

Clifford Baptist Church
Policies and Procedures Manual
Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy
September 2026

Inclusions

- Child Abuse Prevention Policy
- Child Abuse Incident Reporting Procedures
- Child Abuse Incident Report Form
- Children and Youth Leader Application
- Background Check / Identity History Forms or current approved equivalent

1. Introduction, Purpose, and Scope

We live in an age where child abuse and neglect are realities in our society. The church must take reasonable and consistent steps to protect children and youth in its care, maintain parental confidence, reduce the risk of mistaken allegations, and promote a positive, nurturing environment for ministry. Clifford Baptist Church has adopted this policy to safeguard children and youth while allowing ministry to be conducted in an orderly and Christ-honoring way. This policy applies to all persons serving in pastoral, teaching, supervisory, supportive, volunteer, or compensated roles at church-organized activities involving minors.

2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Church-organized activities	Any activity or program under the direct organization of Clifford Baptist Church in which children or youth are under the supervision of staff or approved volunteers. This excludes activities or programs by outside organizations or individuals merely held on church property unless the church expressly assumes supervision.
Adult	Any person age 18 or older.
Youth	Any person age 11 to 17, or in 6th through 12th grade.
School Age Child	Any person currently in Kindergarten through 5th grade.
Infant nursery	Birth through walking.
Walkers nursery	Walking through age 2.
Preschool	Ages 2-5 who have not started Kindergarten.
Guardian	An adult responsible for bringing a child or youth to church-organized activities.
Leader	An approved, background-checked adult age 18 or older serving in a supervisory or supportive role involving minors at a church-organized activity. This includes, but is not limited to, Nursery, Sunday School, Extended

Term	Definition
	Session, Vacation Bible School, field trips, choirs, mission trips, and other children/youth activities.
CAPP Committee	The committee appointed by the church to help administer this policy, recommend policy updates, and coordinate training.
Background Administrators	The persons designated by the church to receive, review, and safeguard background-check results and related eligibility information.
Deacon Board	The church body referenced in this policy for employee/staff background-check discretion and other final decisions where assigned by church bylaws or church practice.
Pastoral Staff	The church staff referenced in this policy for volunteer background-check discretion and ministry-level approval decisions where assigned by church practice.

3. Screening, Application, and Background Checks

All employees and church staff who serve or may serve with minors shall complete the church's Children and Youth Leader Application and submit to a criminal background check before serving. Background checks for employees and church staff are required every five years, or more often at the discretion of the Deacon Board.

All volunteers who serve in any capacity with children or youth shall complete the church's Children and Youth Leader Application and submit to a criminal background check before serving. Background checks for volunteers are required every five years, or more often at the discretion of the Pastoral Staff and/or Board of Directors.

A person should regularly attend Clifford Baptist Church for at least six months before serving in children or youth ministry. Special-situation exceptions may be reviewed by the Pastoral Staff and/or CAPP Committee. Any exception should be documented and should not waive the application, screening, background check, and approval requirements.

No person may serve in a supervisory or supportive role involving children or youth until the application, background check, and approval process is complete. Temporary or conditional approval before background-check results are received is not permitted.

At a minimum, criminal background checks shall include local and state criminal conviction records and state sex offender registries. When available, the church should use a nationwide criminal conviction search and national sex offender registry search.

No person shall be approved as a Leader over minors if, as an adult, they:

- Have been convicted of a sexually related crime;
- Have been convicted of a crime of domestic violence;
- Have been convicted of any offense against a child or youth;
- Are subject to a legal protective order currently in effect;
- Have been convicted of any felony crime of violence.

In other cases, certain offenses may negatively impact an individual's suitability to serve depending on the offense, circumstances, and length of time since the offense occurred. The Background Administrators may request additional information from the individual to help determine eligibility. Eligibility decisions shall be made consistently with this policy, legal requirements, and the safety of minors.

