

# **Child Protection First!**

*Child Abuse Protection Policy*  
*for*  
**First Church of Alabama**

# □ **Administrative Policies** □

# **THE SCREENING PROCESS**

All information acquired through the Employee/Volunteer screening process will be treated as confidential and is not to be disclosed to others outside the necessary ministers of First Church of Alabama staff. The only exception would be if an age-group minister deems that limited disclosure is necessary to protect a child from possible harm.

## **I. CONFIDENTIAL APPLICATION**

A. Every Employee and Volunteer must complete the “Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application.” It should be signed and returned to the Church Office before continuation of this process occurs. (Appendix I)

B. See Appendix S for a Job Description for the Child Protection First! Administrator.

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

See Appendix O for current employees and volunteers. See Appendix R for an Applicant Processing Checklist.

## **III. PROCEDURE FOR CONTACTING PERSONAL REFERENCES**

A. Mail a letter to the references listed on an individual’s application stating the purpose of your inquiry and requesting a response in ten (10) days. Include with the letter a copy of the signed and notarized “Consent to Release of Confidential Information.” (Appendix L) Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the response to be mailed.

B. If no response is received in a timely manner, place a telephone call and explain that you are conducting a standard confidential background check under First Church of Alabama Child Protection First Program.

C. Complete the “Reference Contact Form.” Be sure to answer all questions, noting the date and time of the process. (Appendix N)

D. Turn in the signed and completed “Reference Contact Form” to be placed in the applicant's permanent, confidential record folder. (See Appendix R for a complete checklist.)

## **IV. CONDUCT A PERSONAL INTERVIEW**

A. In order to be properly prepared to conduct an interview and answer possible questions, you should read the screening policies and guidelines very carefully. If you are uncertain about the meaning or purpose of any question, talk with the staff member responsible for overseeing the screening program.

B. It is your responsibility to go over any and all questions contained in the “Personal Interview,” the “Reference Contact,” and the “Confidential Application.” In addition you are to assess the applicants’ gifts, abilities, and experience for ministry at First Church of Alabama.

C. Although the screening process could easily be viewed negatively, take the initiative to cast it in a positive light. Your attitude is likely to be contagious, so make a deliberate effort to make it a positive one. Emphasize the fact that God can use all things for good, even our response to an unpleasant problem like child abuse (see Romans 8:28-29). Among other things you can mention the fact that you see the interview as an opportunity to learn more about applicants’ gifts, abilities, and ministry goals, which will help you to guide them in their work with minors and also to discern ways that you can spur them on in their walk with the Lord (Hebrews 10:24-25). As a result, the screening process will help not only to protect our children but also to build up our body by preparing us for works of service. (Ephesians 4:11-13).

D. As you go through the interview, there are a few things to look for that may indicate a security question. These include:

1. Gaps in church attendance or employment history.
2. Answering yes to one of the questions involving abuse.
3. A negative comment by a reference.
4. The fact that an applicant was sexually molested as a child or as an adult.

Although none of these factors alone necessarily disqualifies an applicant for work with minors, they may raise a concern that warrants further investigation or a report from a licensed counselor before approval is granted.

E. After you have completed the interview, send all of the forms to the staff member responsible for overseeing the process. If you have any doubts or questions about a particular applicant, note them clearly so the other staff member will know to discuss them with you. If you believe that an applicant should be approved, write your signature in the box on the bottom of the “Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application.” If you noticed any particular strengths or weaknesses for work with minors, make note of them on a separate sheet of paper and sign and date it at the bottom. Copies of these notes will be passed on to the appropriate age-group minister.

## **V. QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A PERSONAL INTERVIEW**

- A. To break the ice, engage in casual conversation for a few minutes; thank the applicant for his or her interest in working with preschoolers, grade-schoolers, preteen, youth, etc. Ask some general, non-threatening questions about his or her background, hobbies, interest, why he or she chose this church, etc.
- B. When and how did you become a Christian?
- C. Describe your walk with Christ since conversion.
- D. What are your ministry strengths?
- E. What are some ministry areas that you would like to strengthen?
- F. Why do you want to work with minors (state an appropriate age group)?
- G. When considering prior positions you have held, what particular tasks did you enjoy the most?
- H. Does your spouse support your involvement in this ministry? How?

