



Best Practices Policy

2026

Calvary Burlington
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At Calvary Baptist Church Burlington (CBCB) we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. We believe that childhood innocence is a gift given by God. Children are naturally trusting. Children, youth and vulnerable adults readily place their faith in those who care for them. It is our responsibility as a church to safeguard that trust.

This Best Practices Policy supports the ministry of CBCB by setting clear safeguarding standards for all programs involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults. It exists to protect those in our care, guide those who serve, and support the mission of the church with integrity and accountability.

Safeguarding is not simply a compliance requirement—it is an expression of love for our church family and our community. These practices help ensure that our ministries remain places where the gospel is lived out through honour, respect, and responsible care.

1. Purpose

- To safeguard children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in church ministry programs.
- To provide consistent expectations for Ministry Leads and Ministry Personnel.
- To ensure proper screening, supervision, and response procedures are in place.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all ministries and programs where children (under 18), youth (11–18), and vulnerable adults participate, including on-site programs, off-site events, transportation, and overnight activities.

3. Key Definitions

3.1 Roles

- **Ministry Lead:** The person most responsible in any ministry setting (paid or unpaid). Accountable to the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders.
- **Ministry Personnel:** Approved staff/volunteers age 16+ who serve children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Accountable to the Ministry Lead and through them, the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders.
- **Student Personnel:** Approved youth age 11–15 assisting in ministry under direct supervision. Accountable to the Ministry Lead and through them, the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders.
- **Occasional Observer:** An individual visiting/observing on rare occasions, including a parent supporting their own child. (See section 6.4.)

3.2 Participants

- Child: Under 18 years of age.
- Youth: Program participant age 11–17 (distinct from Student Personnel).
- Vulnerable Adult: Age 18+ who is dependent on others or at greater risk of harm in a position of trust.

4. Screening & Requirements for Service

All individuals working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must complete the recruitment and screening process before serving.

4.1 Qualifications & Lifestyle

- Ministry Personnel are expected to model Christian integrity and refrain from illegal or morally/biblically questionable activities.
- Individuals accused/convicted/suspected of crimes against children/youth/vulnerable persons are prohibited from involvement in these ministries, subject to Elder Team oversight.

4.2 Recruitment & Screening Process

- Ministry Application Form
- Six-month waiting period (may be waived by Elders with appropriate documentation)
- Face-to-face interview
- Reference checks
- Police Records Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening (renewed every 3 years)
- Best Practices Training (within 3 months of approval; annual refresher required)
- Signed documents: Covenant of Care, Statement of Faith, and Confidentiality Agreement
- Final approval from the Elder Team

4.3 Screening Results: Clearance and Restrictions

- If a Police Records Check (PRC) and/or Vulnerable Sector Screening indicates that an individual appears in the National Repository of Criminal Records and/or is recorded in the Vulnerable Sector Screening database, the individual will be required to submit to fingerprint verification.
- If fingerprint verification confirms a criminal record, the individual must either:
 1. Disclose to the Elder Team the offence(s) for which they have been convicted and submit to police verification, after which the Elder Team will make a final decision regarding the individual's eligibility to serve with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults; or
 2. Withdraw their application to serve in any leadership role involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

- Any volunteer currently serving who requires fingerprint verification to renew their PRC must step out of their ministry role until they have been cleared.
- This fingerprint verification requirement does not apply to Elders, Pastors, or paid staff due to the higher level of accountability and supervision built into their roles.

5. Registration & Attendance

- Attendance must be taken each time a program is in session and retained permanently.
- Registration forms are required for on-site and off-site programs. Forms may be electronic or paper and are filed in the church office.
- For visiting children, the adult bringing the child is considered the guardian for the program and must provide contact information.
- Program participants who are 18+ are still considered part of the program, however they may complete their own registration, consent forms, and waivers. Emergency contact information is still required for program participation.

6. Supervision, Staffing, Events & Transportation

6.1 Minimum Ratios

- Birth–23 months: One Ministry Personnel per three infants
- Toddlers / Preschoolers: One Ministry Personnel per five children
- Children ages 5–10: One Ministry Personnel per 7–10 children
- Children ages 11–13: One Ministry Personnel per seven youth
- Children ages 14–17: One Ministry Personnel per 10 youth
- Overnight/Off-site events: Minimum two unrelated Ministry Personnel, then at least 1 per 7 child/youth

6.2 Staffing Standards

- A single adult may serve in a classroom only if the room has clear visibility from the hallway (windows) or the door is left open. Otherwise two Ministry Personnel must be present.
- Mixed-gender events (such as midweek programs and overnight events) must have both male and female leaders present. If only one gender of leader is available, someone else must be present in the building (i.e. a female can be working on-site in another room if only male leaders are available for Youth Group).
- Ministry Personnel must be age 16+ to work alone in a classroom.