Criminal background check information is confidential and shall be kept in a secure location or secure electronic system accessible only to the Background Administrator and/or their assignees approved by the CAPP Committee. No other person shall access these files except as required by law, subpoena, court order, insurance requirements, or church authorization. The church should retain proof of completion, date, eligibility decision, and signed acknowledgments.

4. General Ministry Safety Policies

No one under the age of 18 shall serve in any children or youth ministry in a supervisory or supportive role and shall not be counted as an adult for supervision ratios.

For the health, safety, and benefit of all children and youth, each child/youth shall participate in the appropriate class, activity, or program according to age or grade. Special exceptions shall be handled individually by the parent/guardian and the appropriate ministry director and/or pastor.

Leaders shall not allow their own children or youth to join them in a classroom unless the child/youth belong to that designated age group, or a ministry director approves a specific exception.

Each class, activity, or program shall have at least two Leaders present. If a married couple is serving together, a third Leader must also be present.

Activities shall be conducted with adequate supervision, including periodic visits by program directors, pastors, and/or other adults responsible for the activity. All activities involving minors at Clifford Baptist Church are "open door." Pastors, parents/guardians, ministry directors, and other approved church leaders may observe any activity involving minors.

Leaders shall avoid being alone with an individual child or youth. If a private conversation is necessary, it should occur in a visible, open, and interruptible location, with another Leader nearby and aware of the meeting. If a Leader unexpectedly encounters a situation where only one adult is present in a classroom or activity, the Leader shall immediately use one or more of the following steps:

- Keep the door open and remain visible;
- Contact the ministry director or pastor immediately for assistance;
- Ask another Leader to remain in the room or activity area; or if that can't be done move all minors to another room where another leader is present

Parents, guardians, and adult guests who have not been approved as a Leader may attend or observe programs with their own child, but shall not in any way supervise other minors, escort groups to bathrooms or snacks, serve as chaperones, provide support responsibilities for the group, or count toward supervision ratios.

Only parents, guardians, or those approved by parents/guardians may pick up a child from a classroom. Parents of birth through 5th grade children must sign their child in at the kiosk and show the security tag or a picture of it from their phone for pickup.

Volunteers and Leaders are prohibited from using any form of physical punishment or discipline involving physical pain. Physical punishment is never appropriate at Clifford Baptist Church. Leaders should use calm redirection, reasonable boundaries, and seek help from parents/guardians or ministry directors when needed.

All Leaders are to model the love of Christ while leading minors and avoid behavior that may be misconstrued as negative, harsh, secretive, or inappropriate.

If a classroom does not have a door with a window, the door should be kept open whenever possible. Questionable, unsafe, or inappropriate behavior shall be reported immediately to a pastor, ministry director, or CAPP Committee member. Leaders who disregard this policy may be reassigned, suspended, or relieved from duty at the discretion of church leadership.

5. Communication, Transportation, and Digital Safety

Electronic communication with youth should be transparent and ministry related. Leaders should avoid private, secretive, or late-night one-on-one communications with youth. Group messages, parent-copied communications, official church platforms, or messages involving more than one Leader are preferred.

Leaders shall not post photos, videos, names, or identifying information of children/youth in a way that violates parent/guardian instructions, church policy, or safety concerns. The church should maintain a photo/video permission process for minors.

Transportation for church-organized activities should be conducted by approved adults. Drivers should be properly licensed and insured. Leaders should avoid transporting a single child or youth alone unless prior parent/guardian permission is obtained, and another Leader or church leader is aware of the arrangement.

6. Specific Class and Activity Policies

The following ratios are minimum requirements. Ministry directors may require additional Leaders based on the needs of the group, age of participants, behavior concerns, location, travel, medical needs, or other circumstances. Every classroom and activity shall begin with at least two Leaders. Never allow one Leader alone to be over children or youth. If only one Leader is present, follow Section 4 immediately. **If a married couple is serving together in any of the following classes or activities below, a third person must be present in the room.**

Class / Activity	Minimum Requirement
Nursery	At least two Leaders for the first five children, plus one additional Leader for every three additional children.
PreK 2s and 3s Sunday School and Extended Worship Hour	At least two Leaders, with additional Leaders when needed, using a guideline of one Leader for every five children.
PreK 4s and 5s Sunday School and Extended Worship Hour	At least two Leaders, using a guideline of one Leader for every nine children. Additional Leaders may be added as needed.

