

Children's Protection Policy

San Jacinto Baptist Association

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Statement of Policy

San Jacinto Baptist Association is committed to assisting member churches with evangelism and discipleship. This commitment includes providing ministries relating to children and youth under the age of eighteen. In planning these ministries, concern has always been shown for the well-being of children and youth. However, the reality of contemporary society now dictates that the Association must take formal steps toward preventing child abuse in any form in any program or activity involving children and youth.

With that goal in mind, this Children's Protection Policy is presented. The policies and procedures in this document apply to all programs and activities involving children and youth under the age of eighteen. Children are our most precious resource. Anything which threatens them, including mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury, is not tolerated by San Jacinto Baptist Association.

Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect from the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services

Abuse is non-accidental mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child. Neglect includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, and/or medical care; and/or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.

Worker/Sponsor Enlistment

1. Individuals considered as workers or sponsors for San Jacinto Baptist Association or Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center ministries must be a member of the participating church for six months before serving or if a member less than six months, the church must have a letter of recommendation on the worker/sponsor from their previous church.
2. It is the responsibility of each participating church to receive a completed *Sponsor/Worker Application Form* from each sponsor/worker prior to enlistment. San Jacinto Baptist Association will provide this form. Information provided should be diligently verified and references checked.
3. It is the responsibility of each participating church to conduct a sexual offender background check on each sponsor/worker representing the church prior to enlistment. This must be done anytime someone new is hired or volunteers. The background check should be updated as each church feels necessary.
4. Written permission must be obtained from the sponsor/worker prior to conducting the sexual offender background check.
5. Since background checks must be kept confidential, the participating church must provide the San Jacinto Baptist Association or Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center a completed *Sponsor/Worker Reference Form*, signed by the pastor or an officer designated by the church, for each sponsor/worker representing the church. This form states that the church has on file for each sponsor/worker a *Sponsor/Worker Application Form* and a

Sexual Offender Background Check. The *Sponsor/Worker Reference Form* also states that nothing was found to be in violation of this policy to keep this individual from serving. These forms will be provided by San Jacinto Baptist Association.

6. No person can serve as a sponsor/worker, who has been convicted of, placed on regular or deferred adjudicated probation, received pre-trial diversion, pled guilty, or nolo contendere to any offense involving sexual contact with or physical abuse of a child.

Sponsor/Worker Supervision

1. Corporal punishment of any kind is not appropriate at an association event.
2. Physical affection should be appropriately expressed.
3. Workers should avoid contact with a child in any questionable setting.
4. A reasonable ratio of adult sponsors/workers will be maintained in all children and youth ministries. For Lake Tomahawk camps and retreats, the ratio of adult sponsors/workers will be determined by state regulations. Utilizing the “never alone” rule, activities are not permitted which place one worker alone with a child. At least one worker in a supervising situation with children/youth must be 21 years of age or older.
5. Staff Ministers or individuals authorized by San Jacinto Baptist Association or Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center may supervise ongoing programs and may make unannounced visits to program sites.

Worker Training

1. Each sponsor attending Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center will be given a *LTCRC Policies & Procedures* (dated 1/1/05) which includes the definition of child abuse as stated in the **Texas Family Code** and information regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse.
2. The *Camper and Sponsor Registration Form* requires that all sponsors/workers with children and youth ministries sign that they have received and read the information described above and agree to abide by the rules set forth in the *LTCRC Policies & Procedures* (dated 1/1/05).

Incident Reporting

1. A sponsor/worker who suspects that child abuse has occurred will report the incident or suspicions in writing to the event director or if at Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center, to the camp manager.
2. Any inappropriate behavior with a child, even though it may not be considered abuse as defined in the **Texas Family Code**, will be reported to the event director or if at Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center, to the camp manager.
3. If there is cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, the event director or camp manager will immediately report the incident to Children’s Protective Services or to the local law enforcement officials and to the San Jacinto Baptist Association Executive Director and to the parents of minors involved.
4. The San Jacinto Baptist Association Executive Director will investigate promptly.
5. If child abuse allegations occur, sponsors/workers will:
 - Respond to each allegation in a serious manner.
 - Treat each allegation with confidentiality and respect for the privacy of all persons involved.
 - Cooperate fully with authorities.
 - Extend genuine care to all victims of child abuse or suspected abuse.

6. All child abuse allegations will be communicated to the involved insurance carrier by the San Jacinto Baptist Association Executive Director or the office administrator.
7. The Association will be sensitive to the needs of all involved and shall provide any support necessary including counseling during the investigation and response.

Communication of Policy

This Policy shall be publicized on the Association's web page and through other appropriate forms of communication.

Authority

This Policy will be implemented and maintained under the supervision of the Administrative Council in coordination with the Executive Director. Amendments to this Policy may be made by the Administrative Council and approved by the Executive Board from time to time as necessary.

Approval

The Administrative Council and Executive Board of San Jacinto Baptist Association have approved this policy as of January 24, 2005.