

**Valley Baptist Church Ministry Purpose:**

Valley Baptist Church (VBC) is a member of the California Southern Baptist Convention. Our church is a community of believers who have joined together to meet the spiritual and academic needs for ourselves and the greater community.

Our church promotes behavior consistent with the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, when joining VBC's staff, youth, or children's ministry, you freely and willingly agree to the standards of behavior outlined in this policy. The standards included in this policy are not exhaustive; rather, they are to provide a guideline of conduct we believe is in accordance with biblical standards.

VBC strives to keep our actions above reproach in all things. Consequently, the following standards of conduct shall apply to staff and volunteers. Violations of these standards by staff and volunteers are regarded as a breach of integrity and will result in discipline, up to and including termination. Violations of these standards by volunteers may result in your removal from the volunteer team.

God's Word teaches us that certain attributes are desired, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24). I will strive to seek, encourage, and demonstrate these attributes in my relationships and in working with children or youth.

Scripture further teaches us that every believer has a duty to protect the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of the most vulnerable among us. (Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Mark 9:42, and James 1:27).

VBC understands the responsibility placed upon our church by both God and parents/guardians who entrust their children to our care.

Any church employee/or volunteer known to pose any type of threat or any type of abuse to the children/youth will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children/youth. This is non-negotiable.

As California Court Mandated Reporters, we are required by law to report signs of abuse or neglect, as defined by CANRA, on children in our programs.

As an employee, volunteer, or administrator of VBC, I agree to follow the standards of conduct with this ministry.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Witness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**Definitions:**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “**child**” or “**children**” or “**youth**” includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

**Youth Service Organization:** VBC has activities that involve the direct supervision of children. Youth Service Organization is defined by the State of California AB506, and in the Business and Professions Code section 18975.

A **regular volunteer** is any volunteer who is 18 years of age or older and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

An **occasional volunteer** is any volunteer who is 18 years of age or older and who has contact with children and works less than 16 hours per month or less than 32 hours per year. An occasional volunteer is not required to complete a Background Check.

**Employees** include all employees, whether they work with children or not, including seasonal, occasional, and part-time employees.

**Administrators** may include ministry leaders include clergy, HR administrators, board members and deacons.

**Physical abuse** any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns or biting.

**Emotional abuse** emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

**Sexual abuse** any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.

**Neglect** depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

**CANRA** is an acronym for Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act [11164 - 11174.3]

**CA AB506** is the California Assembly Bill 506 that was signed and passed into legislation effective January 1, 2022. This bill is specifically written to enact child-protection policies in order to prevent child abuse and sexual abuse in youth service organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and churches who provide services to children and is also meant to screen, educate, and train employees/volunteers.

**COR** is an acronym for the Custodian of Records appointed by VBC.

**COURT MANDATED REPORTER** – As defined by CA AB506.

**Training on Child Abuse and Neglect-Identification and Reporting:**

Child abuse and neglect, as defined by CANRA, includes physical abuse, sexual abuse (including both sexual assault and sexual exploitation), willful cruelty or unjustified punishment, unlawful corporal punishment or injury, and neglect (including both acts and omissions).

An administrator, employee, or regular volunteer of VBC shall individually complete training in child abuse & neglect identification and reporting consistent with CA AB506, and the Business and Professions Code 18975(a). This training will cover types of abuse & neglect, what the law requires of court mandated reporters, how to spot evidence of child abuse, examples of different types of abuse, how to report abuse, what happens after a report is filed, and more.

Prior to your employment or volunteering at VBC, CANRA training must be completed. This training is recommended by the CA.gov Department of Social Services. This free self-administered training is available at:

<https://www.mandatedreporterca.com/training/general-training>

Employees and regular volunteers for children/youth workers must complete this General Training (2-4 hours) at [www.mandatedreporter.com](http://www.mandatedreporter.com) every subsequent two (2) years as a refresher course. Clergy (those that are ordained, licensed or commissioned) must also complete the additional training specific for clergy). Disciplinary action will result for failure to take these General Training classes as mandated and in compliance with the current California AB506 legislation.

VBC will pay for all CANRA training costs.

