain persons to report suspected abuse or neglect to government officials and it encourages employees to fully comply with Washington reporting requirements.

Internal Reporting Obligations:

Employees and volunteers who have reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred must discuss the matter with the Church Administrator or the Personnel Commission Chair within 24 hours and prior to reporting to government officials. The report should be made verbally and in writing. A report form is available from the Church Administrator.

In addition, employees and volunteers should discuss any behavior that may be perceived as inappropriate, suspicious, or harmful in any way to the Church, its workers or ministry participants (including children and youth) with your supervisor as soon as possible.

External Reporting Obligations:

Any employee or volunteer who, in a supervisory role for the Church, has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect is required by Washington law (RCW 26.44) to report child abuse or neglect to the proper law enforcement agency, provided the abuse or neglect was caused by a person:

1. whom he or she regularly supervises,
2. who is employed by, contracted by, or volunteers for the Church, and
3. who regularly has unsupervised access to a child or children.

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Washington law requires that all reports required to be made under RCW 26.44 must include the name of the accused if known and be made within 48 hours.

In addition, the reporting obligations required by Washington law apply to other persons including, but not limited to, any practitioner, county coroner or medical examiner, law enforcement officer, professional school personnel, registered or licensed nurse, social service counselor, psychologist, pharmacist, licensed or certified child care providers or their employees.

The employee or volunteer shall report the incident pursuant to the internal reporting procedures. The Church Business Administrator or Personnel Commission Chair may report the incident to local police or the government officials even if the employee or volunteer is not required by law to do so.

Employees or volunteers with mandatory reporting obligations under Chapter 26.44 RCW are not relieved of their obligations by simply reporting the incident to Church personnel.