6.3 Student Personnel

- Student Personnel must serve alongside approved Ministry Personnel/Leads age 16+.
- A minimum three-year gap between Student Personnel and the children they serve is recommended.

6.4 Occasional Observers (Silent Observer Standard)

Occasional Observers may attend/observe ministry on rare occasions, including a parent supporting their own child.

- Occasional Observers do not need screening/training, but access to minors is limited.
- Occasional Observers are never placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.
- They are not to assume responsibility for children and are not permitted to take children to the washroom.
- Occasional Observers must be recorded in attendance records for that day.

6.5 Off-site & Overnight Events

- Off-site activities must be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead and communicated to families at least one week in advance.
- Consent/medical release forms are required for off-site and overnight events; originals remain with the Ministry Lead during the event and are filed permanently after.
- Trip and Off-site Travel Forms must include: vehicle occupants, emergency/health info, location/contact numbers, and driver/vehicle details.
- Overnight events require Senior Pastor or Elder approval, exterior doors locked at 11:00 pm (when at church), and separation of male/female sleeping arrangements.

6.6 Transportation

- Prefer parent drop-off/pick-up for local off-site events when possible.
- Drivers must have a Class G licence (or higher), be pre-approved, and provide valid licence and insurance.
- Occupants must not exceed seat belts; seat belts worn at all times.
- Children/youth are never left unattended in vehicles.
- Avoid one-on-one transport. If unavoidable, maintain an open line of communication with parent/another adult.
- A completion of the Trip and Off-Site Travel Form is required (see requirements in 6.5)

6.7 Billeting / Hosting Youth in Homes

- When youth are billeted in host homes as part of a church-sponsored event, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure safety and accountability. This includes:
 - obtaining a list of all adults residing in the host home and their relationship to the host;
 - obtaining a letter of approval from the host family's pastor;
 - confirming sleeping arrangements in advance;
 - ensuring the host family understands and agrees to supervision expectations and behavioural standards;
 - distributing host-home guidelines at least one week prior to arrival;

- communicating allergies and medication needs to the host home in advance, including clear instructions;
- billeting youth in same-gender teams/small groups only;
- ensuring youth have separate sleeping arrangements from other household members and are not left alone with household members;
- enforcing a curfew of 11:00pm unless pre-approved by the parent/guardian, Ministry Lead, and Elder Board.

7. Appropriate Physical Interaction

Appropriate touch can be a reflection of care and comfort. All touch must be appropriate, brief, and in view of others.

7.1 Acceptable Touch

- Comforting a crying preschool child
- Speaking at eye level and listening attentively
- Holding hands to guide safely to an activity
- Gentle touch on shoulder/hand to redirect behaviour
- Arm around shoulder when comfort/quieting is needed
- Patting head/hand/shoulder/back as affirmation

7.2 Prohibited Touch

- Kissing or coaxing a child to kiss
- Extended hugging, tickling, horseplay
- Holding a participant's face while talking/disciplining
- Touching areas covered by a bathing suit (except authorised diapering/preschool assistance)
- Older children sitting on laps; carrying older children/youth
- Prolonged physical contact

8. Behaviour Support & Discipline

All classroom management is conducted in a loving, calm, consistent environment. The goal is prevention first, followed by clear, appropriate corrective steps.

8.1 Preventive Practices

- Create a caring atmosphere and build trust.
- Use clear expectations and consistent structure.
- Plan engaging lessons with short transitions.
- Arrange the environment for safety and learning.
- Recognise special needs and involve the Ministry Lead.

8.2 Corrective Steps

- Address concerns individually wherever possible.

- Explain why the behaviour is unsafe/unacceptable and model the right behaviour.
- Redirect to positive actions and offer acceptable choices.
- Use consequences only as needed, always proportionate and never shaming or humiliating.

8.3 Parent/Guardian Notification & Escalation

- Ministry Personnel will use age-appropriate, calm, and restorative behaviour support strategies. When a child's behaviour or wellbeing requires additional support, Ministry Personnel may involve the Ministry Lead and contact a parent/guardian.
- A parent/guardian will be contacted promptly when behaviour:
 - compromises the safety of the child or others
 - involves aggression (e.g., hitting, biting, kicking)
 - includes leaving the classroom or running away
 - cannot be redirected after appropriate supports
 - results in injury, illness, or an allergy/medical concern
- Detailed step-by-step discipline procedures are outlined in the ministry procedures documents.

9. Youth Protection

- Annual Youth Ministry Authorisation and Consent forms are required (paper or electronic).
- One-on-one discipling requires Ministry Lead pre-approval and must occur in public settings with visibility; parents must be informed.
- Open Door Policy: no one-on-one behind closed doors; door open or unobstructed window required.
- Dating: Ministry Personnel may not pursue a dating relationship with a student under 18 or in a program they lead.
- Appropriate touch: one-arm hugs/shoulder touch; prohibited: chest-to-chest hugging, extended affection, lap-sitting, kissing, touching thighs/knees/inappropriate areas.