**As a Mandated Reporter you will learn:**

- How the law defines child abuse and neglect
- What the law requires of you as a California Mandated Reporter
- What protections the law provides for a California Mandated Reporter
- How to spot evidence of child abuse, events, patterns and trends that indicate abuse.
- Training will be provided on identification of potential abuse as well as behavior of potential abusers.
- All employees and regular volunteers will have the training of “see something, say something.”
- What happens after a Child Abuse Report is filed
- Definitions of some of the terms used in the training program

At the conclusion of the training you will take a final exam on the information that you have learned during training. Upon scoring 80% or higher you will be able to fill out your name and print a Certificate of Completion. A certificate must be returned to the Deacon Chair. The VBC Custodian of Records will retain a confidential copy to put into your employee file.

**Administrators, Employees and Volunteers—Background Checks:**

Prior to January 1, 2024 VBC did not require administrators, employees, or regular volunteers to undergo background checks pursuant to Section 11105.3 of the Penal Code. Pursuant to CA AB506, administrators, employees, regular volunteers, and the VBC Custodian of Records are required to undergo background checks to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse.

The California background check will exclude persons with a history of child abuse or other convictions that have been determined by the FBI that would preclude them from working with children/youth.

Before a background check is conducted, all employees, administrators and regular volunteers will complete an authorization form allowing VBC to run the background check. If an individual declines the background check they will be unable to work with children.

The following are categories of types of regular volunteers that require a background check:

- Sunday School
- Children's Church
- Nursery workers
- Awana
- Summer Camp Counselors
- Any type of children's/youth ministry program
- Any type of children's/youth athletic program
- Those who are involved in a school/preschool/daycare center
- Those who are involved in overnight activities with children
- Those who are involved in counseling or mentoring children or youth
- Those who are involved in one-on-one mentorship of children

Disqualifying offenses that will prevent an individual from working with children will be determined by the VBC Custodian of Records based on guidance provided by the DOJ. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. Pursuant to privacy laws set forth by the California DOJ, the result of the background check can be disclosed to the applicant. The applicant may also contact the DOJ directly for their records.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained by the VBC Custodian of Records in a locked-file cabinet. The background check will be kept as long as the employee/volunteer is with VBC. The VBC COR will destroy the records once you leave VBC or are no longer interested. The COR will then submit to the Department of Justice a 'No Longer Interested' notification form found at <http://ag.ca.gov/fingerprints/forms/nli.pdf>.

## **Criminal History Disqualifiers for Employees/Volunteers:**

- Murder
- Manslaughter
- Reckless homicide
- Homicide
- Any sex offense
- Kidnapping
- Harboring a runaway
- Aiding and abetting child abduction
- Abduction
- Assault
- Battery
- Tampering with food, drugs or cosmetics
- Infliction of great bodily harm
- Hate crime
- Stalking
- Home invasion
- Criminal abuse or neglect of an elderly or disabled
- Child abandonment
- Endangering the life or health of a child
- Ritual mutilation
- Abuse of a child
- Vehicular endangerment
- Domestic battery
- Intimidation
- Abuse and criminal neglect of a long-term care facility resident
- Violation of an order of protection
- Felony unlawful use of weapons
- Aggravated discharge of a firearm
- Obstructing justice
- Concealing or adding a fugitive
- Armed violence
- Contributing to the criminal delinquency of a juvenile
- Unauthorized manufacture or delivery of controlled substances
- Controlled substance trafficking
- Criminal drug conspiracy
- Sale or delivery of drug paraphernalia
- Felony possession of a controlled substance

**Staff & Volunteer Screening Procedures for Child/Youth Workers:**

All employees, administrators, and regular volunteers who work with children/youth under the age of 18 participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

1. **Six-Month Waiting Period:** No person will be considered for any regular volunteer position involving contact with minors until they have been in regular attendance with Valley Baptist Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between VBC leaders and the applicant allows for a better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
2. **Written Application:** All candidates seeking a regular volunteer position that involves working with children/youth will complete a Volunteer Application.
3. The ministry leader, or designee, will review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. All application materials—the application form, reference checks, notes from interviews, etc.—will be maintained in a locked file cabinet with the VBC Custodian of Records.
4. **Personal Interview:** After the ministry leader, or designee, contacts the references and the background check has been completed, he or she will conduct an interview with the candidate.
5. When indicated by screening procedures, any volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will not be considered for any ministry position involving children or youth.

**Employee Screening Procedures:**

1. The same procedures set forth in “Screening Procedures” above also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered. (Applicable California state and/or local law may regulate at which time during the hiring process and to what extent an employee may ask about an employment applicant’s criminal history that is not released on the background check.)
2. When indicated by screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children or youth will be not be considered for employment or volunteer work.

