

# Jeff Dalrymple to lead SBC sexual abuse response

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When he is introduced formally at the SBC Executive Committee's Feb. 17-18 meeting, several sexual abuse prevention and response initiatives will be announced in order for those to be in place by the time of the 2025 SBC annual meeting in June, Executive Committee President and CEO Jeff Iorg said.

“During our multiple interviews, I was consistently impressed with Jeff’s breadth of technical knowledge as well as his calm and reasoned demeanor about these sensitive issues,” Iorg said.

“He has the informational background and strength of character needed to take on this strategic new position.”

Dalrymple, 49, comes to the Executive Committee after serving as executive director of the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention, which works to set national standards to protect vulnerable groups. He also is owner and president of The Hospitality Project, a leadership consulting firm.

The SBC Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Department will be funded in its initial stages by about \$1.8 million remaining from the \$3 million gift by Send Relief in June 2022 toward the convention’s sexual abuse response.

Iorg cited Dalrymple’s work through the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention and his Southern Baptist background as critical to his being named to the position.

“This organization sets national standards and provides certification in sexual abuse prevention and response for all kinds of ministry organizations,” Iorg said. “Through this experience, Jeff has developed a broad understanding of issues related to sexual abuse prevention and response.

Previously, Dalrymple was a vice president at Southern Seminary for nine years and with the Kentucky Baptist Convention for two years, where he led Crossings Camps.

“He understands how to work with and among Southern Baptists—including our polity and denominational structures,” Iorg said.

Southern Baptist Convention President Clint Pressley commended both Iorg and Dalrymple.

“Dr. Iorg is a man of vision and action as evidenced by his creating the office of abuse prevention and response and appointing Jeff Dalrymple to lead it,” said Pressley, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

“I know Jeff to be a godly and wise leader that will act with discernment and respond with compassion. I’m thankful for Jeff’s willingness to serve the SBC, as I’m certain he will do so with care and professionalism.”

## **Contextualized approach**

Dalrymple will name an assistant in the coming weeks and become familiar with other SBC Executive Committee staff while beginning work “to expand our sexual abuse prevention and response efforts incrementally and as needed,” Iorg said.

“Our goal—as I have stated repeatedly—is a robust response in this important ministry challenge. While we are moving deliberately, we are also moving consistently and purposefully toward workable solutions,” he added.

Dalrymple credited the SBC’s Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force in “charting a course forward to help Southern Baptists.”

“We’re going to build on that foundation, using the Essentials curriculum and other resources to help Southern Baptists,” he said.

That approach will be grounded in contextualization, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all mentality.

“Context is key, with two areas in particular—programmatic and

jurisdictional,” Dalrymple said.

“Programmatic” refers to the types of prevention measures used by an organization such as a church or school. “Jurisdictional” points to laws throughout the country that may vary, even if slightly, in areas such as mandatory reporting.

The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention began in 2019 with more than two dozen experts in areas such as child protection, risk management, insurance industries and practitioners serving in Christian schools and churches. Those voices developed the organization’s standards and compliance programs.

“We’ve tried to strike a balance—and I’ll be honest with you, it’s not easy—in a compassionate response and tone towards survivors who have experienced sexual abuse ... and at the same time, very real legal and stewardship considerations,” Dalrymple said. “We have worked hard to navigate between those.”

Dalrymple and his wife of 22 years, Kristil, have four children. The innate desire of a father to protect his children is strong enough to champion stronger protocols against sexual abuse, but words from Tom Stolle, executive director of the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Convention, struck Dalrymple personally. Stolle has urged the church to protect individuals with disabilities from abuse.

“I have a special needs daughter who is 17,” Dalrymple said. “From Tom, I learned the shocking statistics of sexual abuse in the disabilities community and was abhorred and appalled.

“As a father, I want to do everything I can to help Christian ministries maintain their Christ-centered witness and to continue to do Great Commission work we’ve been called to do, making sure that predators are far, far away from our Christ-centered ministries.”