

ALABAMA BAPTIST

# ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE GUIDE

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PREPARED BY THE ALABAMA  
SEXUAL ABUSE ADVISORY TASK FORCE  
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## Why Does This Guide Exist?

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None of us want to have to deal with the subject of sexual abuse prevention. It grieves our hearts that it is necessary for our churches to have to prepare, protect, and be proactive against the epidemic of child abuse and abuse of all kinds.

We have to do this because according to the CDC, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience child sexual abuse. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence ([www.ncadv.org/statistics](http://www.ncadv.org/statistics)). We know that actual incidences of sexual abuse far exceed the number of reported incidences because many survivors never report their abuse. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, out of every 1,000 incidents of sexual abuse, only 25 abusers ever face incarceration.

Churches are not immune to these statistics. The problem is we are being thrust into this issue with little knowledge. We are trying to catch up because most of us have never really dealt with this issue before, and if we have, we most likely dealt with it improperly. That is why there is a concerted effort to correct and improve our response, as churches, to the issue of sexual abuse. That is why we are scurrying to develop best practices so that we can better respond and be better equipped to respond when we are faced with this issue.

Let us be reminded:

- It is clear sin for anyone to use their power to mistreat people made in God's image (Psalm 11:5).
- Violence against the weak and needy is abhorrent to God, and so Christians have a much higher calling than merely not abusing people (Psalm 82:4).
- As Christians, we are called not only to avoid abuse and protect people from abuse, but to refuse to conceal abuse when we know it is happening or has happened (Proverbs 10:6).
- We live in a sinful world where abuse is happening. There is a high likelihood that someone who has been abused is already a part of your congregation, no matter the size of your church. As leaders, we must be doggedly determined to care for these people who are struggling (Psalm 147:3).

**“A church that shows itself to care about the public is much more likely to lead to a public that cares about the church.” –Michael Wear**

The area of sexual abuse prevention and protection and response to victims is an important way we can show that we care about our communities.

## Best Practices

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Our Best Practices are designed to provide you with tangible, practical, and applicable steps to equip your church to better prevent sexual abuse, provide care for survivors, and respond appropriately to abusers/those credibly accused. The tiers below are a summary of some of the most important steps you can take to help your church become a safer place.

**DISCLAIMER:** *These best practices are provided for general information purposes only and are not a substitute for professional advice particular to your facts and circumstances. Furthermore, each Alabama Baptist church or ministry is different and these best practices should be considered with your particular Alabama Baptist church or ministry's circumstances in mind. In particular, not all of these best practices are currently feasible for all Alabama Baptist churches or ministries, but we hope that a sincere evaluation of an Alabama Baptist church or ministry's capabilities and resources are considered to implement best practices that are lasting and effective.*

*No one viewing these best practices should act or refrain from acting based solely on the content herein of these best practices without seeking professional legal counsel or professional consultation regarding the Alabama Baptist church or ministry's specific needs. The Alabama Baptist State Convention expressly disclaims all liability relating to actions taken or not taken based solely on the content of these best practices.*

### Tier 1: Essential First Steps

#### Prevention:

- Review existing and/or establish policies within your Alabama Baptist church.
- Mandatory background checks for any person working with or supervising minors.
- Train leaders and volunteers specifically about sexual abuse education, prevention, and proper care for survivors.
- Offer clearly written guidelines for appropriate interactions, touch, and relationships.

#### Monitoring:

- A minimum of two volunteers always be in every setting when overseeing minors. The volunteers cannot be related.
- No adult and child alone together in a restroom.
- Follow Center for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) diapering guidelines.

#### Response:

- Clear mandatory reporting policy in place and understood by all leaders and volunteers.
- Leaders are trained to properly respond to an accusation by caring first for the survivor.

## **Tier 2: Extra Measures**

### Prevention:

- Require written application for volunteers working with minors.
- Require members or attendees to be actively involved for six months before serving minors is permitted.
- Review law changes annually and inform leaders and volunteers of applicable changes to policies and procedures.
- Observe “Caring Well Sunday” each year. (For more information, visit [caringwell.com](http://caringwell.com) and the SBC calendar of events.)