10. Bullying

- Bullying is not tolerated.
- Ministry Personnel take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and support children/youth who are being bullied.

11. Health & Safety

11.1 Allergies

Children or youth having severe allergies must have this information brought to the attention of the Ministry Lead and noted on their registration form. Ministry Personnel caring for the child will be informed, and information will be posted for access in ministry areas.

11.2 Illness

- A child who is ill and may expose others is not to be received into nursery/classrooms.
- Consider: fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing/sneezing/runny nose, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth/throat.
- Children with a known communicable disease are not received into nursery/preschool.

11.3 Medications

- Ministry Personnel do not give or apply medications. Parents administer all medications.
- Medication is not left in the classroom; it is held by the Ministry Lead/designate.
- Epi-pens and puffers require written instructions from parent/guardian; administration is documented and parent informed.

11.4 Injuries & First Aid

- For injuries: ensure safety, provide appropriate care, and complete an incident report for all injuries/accidents. Incident reports are kept on file in the church office.
- Injuries are to be reported to the Ministry Lead at the earliest opportunity; they will follow up within 48 hours with the injured individual or their guardian.
- First Aid kits are available in all classrooms.
- For blood: isolate child/area, use non-latex gloves, clean/dispose safely, wash hands.
- Call 911 when in doubt for emergencies (difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, significant bleeding, head/spine injury, seizure, slurred speech, blood in urine or stool, imminent childbirth).
- If 911 is called, their guardians will be notified immediately. If the decision is made to transport the individual to the hospital, the Ministry Lead will accompany the injured person to the hospital (or follow in their own vehicle) if the ambulance leaves before the guardian(s) arrive. When the guardian arrives at the hospital, the Ministry Lead will explain the situation, being careful not to admit fault or assign blame, then return to the event unless the guardian asks you to stay.

12. Abuse: Reporting & Response

“Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health, or a child’s welfare.”
(Faith Trust Institute, 2006)

12.1 Definitions (Abuse & Related Harm)

The following definitions provide clarity for identifying and responding to concerns. These are not exhaustive, but represent common categories of harm referenced in safeguarding practice.

- **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any deliberate physical force or action resulting, or possibly resulting, in injury to a child. It is different from what is considered reasonable discipline.

- Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. Coercion (physical, psychological, or emotional) is intrinsic to sexual abuse, distinguishing it from sexual exploration with peers.
- Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is when an individual attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands beyond the child's capacity.
- Neglect: Neglect is when a parent or caregiver fails to meet a child's basic needs.
- Spiritual Abuse: Spiritual abuse is the use of psychological and emotional manipulation, characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour within religious teaching.
- Discrimination: Discrimination involves unfair treatment of a person or group based on personal characteristics, undermining dignity and equal participation.
- Financial Abuse: Financial (economic) abuse involves acting without consent in a way that financially benefits one person at the expense of another (e.g., theft, withholding funds for necessities, coercion, misuse of property or documents).
- Exposure to Domestic Violence: Children may be harmed by being exposed to domestic violence (hearing violence, witnessing or being involved, or experiencing aftermath). This exposure may include coercion to remain silent and can include direct physical, emotional, or sexual harm.

All allegations or suspicions of abuse are taken seriously. Anyone with reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection is legally required to report immediately to authorities.

- Ministry Personnel must complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Do not contact the accused or other parties while completing documentation.

Records of allegations must be retained permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel. Suspected abuse must be reported to the proper authorities immediately (reporting must be done orally by telephone or in person).

- Ministry Personnel are requested to notify the Lead Pastor that a report is being made.
- The church will not assess, substantiate, or investigate the allegation and will cooperate fully with civil authorities.
- The church must avoid undue interference once a report has been filed.
- The Senior Pastor (or designate) must notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of suspected abuse connected to church ministries.
- Confidentiality and dignity must be maintained for the victim and the accused.
- Information must be shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- The Elder Team will designate a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church.
- All inquiries (internal or external) must be directed to the spokesperson.

- If suspected abuse occurred in the context of church ministries or involves a church member/attendee, the Senior Pastor (or designate) must notify the parent/guardian of the victim unless otherwise directed by authorities.
- Anyone accused of abuse will be restricted from access to children and youth until cleared of allegations.
- Clear written guidelines will be provided outlining restrictions and prohibited areas.
- Anyone convicted of abuse will be prohibited from access to children and youth.
- The Senior Pastor (or designate) may assign a responsible person to be informed when the individual attends church activities and to accompany them while on church property.
- Biblical Response: It is the responsibility and right of the Senior Pastor and/or Elder Team to exercise church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18 and consistent with denominational guidelines.

13. Document Control

- The Best Practices Policy and Procedures are reviewed annually and updated as required.
- Records are maintained permanently in the church office as outlined in administrative procedures.