(POL-SCREENING) Ministry Worker Screening Policy

General Board Approved: May 31, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear process for screening, approving, and reviewing ministry workers who serve in the ministries of 1st Free Will Baptist Church.

The church desires to welcome faithful service while also exercising wisdom, care, and accountability in choosing those who serve, especially those who work with children, youth, vulnerable adults, finances, transportation, teaching, or leadership.

2. Scope

This policy applies to pastors, employees, officers, ministry leaders, volunteers, teachers, helpers, drivers, chaperones, and others serving in roles approved by the church.

Additional screening may be required for roles involving:

- Children;
- Youth;
- Vulnerable adults;
- Counseling or mentoring;
- Transportation;
- Money or financial records;
- Keys or building access;
- Teaching or leadership authority;
- Other positions of trust.

3. General Principle

No one has an automatic right to serve in a ministry position. Ministry service is a trust granted by the church. The church may approve, deny, restrict, suspend, or remove a person from ministry service when doing so is necessary or wise for the good of the church, the safety of others, or the testimony of Christ.

4. Minimum Screening Requirements

Before serving in a ministry role involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults, a person must:

- Be known to the church, pastor, or General Board for a reasonable period of time;
- Complete a ministry worker application;
- Authorize a criminal background check;
- Provide references if requested;
- Agree to follow church policies and ministry procedures;
- Be approved by the appropriate ministry leader and/or the General Board.

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5. Background Checks

The church shall conduct criminal background checks for:

- All employees, regardless of position;
- All pastors;
- All volunteers with access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults;
- All approved drivers for church ministry transportation;
- Other ministry workers as determined by the General Board.

Background checks may include national, state, county, and sex offender registry searches as appropriate and available.

6. Renewal of Background Checks

Background checks shall be renewed periodically as determined by the General Board. The recommended review period is every three years for those serving with children, youth, vulnerable adults, or transportation.

The church may conduct a new background check at any time when concerns arise or when a person changes ministry roles.

7. Application Questions

Applicants for ministry service may be asked whether they have ever:

- Been accused of, investigated for, or participated in abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, exploitation, harassment, or grooming behavior;
- Been convicted of, pleaded guilty to, or pleaded no contest to a crime involving abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct, violence, dishonesty, drugs, alcohol-related endangerment, or any crime involving a child or vulnerable adult;
- Been dismissed, removed, or asked to step down from employment or volunteer service because of misconduct, unsafe behavior, abuse concerns, dishonesty, or boundary violations;
- Had a driver's license suspended, revoked, restricted, or cancelled, if applying to drive for church ministry;
- Had any circumstance that would call into question his or her suitability for the ministry role being requested.

Failure to answer truthfully may result in denial or removal from ministry service.

8. References and Interviews

The General Board may request references or conduct interviews before approving a person for ministry service.

References may include former pastors, ministry leaders, employers, or other adults who can speak to the applicant's character, reliability, judgment, and suitability for ministry.

2026-05-31

9. Disqualifying Factors

A person shall not serve with children, youth, or vulnerable adults if he or she has been convicted of, pleaded guilty to, or pleaded no contest to:

- Any sexual offense;
- Any offense involving child abuse or neglect;
- Any offense involving abuse or exploitation of a vulnerable adult;
- Any offense involving kidnapping, trafficking, or sexual exploitation;
- Any violent felony;
- Any offense that the General Board determines makes the person unsuitable for the role.

Other criminal history, accusations, misconduct, or concerning behavior may result in denial, restriction, or removal from ministry service depending on the nature, timing, pattern, seriousness, repentance, and relevance to the ministry role.

10. Review of Concerning Results

If a background check or application reveals concerning information, the General Board shall review the matter carefully and confidentially.

The church may:

- Approve the person for service;
- Approve with restrictions;
- Delay approval;
- Deny approval;
- Remove the person from current service;
- Refer the matter to the appropriate board or leadership group for review.

11. Confidentiality

Applications, background check results, reference information, and screening records shall be handled confidentially and shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know.

12. Ongoing Duty to Report Changes

Ministry workers are expected to report promptly to the Lead Pastor or designated General Board member any arrest, criminal charge, conviction, abuse allegation, license suspension, or other matter that may affect their suitability for ministry service.

13. Approval Does Not Guarantee Permanent Service

Approval for ministry service may be reviewed at any time. A person may be removed or restricted from ministry service when the General Board determines that such action is necessary or wise.

14. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the General Board and may be revised as needed.

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