### Monitoring:

- Volunteer safety team and/or paid uniform officers present.
- Manned check-in stations for parents.
- Only parents and approved volunteers are allowed in areas where minors are being supervised.

### Response:

- Up-to-date list of local law enforcement and other authorities on hand and distributed to leaders.
- Detailed reporting process given to all leaders.

## **Tier 3: Strongest Measures**

### Prevention:

- Require leaders to provide character references and speak with those references.
- Utilize local DHR/Child Advocacy Center personnel to provide further training for leaders and volunteers.

### Monitoring:

- Cameras monitoring all public spaces and classrooms.
- Adults are not permitted to use designated restrooms for children.

### Response:

- Form, equip, and empower a sexual abuse task force liaison team.

## Best Practices - Prevention: Before Ministry Happens

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### 1. Review existing policies.

a. It is highly recommended each Alabama Baptist Church consults with their insurance company to receive a sample policy for the construction of its church policies and procedures. Your insurance company would prefer to support you as you embark on policy building.

### 2. Complete background checks and applications with references for staff and/or volunteers who work with those 18 years and younger.

a. Written Application Form - This written application should have at a minimum the applicant's name, address, the names of other organizations where the applicant has worked or been a volunteer, a full explanation of any prior criminal convictions and the names of two or more references with contact information. Written applications are suggested for all staff members and volunteers having custody or supervision of minors.

b. Confirm Identity - If an applicant is unknown to you then require the applicant to provide photographic identification (such as a state driver's license).

c. Contact References - Contact each person and organization listed as a reference on the written application and request a written reference from those contacted. IF possible, obtain the names of other people who know the applicant that are not listed as references and contact them.

d. Background Checks - There are numerous companies that provide criminal background checks for minimal cost. It is recommended that all applicants for staff positions and those seeking volunteer opportunities which include custody or supervision of minors be subject to a background check before beginning their work.

It is further recommended that Alabama Baptist churches utilize the Alabama Department of Human Resources for background checking criminal and sexual abuse crimes. The request form may be found at -

[dhr.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/form1598.pdf](http://dhr.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/form1598.pdf)

This form must be filled out in paper form and presented to DHR at least 90 days in advance of when the information is needed. Instructions for filling out the form can be found at:

[dhr.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Form-1598-B-Instructions.pdf](http://dhr.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Form-1598-B-Instructions.pdf)

## Best Practices - Prevention: Before Ministry Happens

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Additional background check options: educational background, employment history, motor vehicle records, social security number, credit history and professional licenses; certifications could apply depending on the position applied for.

Six Month Rule: Alabama Baptist churches and ministries may reduce the risk of incidents of sexual abuse by adopting a policy restricting eligibility for any position or volunteer activity involving the custody and control of minors for a period of time, such as 6 months. This policy gives the church or ministry a greater opportunity to evaluate and observe applicants. This waiting period would also serve to repel those seeking immediate access to the vulnerable groups.

### 3. Church Membership

While membership requirements and expectations vary in Alabama Baptist churches, it would be a wise practice to be sure that those who desire to volunteer have met all the standards of membership your church has established (i.e. attended and completed the membership class, met with the pastor or staff or volunteer leader of the ministry they desire to be involved with, especially as it pertains to minors, etc.).

### 4. Training Staff and Volunteers

a. Require all ministerial staff and volunteers, who work with minors or adults vulnerable to abuse to be educated and trained in the areas of sexual abuse prevention, identification, and care. Training is the key and should include awareness training of how predators select and groom victims. Examples of training are: [ministriesafe.com](http://ministriesafe.com); [caringwell.com](http://caringwell.com).

b. Utilize local leaders such as: Sheriff, DHR, Child Advocacy Center, and Local Trauma-Informed Counseling Center to counsel and train leaders and volunteers on the process of mandated reporting. These local leaders would also be an excellent resource for helping you become more aware of the issue of child and sexual abuse in your community.

c. Meet in person to review policies with leaders and volunteers annually, including:

- Code of Conduct (in person and social media)
- Defining appropriate interactions
- Reporting procedures

## **Best Practices - Prevention: Before Ministry Happens**

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### **5. Shadowing**

a. If possible, new volunteers should shadow experienced staff/volunteers for a period of time (2-4 week minimum) before they are ready to serve without supervision. This allows for opportunities to observe new volunteer's behavior and ascertain his/her readiness to serve within a ministry.

b. At a minimum, experienced staff/volunteers should regularly move through ministry areas that include minors and adult populations vulnerable to abuse, to establish presence and to observe interactions between staff/volunteers and ministry participants.

