



FIRST  
BAPTIST  
CHURCH  
HALIFAX

## PLAN TO PROTECT POLICY

### 1. Intent of Policy

First Baptist Church Halifax (the “Church”) is a community of Christian faith rooted in the Baptist tradition. We believe that every person has a right to respect, self-esteem, physical care, safety and to be free from abuse.

Our intent in this policy is to prevent abuse within the Church, or in Church-based activities, and to report concerns observed within the Church or during Church-based activities.

As a community of believers, we value caring for each other in our Church and others in our community and beyond, seeking to be a truly compassionate, nurturing Church family. We also recognize that abuse of the vulnerable can happen in our Church and that it can be devastating for the abused person, their relatives and for the Church community. This policy is intended as a preventative measure to reduce risk and affirms our commitment to protect the vulnerable from harm including, and especially from, abuse.

#### 1.1. We value:

- Caring for each other in our Church and in our community and beyond, especially those who are vulnerable.
- Seeking to be a truly compassionate, nurturing Church family.
- Openness that follows Christ’s example of inclusion rather than exclusion.
- The participation of children and other vulnerable persons in our community.
- Accountability to God and each other to protect the vulnerable.
- The right of all persons who participate in our church community and activities to know that they are safe.
- Persons who seek to serve God through service to vulnerable persons, through the Church.

### 2. Accountability and Responsibility to Report

Every person who has knowledge of, or has reasonable and probable cause to indicate that abuse occurring has a responsibility, both under this policy and under the law, to report the circumstances to the appropriate authority. We recognize our responsibility to create and maintain an environment of safety.

Each member of the Church community has an individual responsibility to ensure respectful treatment of all persons, including protection of vulnerable persons from abuse of any kind.

### 3. Screening

All Program Leaders, Staff, volunteers and anyone working with a child or vulnerable persons shall be screened using the following procedures:

- 3.1. **The “six month rule” shall be applied:** program leaders, staff, or anyone working with children or the vulnerable shall not be permitted to work with vulnerable persons until after having been adherents/members of the Church for a period of at least six months. **In special circumstances, the requirement of six months as an adherent/member may be evaluated and waived by the Leadership Team.**
- 3.2. Submit a signed Covenant of Care (Appendix IV), which shall serve two purposes:
  - a) Expression of interest: The signed document will be considered as the candidate's formal expression of interest in the position.
  - b) Acknowledgment of compliance: By signing, the candidate affirms that they will follow and respect the Plan to Protect.
- 3.2.1. These workers and collaborators shall provide to the Church a **Halifax Police Criminal Record check and a Vulnerable Sector Check**. Program leaders, staff, or anyone working directly with children or youth, shall **also provide to the Church a Child Abuse Registry check**.
- 3.2.2. To initiate a Child Abuse Registry check, the Congregation Coordinator or the Community Engagement Lead can be contacted so that they can send the applicant an invitation to the platform [MyBackCheck.com](https://www.mybackcheck.com).
- 3.3. The Church Congregation Coordinator shall maintain secure up-to-date, confidential records of completed criminal, vulnerable sector and child abuse registry checks, and make the documents available to the Leadership Team's Personnel representative and Community Engagement Lead.
  - 3.3.1. **All records (Covenant of Care, as well as Criminal, Vulnerable Sector and Child Abuse Registry checks) must be renewed every three (3) years, as a condition of continued employment/service provision.**
  - 3.3.2. A criminal record check means a record prepared by the police that contains information on whether an individual has any conviction or has any outstanding charge awaiting disposition under a federal or Provincial enactment;
  - 3.3.3. A vulnerable sector check means a search of the automated criminal conviction records retrieval system maintained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in accordance with the Criminal Records Act of Canada.

### 4. Two Adult Rule

- Two adults shall be visible during any children or vulnerable persons' activity.
- Proper information is fundamentally important. Children and vulnerable persons shall be registered for any Church activity. Registration shall include signed parental/guardian consent and, if needed, a medical release form.
- In the crèche, parents/guardians shall be required to provide the child's name and a person to find in the Church in case of an emergency. For programs beyond infancy, each Program leader shall maintain an attendance sheet.
- Parents shall be required to pick up their children promptly at the end of a service or program.
- Diapering of an infant may only be done by the child's parent/guardian.

