

SBC launches revamped sexual abuse helpline

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NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention’s office for abuse prevention and response has launched a revamped helpline for those needing assistance with matters related to sexual abuse.

The initiative, a partnership with the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention, is designed to deliver support for survivors, ministry leaders and others needing advice on preventing sexual abuse or responding to abuse allegations.



The helpline can be accessed at 833-611-HELP or by visiting <https://sbcabuseprevention.com/helpline>. The website also features email and chat options.

The office for abuse prevention and response, a department of the SBC Executive Committee created last September, announced the new helpline Aug. 18.

“Our new helpline suite of services enhances our efforts at providing Southern Baptist churches and ministries the resources they need to prevent sexual abuse or respond to sexual abuse allegations,” SBC Executive Committee President Jeff Iorg said.

“The new helpline will provide competent assistance to those seeking assistance—for survivors as well as services for ministry leaders who are responding on these issues. We are putting in place long-term strategies for confronting this pernicious evil because even one instance of sexual abuse

is too many.”

Help for survivors and ministry leaders

The establishment of the helpline begins the transition away from a hotline hosted by Guidepost Solutions since May 2022. Jeff Dalrymple, director of the SBC’s abuse prevention office and a founding member and former executive director of the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention, told Baptist Press the council shares Southern Baptists’ convictions and values.

There are currently three call takers and four coaches, Dalrymple said. The coaches have been approved by the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention, and the call takers have completed specially designed training in addressing crisis situations.

“Christian experts lent their expertise to create the training from scratch,” he said. “It didn’t exist before.”

Call takers will receive calls and walk through each unique situation with the caller, then refer a caller to a coach as needed.

“In addition to the functionality of the Guidepost tip line, we felt compelled to provide help to survivors that are calling that need access to counseling and for ministry leaders that find themselves in the middle of an abuse allegation and don’t know what to do,” Dalrymple said.

The Guidepost-operated hotline, which averages 15 to 20 calls per month, will remain active through at least the end of this year, Dalrymple told BP.

“We don’t want to miss any calls,” he said.

Dalrymple called sexual abuse “a scourge on our society.”

“We aim to prevent sexual abuse from occurring in the first place, but when

it does occur, we will use our resources to respond in a healing manner following the teachings of Jesus Christ,” he said.

How the helpline works

The helpline will respond to the following four areas of service:

- Reporting abuse to the SBC Credentials Committee and to the appropriate authorities
- Coaching for appropriate church-related response to abuse claims, within ministry programs or external.
- Trauma-informed Christian counseling referrals for victim/survivors, family and caregiver
- Guidance regarding abuse prevention in ministry

Call takers will be available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Central, with after-hours options available also. One of the call takers is fluent in Spanish, and translation services for other languages, including American Sign Language, are available.

“Calls will be triaged to determine what assistance would be most helpful to the caller,” Dalrymple said. “This could mean guiding a caller through legal reporting requirements, seeking a referral for survivor care, and/or providing support for a ministry leader navigating an allegation or incident of abuse.”

Matt Espenshade is a former FBI agent who now serves as executive pastor of Journey Church in Lebanon, Tenn. He also is a member of the SBC Abuse Prevention & Response Advisory Committee and gave input for the helpline.

“The collaborative effort between the SBC and the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention demonstrates how to lead with integrity and humility in

providing a resource for timely, accessible, transparent and biblically grounded expertise to ensure this problem is not ignored or mishandled," Espenshade said.

"The helpline is more than a resource; it is a statement of commitment to pursue justice, extend grace, and ensure that the church remains a place of safety, hope and healing."