### **6. Sexual Abuse Recognition, Lament, and Healing Day**

a. Observe "Caring Well" Sunday. (For more information, visit [caringwell.com](http://caringwell.com) and the SBC calendar of events.)

b. Perhaps host a day inviting sexual abuse survivors to attend your church and talk with them. Invite their thoughts and suggestions as best practices are built in your church. In doing this, survivors could see how much the church cares about them, cover them with Scripture and support, hoping to develop care for survivors long-term.



# Best Practices - Monitoring: During Ministry

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## 1. Observation

- If you observe suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations immediately report your observations to your leader.
- Interrupt the behavior immediately.
- Report to the ministry leader, supervisor, director or other authority.
- Reports can be made anonymously.
- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of leadership.
- Document the report.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

## 2. Volunteer Safety Policies and Practices

**Children Check In/Out Policy** - Ensure children are only allowed to leave with an approved adult.

**Hall Monitor Policy** - Designate a volunteer to circulate throughout the building during service times to ensure that no adults are alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable persons.

**Two-Deep Policy** - If possible, require at least two adults (not related) to be present when a child, youth, or vulnerable person is present in all circumstances. Volunteers under the age of 18 do not count towards this rule because background checks cannot not be efficiently conducted.

**“Know Your Church” Policy** - A volunteer should be known to your church for a specified length of time and by a specified number of leaders in order to be eligible to volunteer. However, this rule should not be used as a substitute for adequate screening.

**Respect for a Child’s Privacy Policy** - Ensure that children, youth, and vulnerable persons are guaranteed privacy when they are changing clothes or going to the restroom. Children should be supervised by sound while in the restroom. The number of children in the restroom should correspond to the number of stalls in the restroom. Adults may not enter the restroom with a child alone. If a child needs assistance, volunteers should stand at the door and offer help with another volunteer observing. The CDC guidelines for diapering should be prominently displayed and followed. This applies to giving them privacy from both adults and minors. Not only should privacy maintained in the church setting, but also at off-site activities like retreats and church camps

## Best Practices - Monitoring: During Ministry

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**Open Doors Policy** - Have an open-doors policy at your church (unless the door is outfitted with a full window). This applies to all doors, not just doors in the children and youth areas. This protects private areas that could easily be utilized for abuse while still allowing for confidential, but not secluded conversations.

**No Sexual Jokes or Behaviors Policy** - It is never appropriate to permit anyone to engage in sexual jokes, innuendo, or behaviors. This is just one more avenue that predators can use to groom and begin to break down the defenses of the community.

**Transportation Policy** - It is important to establish a policy with respect to transportation to and from church events to prevent one-on-one settings and opportunities for predators to gain access to victims under the guise of being “helpful” and offering rides. Persons who drive church owned or privately-owned vehicles for church business or events must maintain a valid Alabama driver’s license and provide proof of insurance.

**Online/Social Media Policy** - Social media policies should include all online and mobile platforms and should specifically address all forms of communication involving minors or vulnerable adults. These policies should be published, clearly communicated, and updated regularly as online and social media options change. An excellent template for social media policies can be found at [www.churchmarketinguniversity.com/social-media-policies-churches-ministries](http://www.churchmarketinguniversity.com/social-media-policies-churches-ministries)

**Overnight Policy** - The two-deep policy should be followed for all overnight activities. Additionally, chaperones should be provided for each gender and, if possible, children, youth, and vulnerable persons should not share a bed with an unrelated person. All chaperones should be thoroughly vetted and have completed current background checks. Further church resources, including sample policies and procedures, can be found at: [www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/publications/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/](http://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/publications/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/)

## Best Practices - Response: Critical Response & Care

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Church leaders are often called to the difficult and sensitive task of shepherding survivors through the devastation of abuse. Our hope is that this information will aid church leadership among Alabama Baptists with a biblically-grounded, survivor-centered approach to responding to disclosures of alleged sexual assault, abuse, and/or domestic violence.