- Assistance with toileting for children beyond infancy may only be done with permission of a parent/guardian upon daily registration.
- Registration forms and sign-ins are to be kept on file in the church office for three years.

## **5. Displays of Affection**

### **5.1. Examples of Appropriate Touch**

Love and caring shall be expressed in appropriate ways, including the following:

- Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly, listening carefully and smiling.
- Taking a child's hand and leading him/her to an activity.
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting.
- Taking both of a child's hands to greet him/her.
- Gently touching a child's shoulder or holding his/her hand while redirecting his/her behaviour.
- Gently patting a child on the shoulder, back, or hand.
- Gently holding a preschool child who is distressed.

### **5.2. Examples of Inappropriate Touch**

DO NOT:

- Kiss a child, coax a child to kiss, engage in wrestling, extended hugging or tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting with toileting).
- Carry older children or have them sit on the lap of a Program Leader.
- Lie down with a child.

## **6. Events Procedures**

All activities for children, youth or the vulnerable must be approved by the Church. All field trips shall be supervised by a minimum of two Program Leaders. The ratio for such trips is one adult for five children.

- At least one Program Leader present at events away shall have First Aid training, as required by the [Workplace First Aid Guide Nova Scotia](#).
- First Aid Kit shall be available at every program or event.
- The Two Adult rule applies to all events.
- All children participating in an event shall be registered with the Church.

## **7. Transportation Procedures**

- Whenever possible, a parent/guardian shall provide transportation to and from events.
- If a program leader, staff or person delegated by a Program Leader or staff is responsible for transportation, signed parental/guardian permission is required.

- When the church is involved in transporting children or youth, all drivers shall be a minimum of 18 years old; have proof of insurance as the owner of the vehicle or is listed as a driver on the policy, or has written permission from the owner, with owner's proof of insurance on the vehicle, to use the vehicle for the purpose required by the Church. Also, the vehicle insurance policy must have a minimum coverage of two million dollars (2M).
- No driver shall transport an unrelated child or youth alone unless parental permission is obtained.

## **8. Mandatory Reporting**

- Every person who has knowledge of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child or vulnerable person has been abused, shall immediately report the circumstances to the appropriate authority (Child Welfare Services) and the Church (Senior Minister and Leadership Team). If the Program Leader, Staff or any other person is not certain about whether abuse has occurred, they shall immediately contact the Church for assistance regarding a possible report.
- Anonymous contact is accepted.
- Reporting is done out of care for the Vulnerable Person.
- To report alleged or suspected child abuse, reports shall be made to the Child Welfare, Halifax District, at 902-425-5420 - After hours: 1-866-922-2434 (toll-free number). The reporting form is attached as Appendix III.
- To report alleged or suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult, reports shall be made to Adult Protection Services at the Department of Health at 1-800-225-7225 (toll-free number).

## **9. Steps in Responding to Alleged or Suspected Abuse of Children or Vulnerable Persons**

If a Program Leader, staff, or any person, observes or suspects abuse or risk of abuse, or should a child or vulnerable person divulge that he/she has been abused, they shall take the allegation seriously, respect privacy and confidentiality, remove the child or vulnerable person from the situation, make an immediate report to the Halifax District Office (Child Welfare), or Adult Protection Services, and give full cooperation to the authorities in charge of the investigation. The Program Leader, staff, or any person shall:

- Immediately ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable person.
- Contact authorities and the Church.
- Take all steps as directed by authorities and the Church.
- Complete an Incident Report Form as soon as possible.

A Program Leader shall never attempt to investigate alleged or suspected abuse. In all instances the care of the child or vulnerable person shall be paramount.

## **10. Closing**

This Policy shall be communicated to all Program Leaders, Staff, volunteers and anyone working with a child or vulnerable persons.

This Policy is fundamentally important and shall fall under the responsibility of the Leadership Team of the Church.