Class / Activity	Minimum Requirement
Kindergarten through 5th Grade	At least two Leaders for the first 20 children, plus one additional Leader for every 10 additional children.
Youth: 6th through 12th Grade / ages 11-17	At least two Leaders for youth activities. For larger groups, use at least one Leader for every 20 youth.

Bathroom breaks and diaper changes in preschool areas shall only be performed by Leaders, parents, or guardians.

For preschool bathroom assistance, it is preferred for a same-sex Leader to accompany children to the bathroom when possible. For young children, the bathroom door should be propped open so the adult and child can be seen. For older children, the adult should not enter the stall with the child, but should wait right outside the door and say, "If you need me, I will be waiting right outside the door."

Children in Kindergarten and older may go to the bathroom without an adult escort unless circumstances require otherwise.

7. Day Trips and Overnight Activities

For all activities below: If a married couple is serving together, there must a third person present.

Activity	Requirement
Mixed-gender day trips and overnight activities	At least two Leaders of each gender should be present for mixed-gender groups.
Preschool day trips	At least two Leaders must be present, with at least one Leader for each five children present.
Kindergarten through 5th grade day trips and overnight activities	At least two Leaders must be present, with at least one Leader for each five children present.
Youth day trips	At least two Leaders must be present, with at least one Leader for each 20 youth present.
Youth overnight activities	At least two Leaders must be present, with at least one Leader for each 10 youth present.
Sleeping, bathing, and dressing areas	Male and female minors shall have separate sleeping, bathing, and dressing areas/facilities.
Overnight sleeping areas	There shall be a minimum of two same-sex Leaders for each sleeping area/room. A same-sex Leader shall remain with the minors assigned to that area.

8. Child Abuse Incident Reporting Procedures

8.1 Commitment

Clifford Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and youth, as well as for employees, volunteers, members, and guests. If child abuse or neglect is suspected, reported, or comes to the attention of the church, the church will cooperate with law enforcement officials, child protective services, and other proper authorities.

8.2 Definition for Reporting Purposes

For purposes of these procedures, “child abuse or neglect” includes suspected sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other conduct involving a minor that must be reported under applicable law. This definition should be interpreted broadly in favor of child safety and compliance with Virginia law.

8.3 Immediate Safety and Reporting Steps

1. **Protect immediate safety.** If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 first.
2. **Notify church leadership.** The reporting party shall promptly notify a pastor, ministry director, or CAPP Committee member.
3. **Report to civil authorities.** A person who has reason to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make a report immediately to the local Department of Social Services, the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-552-7096, the Virginia Mandated Reporter Portal when appropriate, or law enforcement as required by law. The report shall not be delayed while the church investigates internally.
4. **Remove accused person from child/youth duties.** Any accused Leader or person involved in the allegation shall be relieved from duties involving children/youth pending review. Other church or administrative duties during this time will be determined by church leadership and the Deacon Board as applicable.
5. **Limit information.** Details related to allegations and the identity of parties shall be shared only with those who need to know to protect children, comply with law, cooperate with authorities, notify insurance, and administer church responsibilities.
6. **Notify parent/guardian appropriately.** Church leadership shall make every reasonable effort to notify the child’s parent/guardian unless law enforcement or child protective services instructs otherwise, or **unless the parent/guardian is the alleged offender or notification could increase risk to the child.**
7. **Document the matter.** The reporting party, a pastor, and a CAPP Committee member or designee shall complete the Incident Report to the best of their ability without attempting to investigate beyond recording known facts.
8. **Designate a spokesperson.** The official spokesperson for the church shall be the Pastor or his appointee. No other staff member, volunteer, or church member shall speak to the media on behalf of the church.
9. **Return to service.** Whether a person may return to service involving children/youth shall be determined by the Deacon Board after consultation with the CAPP Committee, legal counsel, insurance carrier, and any applicable civil authorities.