(Survivor Advocacy Supplement)

### **A. Reporting abuse when the survivor is a child, teenager, or vulnerable adult.**

While pastors have the responsibility to protect and ensure the safety of victims regardless of the age or capacity of the person being harmed, the responsibility they have to the civil authority changes depending on the age of the victim. When the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult, the following guidelines are critical.

#### **1. Reporting to Civil Authorities**

Reporting to civil authorities is **MANDATED** in Alabama when the survivor is a minor or vulnerable adult.

#### **Who Must Report?**

- Every staff member or church leader who has reason to believe, has observed, or has been told that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused is mandated by law to report suspected abuse.
- Failure to report is a misdemeanor.
- A person reporting in good faith will not be held criminally liable.
- The name of the person reporting can be kept confidential.

#### **When to Report?**

- A report should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused, neglected, or is in danger of being abused.
- These investigations are handled by the Alabama Department of Human Resources.
- When determined that a crime may have been committed, Alabama Department of Human Resources will work with law enforcement.

## Best Practices - Response: Critical Response & Care

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### Facts about Reporting to Alabama Department of Human Resources:

- Understand that it is the law to immediately report any allegation of abuse.
- It is not the church leader's responsibility to determine the validity of the claims.
- Church leaders often hesitate to report allegations of abuse for fears of damaging relationships with members of the congregation or making a false report. Neither of these concerns should prevent individuals from following the law and putting survivors or potential survivors first.
- Church leadership can immediately shift its focus to survivor care and safety of the church body.

### B. Reporting Abuse for Able-Bodied Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse or Domestic Violence

While there are many types of domestic abuse including verbal, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse, our purpose here is to deal primarily with illegal domestic abuse.

Adult survivors of sexual abuse and domestic violence usually disclose to church leadership because of pre-existing relationship, an expected level of trust with her or his church, and the need for support and care. We must be good stewards of this trust and responsibility.

#### Reporting Domestic Abuse:

- Reporting abuse to law enforcement is the able-bodied adult's choice. **Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-650-6522**
- Allowing the able-bodied adult survivor to choose to report or not restores the survivor's voice.
- The decision to take legal action against an abuser is difficult and one that should be made under advisement from a counselor or abuse advocate who has experience with abuse cases.

#### Regarding Disclosures of Sexual Abuse:

- Survivors have most likely been threatened not to tell.
- Survivors often experience great shame.
- Survivors fear what they will have to endure if they tell someone.
- Survivors fear that they won't be believed.

## Best Practices - Response: Critical Response & Care

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### Disclosures of Domestic Violence:

- Survivors often bring their story to a pastor or church leader they trust only after seeking counseling repeatedly, reading every marriage book, and praying fiercely for change and relief (Is It Abuse?, Strickland, 105).
- Survivors know something is terribly wrong but may fail to even recognize that the oppression they have experienced is abuse.
- Survivors may even defend the abuser and blame themselves.

### **DO NOT Investigate the allegations; believe the adult survivor:**

- You may find it hard to imagine what the survivor is alleging—especially if the alleged abuser’s public presentation is deceptive.
- The survivor may even tell an incoherent story and use language that is not normally used in a church setting.
- Regardless of your underlying assumptions, a survivor’s small disclosures should sound a warning signal.

**DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE DANGER FACING A SURVIVOR AND A SURVIVOR’S CHILDREN. YOU MUST TAKE THE ABUSE SERIOUSLY, TAKING CARE NOT TO PUT ANYONE IN THE PATH OF MORE DANGER.**

### **After disclosure, avoid unintended re-victimization of the adult survivor:**

- After initial disclosure, church leadership should in no way investigate, question, or seek to find any other information from the survivor.
- Church leadership should not request or require the survivor to disclose to a different audience, elders, deacons, other church members, police, etc.). Again, it is the able-bodied adult survivor’s choice whether or not to report.
- The survivor has disclosed something very sensitive, and questioning can often infer disbelief or blame.