- I. Describe the relationship among your family members as you were growing up.
- J. What types of disciplinary measures were utilized in your family?
- K. Have you ever been physically or sexually abused?
- L. Go over the questions contained in the “Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application.” In addition to gathering general information:
  - 1. Clarify any gaps in church attendance history (periods when an applicant was not attending church).
  - 2. Clarify any gaps in employment history; if an applicant had many job changes, find out why.
  - 3. If an applicant answered “yes” to any question pertaining to child abuse, get complete details.

## **VI. HANDLING ABUSE/MOLESTATION INCIDENTS**

### **A. THE CHURCH INVOLVEMENT**

- 1. The accused party will be presumed innocent until proven guilty. In an appropriate case, an accused party may be placed on paid or non-paid leave where there are no witnesses other than the accused and the accuser. However, where two adults were present at the time of the alleged incident, one of whom was the accused, and the other adult states in writing that he or she observed no incident to occur, then the accused employee or volunteer shall remain as a church employee or volunteer throughout the investigative process.
- 2. Upon an accusation being made, a designated representative of the Church Staff will notify and consult with the Chairman of the Church Council, the church attorney, and the liability insurance carrier representative for the church. Recommendations received from these sources will be followed.
- 3. Besides any other investigative process that may ensue, the church itself will implement the following procedure for investigation of the incident. The church may arrange for psychological testing for those involved, as well as for possible transference of actual abuse-related emotions from the parent of the accuser to the accused, or for other explanations of the incident that would establish the innocence of the accused. The church will take other steps as deemed prudent by the Pastor, Church Staff, and Church Council.
- 4. The church will, on a regular basis, keep all interested parties notified of the progress in the investigation and other matters, subject to counsel from the church’s lawyer or insurance company.
- 5. If the investigative process, or the church’s own investigation, clearly shows that the accused is in fact guilty of the incident, then the church will take all reasonable steps to cooperate with law enforcement authorities in any action they may take against the accused. Any claim or dispute arising from or related to allegations by or against workers, employees, volunteers, church members or their families, shall be resolved in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation.

### **B. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

- 1. Observed or reported child sexual abuse or child molestation, or indications of possible sexual abuse or child molestation, should be reported immediately to the Church Administrator. (See Appendix J).
  - A. No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a given person or situation more closely. When multiple indicators appear together, however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with someone else in the church, or in urgent cases, to make an

actual report to the authorities. (See Appendix E)

- B. Indications of sexual abuse: child reports abuse by others; has difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; complaints of pain or itching in genital area; bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area; unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters; or other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child of that age. (See Appendix F and G)
- C. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with the Church Administrator to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family. When time and circumstances permit, the report should first be made to the appropriate age-group minister, who will then proceed with the correct and thorough process.

2. Indications of abuse or neglect that may have occurred outside of church activities, but discovered during church activities, should be reported to the Church Administrator.

- A. Indications of physical abuse: child reports injury by others; unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites; child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretaker. (See Appendix H)

**First Church of Alabama  
Child Protection First!  
Administrative Guidelines  
Appendix Index**

- A Guidelines for Preschool Ministry**
- B Guidelines for Children’s Ministry**
- C Guidelines for Student Ministry**
- D Ministry To Students Behavior Guidelines**
- E The State of Alabama Child Abuse Reporting Requirements**
- F What is Child Sexual Abuse?**
- G Types of Child Sexual Abuse: Touching and Non-Touching**
- H Common Symptoms of an Abused or Molested Child**
- I Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application**
- J Abuse/Molestation Incident Report Form**
- K Parental Consent, Certification, and Medical Authorization**
- L Consent To Release of Confidential Information**
- M Alabama Department of Human Resources Request for Clearance of State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect**
- N Reference Contact Form**
- O Implementation Guidelines**
- P Recommendation Report**
- Q Sample Church Bulletin Announcements**
- R Applicant Processing Checklist**
- S Job Description: Child Protection First! Administrator**

**APPENDIX A**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Guidelines for Preschool Ministry**

1. Employees and volunteers must have no record of arrests or convictions for child abuse, or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor.
2. Employees and volunteers must be free of any and all accusations or allegations of child abuse.
3. Every effort will be made to staff all Preschool rooms with at least two (2) adults (age 19 and up), during all services.
4. Ministry leaders who coordinate and/or supervise nursery workers must be members in good standing of First Church of Alabama.
5. Effort will be made to ensure at least two workers for each Preschool room:
  - A. Helpers in the Bed Baby Room should be adults.
  - B. Helpers in the 1-3's nurseries should be adults. High schoolers at least fourteen (14) years of age may serve as helpers, on an as-needed basis.
  - C. Teenagers under age fourteen (14) may accompany their parents.
6. All parents who have children in the Preschool program will be telephoned and encouraged to participate in the program on a rotational basis.
7. All workers must adhere to the Child Protection First! policy and procedures, as well as the Preschool Security Policy.