Child Abuse Incident Report Form

-- CONFIDENTIAL -- FOR AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY --

Use this form to record known facts. Do not use this form as a substitute for reporting to civil authorities when required by law.

Reporting Party:	Phone Number(s):
Accused Leader / Person:	Leadership Capacity:
Alleged Victim / Child:	Date of Birth:
Parent/Guardian(s):	Reported to Pastor / Church Leader:
Date and Time Report Received:	Civil Authority Reported To:
Date and Time Civil Report Made:	Person / Agency / Portal Confirmation:
Events Leading to Report:	
Alleged Incident:	
Additional Observations of Reporting Party:	
Potential Witnesses and Contact Information:	

Signature of Reporting Party: _____ Date: _____

Office Use Only

The items below follow the order of the reporting steps in Section 8.3.

☐ Immediate Safety / 911 / Medical Assistance, if applicable Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Report to Local DSS / Virginia Hotline / Mandated Reporter Portal Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Notice to Church Leadership Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Notice to Parent/Guardian, if appropriate Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Incident Report Completed Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Accused Person Removed from Child/Youth Duties Pending Review Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Information Limited to Necessary Parties Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Spokesperson / Media Direction Confirmed Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Insurance Carrier Notified Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____
☐ Legal Counsel Consulted Date/Time: _____ Spoke With / Confirmation: _____ Notes: _____

Children and Youth Leader Application

-- CONFIDENTIAL -- FOR AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY --

Clifford Baptist Church, 635 Fletcher's Level Road, Amherst, VA 24521 | Phone: 434-946-0555

Email: cliffordbaptist@cliffordbaptist.org

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position involving a supervisory or supportive capacity over children or youth. It is intended to assist the church in providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth participating in classes, activities, programs, and church-organized events.

Full Name: _____

Other names used: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Marital Status: _____

Email Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Height: _____ Weight: _____ Eye Color: _____ Hair Color: _____

Date available to begin: _____

Application Questions

If you answer "Yes" to any of the questions below, write/attach a written explanation with the nature of the matter, date, jurisdiction/court/agency, disposition, and any relevant information.

1. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a criminal offense as an adult, felony or misdemeanor, except minor traffic violations? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any sexually related crime? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any crime of violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense against a child or youth? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Are you subject to a legal protective order currently in effect? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Have you ever been reported to a social service agency, law enforcement authority, child abuse registry, or similar organization regarding abuse or misconduct involving children or youth? ☐ Yes ☐ No

References

Renewal applicants do not need to provide references unless requested by the CAPP Committee. New applicants shall provide three personal references, including one local reference. Do not include former employers, relatives, Clifford Baptist Church pastors, or their immediate families.

Reference 1: Name _____ Phone/Email _____
City/State _____

Reference 2: Name _____ Phone/Email _____
City/State _____

Reference 3: Name _____ Phone/Email _____
City/State _____

Applicant's Statement

Initial: _____ I certify that I have read and reviewed the Clifford Baptist Church Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy.

Initial: _____ I understand that during my period of service, if my answers to questions 1-6 above change, I will notify one of the Pastors or Background Administrators immediately.

Initial: _____ The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Clifford Baptist Church to conduct a criminal background investigation concerning my personal life, history, record, and suitability for service. I authorize references listed in this application to provide information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and youth. I release all such references from liability for furnishing such evaluations, provided they do so in good faith and without malice. I waive any right I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

Initial: _____ Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws, policies, and procedures of this church and to refrain from conduct inconsistent with the church's standards in the performance of my service on behalf of the church.

Initial: _____ I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release, know the contents thereof, and sign this release of my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement that I have read and understand.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix: Identity Summary Request Forms

Attached are the current approved identity history summary request form and fingerprint card used by the church or its approved screening provider.