

Whistleblower Policy

Policy Number: GOV-001

Approved By: Board of Directors

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

1. Purpose

Branches Christian Cooperative (“Branches”) is committed to operating with integrity, transparency, and accountability in all matters. Scripture calls believers to walk in truth, humility, and love (Ephesians 4:1–3; Micah 6:8; Colossians 3:12–17). In that spirit, this policy provides a safe and confidential way for individuals to report suspected misconduct that threatens the Cooperative’s mission, finances, safety, or legal compliance.

This policy protects individuals who raise concerns in good faith and ensures that the Board responds with diligence, fairness, and unity.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all:

- Board members
- Leadership Committee members
- Teachers and volunteers
- Member families

This policy covers concerns related to:

- Financial misconduct or misuse of Cooperative funds
- Violations of bylaws, policies, or legal obligations
- Abuse of authority or unethical behavior
- Safety violations or endangerment
- Child protection concerns
- Retaliation against someone who raised a concern
- Serious moral or ethical misconduct inconsistent with the Statement of Faith

This policy does not cover:

- Routine interpersonal conflicts
- Communication misunderstandings
- Classroom disagreements
- Issues appropriate for Matthew 18 or the Communication Policy

Those matters should follow the Cooperative's established relational and communication processes.

3. Reporting Concerns

3.1 How to Report

Concerns may be reported verbally or in writing to **any Board Officer**:

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Reports may be submitted by:

- Email
- Written letter
- Sealed envelope delivered to a Board Officer

Anonymous reports are permitted, though anonymity may limit the Board's ability to investigate fully.

3.2 When the President Is Involved

If the concern involves the President, the report should be directed to:

- The Secretary, or
- The Treasurer

If the concern involves multiple officers, the report may be submitted to the **full Board**.

4. Board Response and Investigation

4.1 Acknowledgment

The Board (or designated officers) will acknowledge receipt of the report within **7 days**.

4.2 Investigation Team

A **two-member Board subcommittee** will conduct the initial review and investigation. Any Board member who is the subject of the concern will be recused.

4.3 Investigation Process

The investigation may include:

- Reviewing relevant documents
- Interviewing individuals involved
- Consulting with outside advisors if necessary
- Prayerful deliberation

All investigations will be **documented in writing** and stored with the Cooperative's confidential records.

4.4 Timeline

The Board will provide a written response or status update within **30 days**, unless extended for cause.

5. Confidentiality

Branches will maintain confidentiality **as far as reasonably possible**, consistent with:

- Protecting children
- Fulfilling legal obligations
- Conducting a fair investigation
- Safeguarding the Cooperative

Information will be shared only with those who need to know in order to address the concern.

Public disclosure will occur **only when necessary** to protect the Cooperative or its members.

6. Protection Against Retaliation

Branches strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who, **in good faith**, reports a concern or participates in an investigation.

Retaliation includes:

- Harassment
- Exclusion
- Threats
- Loss of volunteer roles
- Negative treatment by leadership or members

Individuals who engage in retaliation may face consequences up to and including:

- Removal from leadership
- Loss of volunteer privileges
- Membership suspension or termination (per bylaws)

7. Bad-Faith or Malicious Reports

Knowingly false or malicious reports violate biblical principles of truth and unity and may result in disciplinary action.

8. Recordkeeping

The Secretary (or designee) will maintain confidential records of:

- Reports received
- Investigation notes
- Findings and outcomes
- Any corrective actions taken

Records will be retained according to the Document Retention Policy once adopted.

9. Adoption and Review

This policy is adopted by the Board of Directors and will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with:

- The bylaws
 - The Statement of Faith
 - Applicable laws
 - Best practices for nonprofit governance
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