**APPENDIX B**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Guidelines for Children's Ministry**

1. Children's ministry workers must have no record of arrests or convictions for child abuse, or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor.
2. Children's ministry workers should be free of any and all accusations or allegations of child abuse.
3. Every effort will be made to secure a yearly commitment from each children worker, at First Church of Alabama.
4. All children's workers must adhere to Child Protection First! policies and procedures, as well as the Preschool Security Policy.
5. Every effort will be made to staff all children's rooms with at least two (2) adults (age 19 and up) during all services and activities.
6. High schoolers at least fourteen (14) years of age may serve as helpers on an as-needed basis.

**APPENDIX C**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Guidelines for Student Ministry**

1. Student ministry workers must have no record of arrests or convictions for child abuse, or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor.
2. Student ministry workers should be free of any and all accusations or allegations of child abuse.
3. Student ministry workers should be at least nineteen (19) years of age.
4. Student ministry workers should be members, in good standing, of First Church of Alabama.
5. Student ministry leaders and workers must adhere to First Church of Alabama policies and procedures, including Child Protection First! and other policies and procedures in effect from time to time.

**APPENDIX D**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Ministry To Students Behavior Guidelines**

*Written guidelines for appropriate behavior--to be read and signed by all returning and new youth ministry.*

1. Any verbal or non-verbal sexual behavior with the youth is inappropriate.
2. Dating any of the youth is inappropriate.
3. Discretion should be used in dealing with all youth, especially regarding physical contact. Innocent gestures can be misinterpreted.
4. Sexual gestures to staff by youth should be reported to the Church Administrator.
5. Two adults should be present at all times, especially when working with youth of the opposite sex.
6. One-to-one conversations with a youth should occur in a public place.
7. Driving alone with a youth should be avoided as much as is reasonably possible, with particular care extended to troubled teens.
8. Special care is to be taken when driving alone with a youth:
  - Do not sit close to one another in the car.
  - No physical contact.
  - Do not stop the car to talk.
  - If you must stop, turn the light on inside the car.
  - If at all possible, get out of the car to talk.
  - Avoid physical contact in saying goodbye (hugs/kisses).
  - Be aware of the time you leave the meeting and the time you arrive at the youth's house.
9. Romantic/sexual attraction for a youth is to be discussed with the Church Administrator for prayer and guidance.
10. All suspicions of child abuse/sexual abuse should be reported immediately to the Church Administrator.

*I certify that I have read the above guidelines and I agree to abide by them.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX E**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**The State of Alabama Child Abuse Reporting Requirements**

The following information is from the Code of Alabama:

**I. MANDATORY REPORTING**

(a) "(a) All hospitals, clinics, sanitariums, doctors, physicians, surgeons, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, nurses, school teachers and officials, peace officers, law enforcement officials, pharmacists, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority.

(f) Subsection (a) to the contrary notwithstanding, a member of the clergy shall not be required to report information gained solely in a confidential communication privileged pursuant to Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence which communication shall continue to be privileged as provided by law."

Ala. Code § 26-14-3(a) (Cum. Supp. 1996) as amended by Act Number 2003-273 of the 2003 Legislative Session

**II. PERMISSIVE REPORTING**

In addition to those persons, firms, corporations and officials required by Section 26-14-3 to report child abuse and neglect, any person may make such a report if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected. Ala. Code § 26-14-4 (1975).

**III. IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY**

Any person, firm, corporation or official participating in the making of a report or the removal of a child pursuant to this chapter, or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting there from, shall, in so doing, be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Ala. Code § 26-14-9 (1975).

**IV. PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO MAKE A REQUIRED REPORT**

Any person who shall knowingly fail to make the report required by this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a sentence of not more than six months' imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$500.00. Ala. Code § 26-14-13 (1975).

If you have questions about reporting obligations: Contact the Church Administrator.

**APPENDIX F**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**What is Child Sexual Abuse?**

1. Child Sexual Abuse is a Crime

“Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.” (Church Law & Tax Report, *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*, 1993, p. 13)

2. General Definition

A general definition of child sexual abuse consists of “any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator.” (Church Law & Tax Report, *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*, 1993, p. 13)

3. Common Definition

“Any sexual activity with a child—whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim.” (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992)

4. Alabama State Definition

“Sexual abuse includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law. Sexual exploitation includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes.” Ala. Code § 26-14-1(1) (Cum. Supp. 1996).