It is the absolute intention of the Church to do everything it can to prevent abuse. If abuse has occurred, it is the absolute intention of the Church to do everything it can to stop abuse. Every person who has knowledge of, or has reasonable and probable cause to indicate that abuse is occurring, has a responsibility, both under this policy and under law, to report the circumstances to the appropriate authority. Each member of the Church community has an individual responsibility to ensure respectful treatment of all persons, including protection of vulnerable persons from abuse of any kind.

This Policy includes:

- Appendix I – Permission to Transport
- Appendix II – Reporting Forms
- Appendix III - Covenant of Care
- Appendix IV – Children and Youth Registration Form
- Appendix V – Onboarding checklist
- Appendix VI – Daily Registration Form

## APPENDIX I - Permission to Transport

Full Name of Youth:

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School Year: 2024/2025

For locations within the Halifax Regional Municipality.

### CONSENT:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/Legal Guardian) give permission for the designated representative of the First Baptist Church Halifax to transport \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Youth) between the above listed locations with the understanding that my Youth may travel alone with this Driver. It is my understanding that the driver has been approved under First Baptist Church Halifax and the Plan to Protect screening process, has access to a First Aid Kit and carries the required level of automobile insurance.

I hereby release First Baptist Church Halifax, its staff and volunteers, from any liability for occurrences and/or circumstances that may arise during this travel period.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian signature**

## APPENDIX II - Reporting Forms

### 1. INCIDENT REPORT FORM: SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

*Note: This form is to be completed immediately after the provincial Child Welfare Authorities have been contacted: at 902-425-5420 - After hours: 1-866-922-2434 (toll-free number). This report shall be maintained in a locked cabinet by the Office and shall remain confidential unless required in a judicial proceeding.*

Incident Date:
Name of Possible Victim:
Address:
Phone:
Name of Person Filing Report:
Nature of suspected abuse. State as accurately as you can, <u>in the words used by the child</u> , what led you to suspect abuse (be it physical, sexual, or emotional, neglect or lack of parental supervision). <u>Do not question more than to clarify what the child is trying to tell you</u> . Use the back of this report if necessary.
Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs, and course of events where necessary). Use the back of this report if necessary.

Action taken (include date and time). Use the back of this report if necessary.

Additional Information (if needed):

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Person completing report**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Chair or Vice-Chair of Leadership Team**



## APPENDIX II - Reporting Forms

### 2. INCIDENT REPORT FORM: SUSPECTED ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULT

*Note: This form is to be completed immediately after the provincial Child Welfare Authorities have been contacted: at 902-425-5420 - After hours: 1-866-922-2434 (toll-free number). This report shall be maintained in a locked cabinet by the OfficeBoard of Trustees and shall remain confidential unless required in a judicial proceeding.*

Incident Date:
Name of Possible Victim:
Address:
Phone:
Name of Person Filing Report:
Nature of suspected abuse. State as accurately as you can, <u>in the words used by the adult</u> , what led you to suspect abuse (be it physical, sexual, or emotional, neglect or lack of parental supervision). <u>Do not question more than to clarify what the adult is trying to tell you</u> . Use the back of this report if necessary.
Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs, and course of events where necessary). Use the back of this report if necessary.

Action taken (include date and time). Use the back of this report if necessary.

Additional Information (if needed):

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Person completing report**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Chair or Vice-Chair of Senior Leadership Team**

### Appendix III - Covenant of Care

I promise, in all my relationships with children/ youth/vulnerable adults, to follow appropriate action as set out in the Plan to Protect policy;

I promise to use only the physical contact that is deemed appropriate by the document Plan to Protect policy, which I have read and understand;

I promise to use appropriate language;

I promise I will not discriminate against others on the grounds of, and including but not limited to: gender, age, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, or economic circumstances.

I promise that I will not harass others;

I promise to respect confidentiality and privacy, unless a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is in danger, then I will follow the steps on the Mandatory Reporting section, or contact the Child Welfare Service, or the Police.

I acknowledge that adherence to the Plan to Protect is mandatory throughout the duration of my involvement with the First Baptist Church Halifax

Full name:

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\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature**