

Church Safety Policy for Preventing Harassment, Abuse, and Exploitation for First Baptist Church of Quincy, Inc.

POLICY STATEMENT

The First Baptist Church of Quincy (FBCQ) is dedicated to ensuring a safe environment for all its staff, volunteers, and members. Everyone connected to FBCQ must behave in a way that prevents any form of sexual harassment and abuse, whether physical or verbal. This policy applies to clergy, leadership, members, staff, and volunteers. Anyone found violating this policy will face disciplinary measures, which could include being removed from their position at FBCQ. Our church enforces a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, physical or verbal abuse, or exploitation. All reported incidents will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.

DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR MISCONDUCT

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. This includes unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual misconduct involves abusing authority, power, or influence in a trust relationship to gain an advantage over another person.

Sexual harassment and misconduct can include various actions and may be physical, verbal, or nonverbal. Examples include, but are not limited to:

Physical Conduct

- Unwanted physical contact such as patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, or other inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Using threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors

Verbal Conduct

- Explicit comments, stories, or jokes
- Sexual advances of any kind
- Gender-based insults
- Repeated or unwanted invitations for dates, social interactions, or physical intimacy

- Sending sexually explicit messages or pictures electronically or in writing

Non-verbal Conduct

- Displaying sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually suggestive gestures
- Inappropriate whistling, leering, or glaring.

Notes: Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment or misconduct, regardless of their gender or the gender of the offender. FBCQ recognizes that sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the same gender. The primary factor is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person it is directed toward.

Anyone at FBCQ, including clergy, staff members, or volunteers, who engages in sexual harassment or misconduct will be disciplined according to this policy.

Prohibitions against sexual harassment or misconduct extend beyond the FBCQ campus. Unlawful harassment can occur through calls, texts, emails, and social media, even if it happens off-campus, using personal devices, and during non-work hours.

This policy does not prevent anyone, regardless of their involvement in the incident, from reporting sexual harassment, misconduct, or abuse if they witness or become aware of such violations.

DEFINITIONS OF PHYSICAL OR VERBAL ABUSE

We consider physical or verbal abuse to be any behavior, action, statement, or demeanor that a reasonable person would interpret as a threat, whether explicit or implied, to harm or endanger the safety of another individual or their family. This includes actions perceived as menacing or potentially harmful, as well as the carrying, displaying, or referencing of weapons, destruction of property, or throwing objects in a manner deemed threatening to others. Prohibited behaviors include but are not limited to:

Verbal Abuse

- Threats or intimidation, including unwelcome name-calling, obscene or abusive language, and bullying, whether spoken or written.

Physical Abuse

- Maliciously touching, threatening to touch, or intimidating another person.

- Throwing objects, regardless of whether they are aimed at a person.
- Destroying property.
- Stalking.
- Engaging in unwanted horseplay.

RETALIATION

Retaliation is defined as any action that might discourage someone from reporting or supporting a claim of sexual harassment. Such actions do not need to be job-related or occur on church premises to be considered unlawful (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of church or work hours).

Retaliation is prohibited by federal, state, and, when applicable, local laws. Federal law protects individuals engaged in "protected activity," which includes:

- Filing a complaint of sexual harassment internally or with any anti-discrimination agency.
- Testifying or assisting in any proceeding related to sexual harassment.
- Opposing sexual harassment by making a verbal or informal complaint or informing a supervisor, manager, or church leader about harassment.
- Reporting that another employee or volunteer has been sexually harassed.
- Encouraging a fellow employee or volunteer to report harassment.

Individuals are protected from retaliation even if the harassment claim does not ultimately constitute a legal violation, as long as they have a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, this protection does not cover individuals who knowingly make false claims of harassment.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Any staff member or church leader who receives a complaint or information about suspected sexual harassment, observes potentially harassing behavior, or suspects that sexual harassment is occurring must report it to the Board of Deacons as outlined below. Staff members or leaders who fail to report suspected harassment or allow harassment to continue will face disciplinary action, in addition to any discipline for their own harassing conduct. They will also be disciplined for any acts of retaliation.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES AND INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY

Reports of sexual harassment or misconduct will always be taken seriously and

addressed promptly. Everyone has a responsibility to help prevent sexual harassment.

FBCQ cannot address or remedy harassment unless it is reported. All reports will be handled confidentially before and after submission to the appropriate persons, as outlined below.

The Board of Deacons has the authority to receive, investigate, make findings, and report on complaints under this policy. Anyone who experiences sexual harassment, misconduct, exploitation, or physical or verbal abuse should, if possible, inform the alleged offender that their conduct is unwelcome. FBCQ recognizes that harassment or abuse may occur within a power imbalance, making it difficult for victims to confront the offender.

If a victim cannot directly approach the offender, they may contact any member of the Board of Deacons to file a complaint. Alternatively, victims may approach any staff member or church leader, who will then relay the complaint to the Board of Deacons.

Upon receiving a complaint, the Board of Deacons will:

- Immediately disclose any conflicts of interest and replace conflicted members for that particular inquiry while keeping them on the Board for other matters.
- Record the date, time, and facts of the incident(s).
- Determine the complainant's desired outcome.
- Ensure the complainant understands FBCQ's procedures for handling complaints.
- Discuss and agree on the next steps, whether informal or formal, with the understanding that pursuing an informal resolution does not prevent the complainant from later pursuing a formal complaint if unsatisfied.
- Maintain a confidential record of all discussions.
- Respect the complainant's choices.
- Ensure the accused is granted due process.

The Board of Deacons may seek legal counsel to fulfill its duties whenever necessary. The Board will also identify and engage counselors with special training to assist victims of sexual harassment, misconduct, exploitation, and physical or verbal abuse. FBCQ recognizes that due to the power imbalances often present in these situations, victims may feel unable to come forward, and will support them in making complaints.