**APPENDIX G**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Types of Child Sexual Abuse: Touching and Non-Touching**

*THIS LIST IS NOT-ALL INCLUSIVE*

**Types of Abuse that Involve Touching Include:**

- Fondling
- Sexual Gratification
- Oral, genital, or anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible Rape

**Types of Abuse that DO NOT Involve Touching include:**

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

**APPENDIX H**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Common Symptoms of an Abused or Molested Child**

**Physical signs may include:**

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty while sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

**Emotional signs may include:**

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- Acting out of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

**Verbal signs may include one or more of the following statements:**

- I don't like [the name of a particular worker].”
- “[A church worker] does things to me when we're alone.”
- “I don't like to be alone with [a church worker].”
- “[A church worker] fooled around with me.”

**APPENDIX I**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

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**Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application**

**This application is to be completed by all volunteers for any position involving the supervision or custody of minors and by all church employees who could have contact with minors in church facilities or on church sponsored activities. It will help our church family provide a safe and secure environment for all boys and girls who participate in our ministries and use our facilities.**

**Personal**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_ SS# \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Evening) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

On what date would you be available to begin? \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a current driver's license?  No  Yes, State \_\_\_\_\_ Driver license number \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of, arrested for, or pled guilty to a felony or an offense involving a minor?

No

Yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the Child Protection First Policy.  Yes  No

Have you engaged in conduct that would fall within the definition of child sexual abuse?  Yes  No

**(If you prefer, you may decline to answer the following question, or you may discuss your answer in confidence with one of the ministers rather than answering on this form. Answering yes or leaving the question unanswered will not automatically disqualify you.)**

Were you a victim of abuse or molestation as a minor or as an adult?  Yes  No

Initial here \_\_\_\_\_ if you are declining to answer this question.

**Present Employment**

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Date \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Hours/Week \_\_\_\_\_ Your position \_\_\_\_\_

Job description \_\_\_\_\_

## Previous Addresses

If you have lived at your current address for less than two years, please provide information on all addresses during that period of time.

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Previous Employment

If you have been employed at your present position for less than two years, please provide information for each job held in the last two years.

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Employment date \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Employment date \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Employment date \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## Church Activity

When did you make your profession of faith in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

Church Member where ? \_\_\_\_\_

**List other churches (name and address) you have attended regularly during the past five years:**

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**List all previous church work involving minors:**

Church name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of work performed \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Church name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of work performed \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Church name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of work performed \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**List all previous non-church work involving minors:**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone number(s)</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for teaching minors:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal References**

**(Not former employers or relatives)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nature of association \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time known \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nature of association \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time known \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

## Applicant's Statement and Agreement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by First Church of Alabama Child Protection First! Policy and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

### Dispute Resolution Agreement

First Church of Alabama believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, any dispute arising from or related to allegations by or against workers, employees, volunteers, church members or their families, will be submitted to biblically based conciliation in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries. (A complete text of the Rules is available at <http://www.hispeace.org/html/geticrul.htm>.) That forum provides the best opportunity for resolving issues in a fair manner while seeking to preserve or restore the relationships fractured by the dispute and allowing the Church to continue its ministry to all people.

**I have carefully read First Church of Alabama Child Protection First! Policy and this application and state that the information I have provided is true and correct and that I accept the above Dispute Resolution Agreement.**

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**Applicant Signature**

**Date**

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#### For Office Use Only

Member attending six months	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Personal interview satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Application satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Former church record satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Release satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Employment record satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Personal references satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Record check satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX J**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**ABUSE/MOLESTATION INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

*Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to an individual and family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse by anyone toward a minor, you should document and report incidents to the appropriate age-group minister.*

I have observed conduct that I feel would fall under the definition of sexual abuse as defined in First Church of Alabama “Child Protection First!” policy:

**DEFINITION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:** The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child provided the child is four (4) years older than the victim.”