**AFTER A DISCLOSURE, A CHURCH LEADER SHOULD BECOME A COMFORTER AND PROTECTOR.**

## Best Practices - Response: Critical Response & Care

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### C. Further Steps When the Accused Is a Pastor or Church Leader

1. If the abuse is against a minor or vulnerable adult, the abuse is illegal. Report to your local Alabama Department of Human Resources immediately.
2. If the abuser of a minor is a minister or church leader, the abuse should be reported to your associational missionary.
3. The SBC Hotline for reporting abuse by pastors, church employees, or church volunteers can be reached directly at: (202) 864-5578
4. Put the minister, employee, or volunteer on a leave of absence. Though every person in “innocent until proven guilty” in our legal system, when reports of abuse are levied against a church leader, that person should be placed on a leave of absence until the legal process is complete.
5. Confiscate church technology from the alleged abuser immediately. Though private property cannot be confiscated, any technology owned by the church can be reclaimed. This step prevents altering or deleting any of the information relevant to the investigation. Law enforcement may want to review these items as well.

**AT ANY TIME, IF OUR ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS  
CAN BE OF ASSISTANCE IN THESE EFFORTS,  
PLEASE CONTACT US AT: (800) 264-1225**

## **Best Practices - Conclusion: Ongoing Response Assessment and Accountability**

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We must remember that we are just getting started in trying to achieve reform and improvement in our response to abuse in our local churches. We are making significant changes in the way we think, react and make efforts to intentionally prevent child abuse and abuse of any form. The new reality is that we must come to grips with the fact that we are going to have to follow these steps for as long as we exist. As a result, we must maintain our commitment to these regular routines of ministry. Here are some suggestions on how we will do this:

- Renew background checks and training certifications at least annually.
- Participate in and provide additional abuse-related training on a regular basis when offered through the Alabama Baptist State Convention or other trustworthy providers.
- Consider organizing a “Care Team” for the purposes of continually walking alongside survivors within the church. Continually assess the church’s strength and weaknesses in abuse prevention and care.
- Utilize trustworthy local partnerships when possible. This might include the Sheriff, Department of Human Resources, local Child Advocacy Center, District Attorney, Probate Judge, and local trauma-informed counselors, or others with expertise in abuse and prevention care.

**THE GOAL OF THE CHURCH’S RESPONSE TO ABUSE IS TO CARE FOR THE SURVIVOR(S) AND ULTIMATELY, TO INTEGRATE THE SURVIVOR(S) INTO THE CHURCH BODY FOR CONTINUED HEALING AND GROWTH.**

## Supplement 01

### Written Applications for Employees and Volunteers

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A written application allows you to gain a lot of information about a person in an efficient manner. The application should contain the standard questions necessary to run a background check, including the applicant's:

- Full Name (including middle name)
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Current Address
- Current Phone Number
- Email Address

In addition, you should also consider asking questions relevant to the potential employee's job duties or the volunteer's position, including providing information about past employment, past church involvement, and past or present volunteer work. You should also ask for at least two relevant references.

Some additional potential questions (from [Caring Well](#)):

- Please provide a short written testimony including what the Lord has done in your life up to this point.
- What Christian accountability do you have in your life?
- How long have you been attending our (the) church?
- Are you in agreement with the church's statement of faith? If not, explain.
- Why do you wish to serve in this role?
- Please list all experience you have working with children/youth. Include any paid positions, babysitting, volunteer positions, summer jobs, camps, or church work. Please provide start date, reason for leaving, position and responsibilities, supervisor, and contact information.
- Have you ever been suspended, asked to leave, or fired from a job? If yes, please explain.
- Have you ever been suspended or expelled from high school or college? If yes, please explain. (This would be for potential youth and young adult workers).
- Have you ever abused alcohol or drugs? If yes, please explain.
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Please list date and nature of offense. Answering "yes" to this question does not automatically disqualify you from service.



## Supplement 01

### Written Applications for Employees and Volunteers

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- Have you ever been arrested for, charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to a crime? If yes, please fully explain with dates and nature of offense. Answering “yes” to this question does not automatically disqualify you from service.
- Have you ever been accused of hurting or abusing a child?
- Have you ever participated in or been accused of abuse or sexual misconduct, including but not limited to conduct involving physical abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or child pornography? If yes, please explain.
- Have you ever been named as a defendant in a civil lawsuit involving allegations of abuse, including but not limited to conduct involving physical abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, or child pornography? If yes, please explain fully.
- Have you ever been asked to step down from a position of leadership in a church? If yes, please explain the time frame and details.
- Describe an area where you need improvement or is challenging for you in working with children or youth.
- Are you aware of any traits or tendencies you possess that could pose any threat to children, youth, or adults with disabilities?
- Are there any experiences in your life that would make it difficult for you to receive an abuse disclosure from a child or student in our ministry? We want to be supportive of any child who has the courage to speak with a volunteer leader in our church and we want to be sensitive to the leaders for whom it may be emotionally disruptive to receive disclosure.
- What characteristics do you possess that make you a good fit for working with children/youth?

At the end of the application, you should ask for the applicant’s written permission to check all previous employment, other volunteer positions, and references, including references not listed by the applicant.

## Supplement 02

### Background Check Guidelines

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Background checks must be done on all employees and volunteers on a regular interval (every 1 or 2 years). Background checks are critical, but they are never a guarantee that a person is safe. Very few cases of sexual abuse are ever reported or prosecuted, so a background check is not likely to uncover potential bad actors unless they are in the very small minority of perpetrators who have been caught, tried, convicted, and have not pled down to a lesser sentence. While it is necessary to complete a background check, it should never be your only screening mechanism.

When choosing a background check provider, it is important to choose a provider that includes the following:

- A social security number verification to validate identity, other names, and develop an address history.
- A multi-state or national criminal database search and county criminal search.
- A check of the National Registry of Sex Offenders
- The scope of the search should be as far back as the records allow.
- The service should provide real-time arrest alerts, which notify you anytime that the person is arrested in the future.

The following is a list of service providers whose services are compliant with the above standards:

- MinistrySafe, [www.ministrysafe.com](http://www.ministrysafe.com), (833) 737-7233
- Protect My Ministry (Plus Package), [www.protectmyministry.com](http://www.protectmyministry.com), (800) 319-5581
- Shield Checks, [www.shieldscreening.com](http://www.shieldscreening.com), (800) 260-3738
- Trak-1 Checks, [www.trak-1.com](http://www.trak-1.com), (800) 600-8999

Do not use the following types of agencies, companies, or individuals to run your background checks:

- Local, county, or state law enforcement agencies (they rarely do a national search).
- Budget (cost-friendly) providers found through a Google search.
- Friends of church members who have a connection to law enforcement or who can “get you a deal.”

## Supplement 02

### Background Check Guidelines

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- There are no shortcuts to performing a quality, thorough background check. Remember, the background check is only one mechanism in vetting and verifying a candidate for employment, and it is not perfect. You want to do a background check that will be the most informational and helpful to you.

Alabama Baptists currently reimburses \$200 of the \$250 MinistrySafe subscription for cooperating churches. To apply for reimbursement, please contact the State Board of Missions 800-264-1225.

In addition to utilizing a background check provider, churches should also consult the Southern Baptist Convention “Ministry Check” website (once available) for credible accusations of abuse that may not be revealed through a background check.

Each church should decide beforehand what types of offenses are acceptable and unacceptable for church service and adhere to the same set of policies for each employee and volunteer. Here are some examples of what might be considered **red** flag or **yellow** flag offenses:

#### **Red Flag Offenses**

**(People who have committed these offenses should not be employed by, or allowed to volunteer in, the church)**

- Providing alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or pornography to a minor
- Voyeurism (Peeping Tom)
- Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
- Criminal solicitation of a minor
- Public indecency
- Exhibitionism (flashing)
- Assault
- Sexual Assault (or any crime that is sexual in nature)
- Homicide
- False Imprisonment
- Kidnapping
- Injury to a child/elderly individual/disabled individual
- Abandoning or endangering a child

## Supplement 02

### Background Check Guidelines

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- Leaving a child in a vehicle
- Matters related to interference with child custody
- Failure to stop or report the aggravated sexual assault of a child

#### Yellow Flag Offenses

(Additional screening should be done to determine compatibility with church policy)

- Driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated
- Possession/Distribution of a controlled substance
- Making a firearm accessible to a child
- Theft, including identity theft

## Supplement 03

### Reference Check Guidelines

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**Reference Check:** Reference checks are one of the most important tools when screening for new employees or selecting volunteers. However, references are not helpful unless you follow through and talk to the references. A reference check should always occur prior to hiring or volunteer service.