## **Supervision Procedures:**

### **Two-Adult Rule:**

*To the greatest extent possible*, two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children/youth are being supervised during our programs and activities. Doors to classrooms will remain open. We do not allow children/youth to be alone with one adult on our premises, or in any sponsored activity, unless in a youth counseling situation (see below).

### **Open Door Policy:**

Classroom doors will remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

### **Inappropriate Behavior with Children:**

Workers will avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.

### **One-on-One Mentoring of Youth:**

When Valley Baptist Church provides one-on-one mentoring of youth the “Two-Adult Rule” set forth in the paragraph above does not apply. In order to be eligible to facilitate in one-on-one youth mentoring:

1. Any regular volunteer must undergo the training set forth in the “Administrators, Employees and Regular Volunteers – Background Checks” as stated on page 5.

Any one-on-one mentoring of youth must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others with an open door. All planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by a ministry leader, and the adult worker must obtain prior written approval from parents/guardians. The duration and frequency of approved one-on-one meetings are to be limited to no more than three occasions for no more than 30 minutes at a time.

### **Child/Youth Discipline Policy:**

It is the policy of VBC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Sunday School Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

### **Restroom Guidelines:**

Children under the age of 5: If a child needs to go to the bathroom they should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. Workers will check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the child inside. Workers will then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker will open the bathroom door and call the child’s name. If a child requires assistance, the workers will prop open the door and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

Children over the age of five: At least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female will take girls. The worker will check the bathroom first to make sure the bathroom is empty, then allow the child inside. The worker will then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child back to the classroom.



For protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

**Check-in/Check-out Procedures:**

1. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth shall be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.
2. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up their child.

**Teenage Workers:**

There may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under the age of 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above (with the exception of a background check, which can't be conducted on minors).
- To the greatest extent possible, must be under the supervision of two Mandated Reporters and must never be left alone with children.

(Using only underage workers does not meet the requirements of Business and Professions Code Section 18975).

**Violation of Supervision Procedures:**

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry Director when they or others violate the procedures set forth by these policies.
2. Ministry coordinators, the Sunday School Director, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

**Child Abuse Discovery:**

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of a child under VBC's care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this will be reported immediately to the Sunday School Director, Pastor and Deacon Board for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by California state law.

**Procedure For Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect:**

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. Mandated Reporters must report to the Imperial County Child Protective Services at (760) 337-7750, local Police or the Sheriff's Office, immediately by phone.
3. A written report must be sent within 36 hours by fax or electronically. Written reports must be submitted on the California Suspected Child Abuse Form 8572. This form is available at: [https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss\\_8572.pdf](https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf)  
(More information about California Mandated Reporting can be found at: <https://mandatedreporterca.com/about/faq>)

**Procedure for Reporting Abuse alleged to have occurred by a VBC employee/or any volunteer, during a church program or activity:**

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The employee/volunteer worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Mandated Reporters must report to the Imperial County Child Protective Services at (760) 337-7750, local Police or the Sheriff's Office, immediately by phone.
4. A written report must be sent within 36 hours by fax or electronically. Written reports must be submitted on the California Suspected Child Abuse Form 8572. This form is available at: [https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss\\_8572.pdf](https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf)  
(More information about California Mandated Reporting can be found at: <https://mandatedreporter.ca.com/about/faq>)
5. VBC's insurance company will be notified, and VBC will complete an Incident Report. All documents received relating to the incident and/or allegation will immediately be forwarded to our insurance company.
6. A Trustee Board member will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect unless they are alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
7. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
8. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

**Investigation from an abuse that is alleged to have occurred by a VBC employee/or any volunteer during a church program or activity, the following procedures shall be followed:**

1. VBC considers any allegation of abuse or neglect a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, then by ministry leaders following a consultation with qualified legal counsel. The ministry will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from all activities related to the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation.

**Dealing with Law Enforcement and the News Media:**

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of Valley Baptist Church will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating abuse and neglect.
2. The leadership of VBC will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization and a report will be provided to our insurance carrier. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
2. One individual—a member of the leadership team, an employee, or our attorney will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

**Protection:**

1. During an investigation, victims should be protected from harm.
2. Procedures should be enacted that will protect the victim during the investigation process.
3. Ensure that those who come forward to report abuse are received with dignity and compassion.
4. The accused abuser should be removed from any interaction with the victim.