Child sexual abuse can be violent or nonviolent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

**I understand that this material is to be treated as highly confidential and that I am not to discuss it with anyone else other than the age-group minister to whom I make this report.**

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date this report was made \_\_\_\_\_

**REPORT OF THE INCIDENT:**

Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time incident occurred \_\_\_\_\_

Suspected Abuser’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Minor’s Name (victim) \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued on reverse side)*

Describe nature of the incident:

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Personal observations of indications of suspected abuse that are not readily explained:  
(circle any or all that apply)

Physical Abuse

unexplained bruises  
welts  
lacerations  
burns  
fractures  
abdominal injuries  
human bites  
child unusually wary of  
    physical contact with adults  
demonstrates extremes in  
    behavior  
Seems frightened of parents  
    or caretaker

Sexual Abuse

child reports abuse by others  
has difficulty walking or sitting  
torn, stained or bloody underclothing  
complaints of pain or itching in  
    genital area  
bruises or bleeding in external  
    genitalia, vaginal or anal area  
unusual interest in or knowledge  
    of sexual matters  
unusual and excessive behaviors  
    inappropriate for a child of that age.

Provide a complete description for the personal observations of indications of suspected abuse you have checked above:

I have reviewed the above report. It is true and correct, based on my personal observations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Making Report

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Received by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Minister)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX K**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Parental Consent, Certification, and Medical Authorization**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home #: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother/Guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home #: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Work #: \_\_\_\_\_

Father/Guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home #: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Work #: \_\_\_\_\_

If Emergency, please notify: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Policy #: \_\_\_\_\_

Immunizations:    Tetanus    Polio Booster    Measles    Mumps    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL HISTORY** (check box to give appropriate information)

Asthma    Sinusitis    Bronchitis    Kidney trouble    Diabetes    Dizziness

Heart trouble    Stomach upset    Hay Fever    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies:   Food: \_\_\_\_\_ Poison sumac, oak, or ivy: \_\_\_\_\_

Insect stings/bites: \_\_\_\_\_ Penicillin/Antibiotic: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous operations or serious illnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

Any current medications: \_\_\_\_\_

Special diet (name): \_\_\_\_\_

Childhood diseases:    Chickenpox    Measles    Mumps    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Permission to Participate in First Church of Alabama Activities**

As the parent (or legal guardian), I the undersigned, certify that my child, named above, has my express permission to participate in all activities, of any nature, sponsored by First Church of Alabama for the calendar year.

## **Assumption of Risk**

I acknowledge that there are certain risks associated with participation in any activity or program, including transportation accidents, injuries, loss of personal items, criminal actions beyond the control of First Church of Alabama, or other harm that may occur to my child. I assume the risk associated with such activities and release First Church of Alabama of any liability for such.

## **Dispute Resolution Agreement**

First Church of Alabama believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, any dispute, not otherwise released or for which the risk was not assumed, arising from or related to allegations by or against workers, employees, volunteers, church members or their families, will be submitted to biblically based conciliation in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries. That forum provides the best opportunity for resolving issues in a fair manner while seeking to preserve or restore the relationships fractured by the dispute and allowing the Church to continue its ministry to all people. (A complete text of the Rules is available at <http://www.hispeace.org/html/geticrul.htm>.)

## **In Case of a Medical Emergency**

It is my understanding that a church representative will attempt to notify me in case of a medical emergency involving my child. If the church cannot reach me, then I authorize the church representative to hire a doctor or other health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professional to provide the medical services he or she may deem necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred. I will notify the church if I feel there are any health considerations that would prevent my child's participation in an activity. I also give my permission for church leaders to restrict my child from participation in any activity, which they have any question about for health or other reasons.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Photocopy Health Insurance Card Here**

**APPENDIX L**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**Consent To Release of Confidential Information**

Having made application to work with minors at First Church of Alabama and desiring the church to be informed as to my past record and character, I authorize any persons, references, employers, churches, or organizations with whom I have had any contact to release to First Church of Alabama any information (including opinions) they may have regarding my record, character, and fitness for work with minors. **I also authorize First Church of Alabama, at its discretion, to contact any law enforcement or social service agency to determine whether I have ever been charged or convicted of a crime, and I authorize such agencies to release such information to First Church of Alabama.** I fully release First Church of Alabama, its agents, and all persons, organizations, and agencies from any right or claim of confidentiality and from all claims, actions, or causes of action which may arise as a consequence of exchanging such information, and I waive any right that I may have to inspect any such information, letters or statements, provided on my behalf.

Full Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_ Drivers License No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

**Statement from Law Enforcement or Social Service Agency**

\_\_\_ I have checked our records regarding the person named above and have found no indication that this person has ever been charged, arrested, or convicted of a crime, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, assault, or any other acts of violence.