Consider asking the potential employee or volunteer for a list of current and previous employers, volunteer supervisors, and personal references as a part of a written application (see Supplement 01: Written Applications for Employees and Volunteers) or as a separate document (see sample reference release form).

You should view references as data points that help verify the person is who they say they are and that they do not have any concerning behavior from previous employment or ministry service. Employment references should be verified for accuracy and job performance. Other churches or ministries where the applicant has served should be contacted regarding those positions and the individual's interactions with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons should be discussed. If after checking the provided references you have reservations, consider speaking with someone from a previous church not listed by the potential employee or volunteer as a reference.

#### REFERENCE CHECKS

Other churches or ministries where the applicant has served should be contacted regarding those positions and the individual's interaction with children and students. It can also be helpful to obtain a reference from a past church, a family member, or at least one person of the opposite sex. Some questions that may be informative while interviewing references are as follows:

- Please verify the position, responsibilities, and start and end date of the applicant.
- What was your relationship with the applicant, and how long did you know him/her?
- Please describe the applicant's interaction with children/students.
- Please describe the applicant's interaction with supervisors and those in authority.
- What strengths does the applicant possess in working with children/students?
- What weaknesses or challenges did the applicant have in working with children/students?
- Have you ever seen the applicant push boundaries or break policies?

## Supplement 03

### Reference Check Guidelines

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- **Do you have any hesitancy in recommending this applicant to work with children/students?**
- **Would your organization hire this person again, given the opportunity?**

It is crucial to be persistent in following up with references, because some references may be reluctant to share negative information with prospective employers. Follow up with the reference by phone. Be sure to keep a record of the recommendation in a permanent file.

Be sure, when checking references, to note and follow up on discrepancies between information given by an applicant and by references.

Job applicants may sometimes be uncomfortable with their current employer being contacted as they may not want their current employer to know they are looking for another position. If that is the case, you may postpone contacting their current employer, but as the process continues and you seek to hire the applicant, the employer should be contacted for a reference before hiring the individual.

Some employers and organizations may be reluctant to share information about past employees or volunteers out of a fear of liability or defamation. One option for relieving these concerns and ensuring you receive full and candid information from references about applicants is to ask the applicant to sign a reference release form. This form protects references, past employers, and organizations with which the employer has been involved.

We are providing a template release that can be used as a part of your application materials. You should consult with an attorney in your area/community before using this form, but this form has been reviewed.

## Supplement 04

### Interview Guidelines

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**Interview:** An interview is a time to be face to face with the potential employee or volunteer. Direct questions about prior jobs and volunteer service may be helpful. It is also a time for you to educate the applicant about your church, ministry areas, and safety policies and practices. You should ask the potential employee or volunteer if they have any questions or concerns about the safety policies and practices. The applicant's reaction may be a helpful indicator of the level of buy-in the applicant has regarding the safety policies and practices. See Interview Guidelines.

Predators look for soft targets. By addressing the safety policies and practices in an interview, your church will send a clear message about the value the church places on keeping people safe from abuse. At the same time, you are learning more about the potential employee or volunteer and whether they are a good fit from the perspective of beliefs, background, safety, experience, demeanor, and responsibility.

It is best to ask open-ended questions in an interview.

#### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please consult an employment attorney in your community/area to review the language of your application and interview questions. Make sure the application and interview questions are in keeping with the State of Alabama Employment Laws. Your church should ensure that your practices do not violate the laws of Alabama.

- **What makes you desire to serve with our organization?** Be aware of answers that focus on the applicant and what they gain from the situation rather than on serving the children. Answers such as, "Working with children makes me feel fulfilled," may be a red flag. Follow up to see if they have the children's interest at heart or if they are seeking to have their own interests fulfilled by working with children.
- **Is there an age group of children you prefer to work with? If so, why?** Are they willing to work with any age group or sex? Do they have a preoccupation with a specific type of child? If they have a specific group in mind, follow up and ask, "Would you be willing to work with a different age-group?"
- **What sort of supervisors do you work well with and what sort of supervisors are difficult for you?** Do they express a desire for independence and a distaste for oversight?