\_\_\_ I have found some problems with this person's record: please call me for more information.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to:** Child Protection First Coordinator, First Church of Alabama

***A PHOTOCOPY OF THIS AUTHORIZATION SHALL HAVE THE SAME EFFECT AS THE ORIGINAL.***

**SAMPLE ONLY (need to obtain originals directly form DHR)**

**APPENDIX M**  
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
**REQUEST FOR CLEARANCE OF STATE CENTRAL REGISTRY**  
**ON CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please print or type the information. Refer to the back of this form for information on the laws of confidentiality and on how to interpret the information released from the State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect.

TO: Department of Human Resources  
Division of Family and Children's Services  
State Central CAN Registry  
50 Ripley Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130-4000

FROM: ORGANIZATION: FIRST CHURCH OF ALABAMA  
ADDRESS: P.O. Box 1407  
Alabaster, Alabama 35007  
TELEPHONE: (205) 664-0122  
SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Requestor Date

WITNESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness Date

I am requesting that the following person be cleared through the Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect as a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator. This information will be used for \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

\* Alias, Maiden, or Prior Married Names: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Names of Spouse or Ex-spouse(s) (DOB for each): \_\_\_\_\_

\* Name of Children/Step-children (DOB for each): \_\_\_\_\_

\* Alabama Counties where person(s) have lived: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Additional Pages May be Attached if Needed.

Below To Be Completed by the Employee/Potential Employee/Adoptive or Foster Parent Applicant.

I authorize the Department of Human Resources to release information regarding me contained in the State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect to the above-named person/agency/organization. I hereby waive any right to review or hearing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I further release the Department of Human Resources and its officers and employees from any and all claims arising out of or in any way connected to the release or dissemination of any information concerning me.

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

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

Below To Be Completed by DHR

Note: Only those perpetrator records which are determined as needed to discover or prevent child abuse/neglect will be released by DHR.

Request denied Reason \_\_\_\_\_

In clearing the State Central Registry regarding the above request, the following information was obtained.

\_\_\_\_\_ No Perpetrator Record Located  
\_\_\_\_\_ Substantiated Report Located: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Report  
\_\_\_\_\_ physical abuse \_\_\_\_\_ emotional abuse  
\_\_\_\_\_ sexual abuse \_\_\_\_\_ neglect

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
DHR DFC-1598 Disposition: Submit both copies of this form to SDHR  
Rev. Nov. 1994

Information contained in the State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect is confidential and may be shared with employers or potential employers of the person investigated where the employee provides care and supervision of children only for the purpose of discovering or preventing future abuse or neglect. This information may also be shared with licensed child placing agencies on adoptive and foster parent applicants for this same purpose. Any other use of this information may constitute a misdemeanor and be punishable by law. "Employee" is defined as paid or volunteer.

Childcare facilities licensed by Department of Human Resources (DHR) are bound by the confidentiality provision of the Child Care Act, Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 38-7-13. The use of any information shared by DHR with a governmental agency is bound by the same confidentiality provision under which DHR operates, according to Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 38-2-6(8). Any request for information made by any other private agency/person will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may require a signing of a written agreement in order for the information to be disclosed.

Clearance of the State Central Registry on Child Abuse/Neglect is a clearance of persons by names, race, sex, age, etc. These persons are not further identified by unique identifiers, i.e., social security numbers or fingerprints, etc. For this reason, we cannot ensure that the information that is being provided relates to the person who is the subject of this request.

**APPENDIX N**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Reference Contact Form**

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

- How long have you known the individual and in what capacity?
  
- What type of experiences have you had with the individual in relation to his/her teaching and leadership with minors?
  
- What do you consider to be this individual's strengths in working with minors?
  
- What do you see as his/her weaknesses in the area of teaching minors?
  
- Would you have any hesitancy in hiring this individual again? OR... in hiring this individual to work with your child? Explain.
  
- To the best of your knowledge, has this person had any previous incidents related to child molestation or child abuse or any other accusations of impropriety involving a minor?

Summarize any other pertinent conversation on reverse side.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Time

**APPENDIX O**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

**I. EMPLOYEES**

A. All current First Church of Alabama Employees (full-time, part-time, interns, and hourly):

- 1) The Confidential Application and Consent to Release of Confidential Information must be completed and returned by September 30, 2003.
- 2) A criminal background check shall be completed and a copy of the report shall be added to the employee's file.
- 3) A background check through the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Registry or other comparable agency shall be completed.
- 4) In lieu of outside reference inquiries, the Supervising Staff Member must submit the Recommendation Report by October 30, 2003. This report shall be added to the employee's file.

B. All new employees hired after September 1, 2003 shall adhere completely to the policies as set forth in the "Child Protection First!" Program.

**II. VOLUNTEERS**

A. All First Church of Alabama volunteers giving supervision to minors (preschoolers, children and/or students) at any time prior to September 1, 2003:

- 1) The Confidential Application and Consent to Release of Confidential Information shall be completed by December 31, 2003.
- 2) A background check through the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Registry or other comparable agency shall be completed.
- 3) In lieu of outside reference inquiries, the Supervising Staff Member must submit the Recommendation Report. Every effort shall be made to have these completed and added to the individual's file by January 31, 2004.
- 4) Additional background and reference checks may be conducted based upon the recommendation of the Supervising Staff Member.

B. All new volunteers enlisted for the new church year, beginning September 1, 2003, shall comply entirely with the policies as outlined in the "Child Protection First!" Program.

**APPENDIX P**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Recommendation Report**

(for use with individuals participating prior to September 1, 2003)

Volunteer/Staff \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Position \_\_\_\_\_ Church Member since \_\_\_\_\_

Current Age Division \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Service \_\_\_\_\_

*Answer the following statements and questions by checking either "yes" or "no" and by giving a brief explanation where indicated. Further comments may be written on additional paper.*

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| ▪ I have witnessed this individual, at some time in the past, engage in conduct that might be considered a violation of the "Child Protection First!" Program.<br>If "yes," explain: _____<br>_____<br>_____ | _____      | _____     |
| ▪ In the past, I have received complaints against this person for conduct that might be considered in violation of the "Child Protection First!" Program.<br>If "yes," explain: _____<br>_____<br>_____      | _____      | _____     |
| ▪ Additional background checks should be made at this time based upon the information provided on the application and/or my personal observations?<br>If "yes," explain: _____<br>_____<br>_____             | _____      | _____     |
| ▪ Would I hesitate allowing this person to work with my child?<br>If "yes," explain: _____<br>_____<br>_____                                                                                                 | _____      | _____     |

- |  |            |           |
|--|------------|-----------|
|  | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|  | _____      | _____     |
- To the best of my knowledge, has this person had any previous incidents related to child molestation or child abuse or any other accusations of impropriety involving a minor?  
 If "yes," explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**

Based on this report:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I recommend
- \_\_\_\_\_ I do not recommend

this person be allowed to serve as an employee or volunteer where minors (preschool, children and/or students) are present at First Church of Alabama.

Supervising Staff Member \_\_\_\_\_  
 (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## **Appendix Q**

### **Title**

**Sample Church Bulletin Announcements**

**(Following Three Forms)**

# Child Protection First!

**Called Church Business Meeting  
Tonight at 6:00 p.m.**

For all adults, college age and above  
6:00 p.m. Sanctuary

**Childcare for Meeting Provided**

Due to the content, these meetings are appropriate for those *college age and above only*. Childcare for preschoolers (birth through kindergarten) will be provided in their regular building locations during the meetings.

**Your Attendance Is Vital!**

Adults, please make every effort to attend. If you attended last week during the leadership or parents meeting, please join us again tonight for follow-up to several questions from last week, and to join with the rest of the rest of the church family in taking a positive stand on the issue by adopting *Child Protection First!* as an official policy of the church.

# Before It Could Ever Happen . . .

If you knew that a family was going to be touched by a devastating event, a painful and emotional episode, wouldn't you want to do everything in your power to prevent it from happening? As a church, we have just such an opportunity. Faced with the growing social problem of child sexual abuse, we can take steps to ensure this never happens "close to home" – that is, within the walls of our church.

A committee of staff and lay leaders have pored over information for many months in an effort to put policies into place to ensure our church continues to be a safe, loving environment for every child. The result of these efforts is *Child Protection First!*, a proactive policy for our church with respect to child sexual abuse. It consists of some common-sense policies, most of which are already in place. Secondly, there will be a simple screening procedure in which every adult in our fellowship who works with minors can participate.

This policy is not in response to any incident, accusation or situation within our church body. It is "preventive medicine," based on biblical principles and a sensible approach to maintaining a wholesome environment for every child.

Tonight, you'll have the opportunity to hear details about *Child Protection First!* during our evening worship hour. At the close of this meeting, we'll have the opportunity to approve this positive child protection policy for our church.

Leaders and parents who were present last week will want to return for this meeting to receive additional information, follow up on several questions from last week's meetings, and join with the rest of the church family in the approval of *Child Protection First!*

# Announcements

## Important Info

This month we will be examining in detail our proposed *Child Protection First!* policy. As you may have read in last week's *Church Newsletter*, this preventive measure will help to ensure that our church remains a safe, secure and loving environment for children of all ages.

### ***Information Meetings***

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date), a presentation of *Child Protection First!* will be made to all Sunday School Leadership at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) in the \_\_\_\_\_. Additionally, on that same day, a presentation to all parents of preschool, kindergarten, children, preteens and students will be made at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) in the \_\_\_\_\_. At both sessions we'll review all the written policies, the biblical principles behind them, and the implementation strategy. You'll also have the opportunity to ask questions. If you cannot attend at your designated time, please feel free to come at the alternate time.

### ***Childcare During Meetings***

Due to the content of these meetings, they will be appropriate for college age and above *only*. Provisions will be made for all younger age groups – birth through kindergarten will be in the regular areas.

### ***Called Church Business Meeting***

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date), we will have a called Church Business Meeting at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) in the \_\_\_\_\_. All materials will be presented to the church, as well as the recommendations of the *Child Protection First!* Committee and Church Council. The same childcare provisions as noted above will be available on this evening.

The policy will be presented for adoption at the close of the meeting.

Your attendance at these meetings is vital – even if you do not currently have or work with minors, we urge you to participate in this policy.

**APPENDIX R**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**APPLICANT PROCESSING CHECKLIST**

1. \_\_\_\_ Receive all confidential applications. Staple a Forms Received Checklist on all incoming applications and follow the procedures outlined in processing the individual forms.
2. \_\_\_\_ Review all information on individual confidential applicant's form and make sure it is complete and signed.
3. \_\_\_\_ Be sure all other forms are initialed, signed and dated in the proper places. Also, check that two witnesses or a notary has signed the Consent to Release Confidential Information form. If not, return incomplete form to applicant with a note asking applicant to complete the missing information and return the completed form to the Child Protection First! office. (Keep a copy of whatever form you send back to the applicant to be completed and calendar a follow-up.)
4. \_\_\_\_ Be sure all applicants have filled in the information requested on the *DHR consent form*. Mail this completed form to the DHR for screening and approval.
5. \_\_\_\_ Be sure all paid staff applicants have filled in the requested information on the *consent form* from the company that will provide criminal background screening. Mail this completed form to the company providing screening.
6. \_\_\_\_ Access applicant's *membership number* in the Computer system and write the number on left top corner of front page of the completed application form.
7. \_\_\_\_ Deliver to appropriate minister a list of those who have turned in forms along with their member number and the date the application was approved.
8. \_\_\_\_ Write a letter to the applicant's two personal references enclosing a *Reference Contact Form* and a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope. Ask the individuals to fill in the form, sign and return it to the Child Protection First! office.
9. \_\_\_\_ Deliver a copy of the Recommendation Report to the appropriate staff minister. Ask the staff minister to discuss the program with the applicant, fill in the form, sign it and return it to the Child Protection First! office.
10. \_\_\_\_ Call or write previous church(es) to verify individual's past membership and record responses.
11. \_\_\_\_ Call or write to verify previous employment (if it is deemed necessary). This should always be done on paid staff applicants. This should be done on volunteer if they have been employed in the past in a position where they would have worked with minors.
12. \_\_\_\_ Check appropriate boxes on the back of the applicant's completed form, sign and date on the Approved by line.
13. \_\_\_\_ Ask appropriate staff minister to review file, sign and date the completed form on the Ministerial approval line.
14. \_\_\_\_ Make file folder listing applicant's name and file application and all other pertinent forms in confidential completed forms file drawer.

**APPENDIX S**  
**First Church of Alabama**  
**Child Protection First!**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**  
**CHILD PROTECTION FIRST! ADMINISTRATOR**

- Staff the Child Protection First! office.**
- Process all incoming application forms and set up confidential file system with privacy safeguards.**
- Contact by mail the individuals listed as personal references by applicants.**
- Submit information on each individual applicant to Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) for approval.**
- Submit information on each paid staff applicant to the company selected to conduct criminal background screening.**
- Respond to requests for materials and information from sources outside the office, i.e. other churches.**
- Provide appropriate information concerning the applicants as requested by ministerial staff.**
- Maintain accurate and confidential files for all confidential forms.**
- Maintain an adequate supply of all forms and updated packets of material.**
- Provide new staff/volunteers Child Protection First! packets and request they complete the forms, calendar follow-up.**
- Periodically review program with counsel and staff. Make suggestions on improving the screening process.**
- Work under the supervision of Church Administrator.**