## Supplement 04

### Interview Guidelines

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- **Have you reviewed our child protection policies? What did you think of them?**  
Applicants who do not believe the policies are necessary or who communicate a hesitancy to abide by the policy may not be child abusers but they are also less likely to be vigilant in keeping children safe.
- **Is there anything in your past we should know about as we consider you for this position?** Though someone with accusations or criminal behavior in the past may not share, it is helpful to ask and communicates to a past offender that you will be vigilant in protecting the children in your care.
- **Would anyone be concerned about you working with children or students? Why or why not?** Like the question above, this gives them an opportunity to share concerning information with you, but also communicates you will be vigilant about protecting the children in your care.
- **What would you do if a student expressed to you a hesitancy to be around another employee or volunteer or a dislike for that individual?** You could use a number of other scenarios in place of this one. What you are looking for in offering a scenario like this one is the applicant's response to potential concerns and awareness of grooming. Children will often make a partial disclosure or make a small comment to see if an adult is safe to disclose the abuse to. A question like this allows you to see how an applicant would respond and to train applicants to recognize grooming or partial disclosures if they do serve with your organization.
- **One day, you walk through the hall and find a child alone with a teacher in a classroom behind a closed door. When you come in, the teacher says that the child was misbehaving and needed to be corrected in private. Nothing appears to be going on that is inappropriate. The teacher says they are ready to rejoin the others. What would you do?** This scenario allows you observe if the applicant will follow the policies and procedures you have in place. If there is a disregard for observing policies and procedures, that attitude will put children and students in your care at risk.
- **You notice bruises up and down the legs of one of your students. When you ask what happened the child gets teary eyed and says his dad whipped him. Under or policies, would you report this to the authorities?** If the candidate says he wouldn't report it right away but would investigate the matter, speak to the father, or otherwise fail to follow your mandated reporting policies, he or she is not a good candidate.
- **What do you like to do with your free time?** This question allows you to get to know the applicant. Do they have adult friendships? Do they have other interests besides working with youth?



## Supplement 04

### Interview Guidelines

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During the interview, it is helpful to have at least two trained personnel interview the applicant. This allows for multiple things to happen at once: asking questions, observing non-verbals, listening to answers, recording responses, and having more than one person's assessment. Watch for inconsistencies or evasive responses in the interview that could indicate defensive behavior or deception.

As either part of the written application or a written portion of the interview, review key parts of your policy, and have the applicant affirm and initial the applicant's commitment to and awareness of policy. Some examples of statements for the applicant to review, initial, and ascribe to are:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received and read a copy of (the church's) child protection policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will protect children/students and will never engage in any behavior that is dangerous or will harm them physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will immediately report any inappropriate behavior that I observe or hear about regarding children/students and violations of the child protection policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will report any known or suspected abuse that I observe or hear about to church leadership and government authorities.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will abide by all terms of the child protection policy, and if I have any questions, I will ask for clarity.

## Supplement 05

### Internet and Social Media Check Guidelines

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In an era in which most people have an online presence, it is helpful to review and applicant's online information for red flags or any content that could indicate improper behavior. A general Google search may yield helpful information. Are there any news articles written that include their name.

By searching the applicant online, you may be able to ascertain what the applicant values, their level of discernment, and how they interact with children/students. Red flags that are often found on social media are inappropriate pictures, suggestive or even explicit comments, and excessive commenting and interest in children or students by someone older. You may find some of these red flags, or you may come across other information that indicates this person is not a good fit for ministry service.

#### Some Questions to Consider:

- Do the applicant's posts contain language/content that would be deemed inappropriate for a volunteer/staff serving with minors in a church setting?
- Who are the applicant's friends? Does that raise a red flag? For example, if the applicant is in his 30s or 40s and a large portion of his friends are young teenage boys, this might be a red flag.
- What sites is the applicant affiliated with? Are the movies, music and other items of interest on their social media telling in some way?

All of these items provide a profile of the applicant's personal life that help to determine if the applicant is the type of person the church would consider to be a positive influence for minors.

Potential inappropriate social media posts could include:

- Inappropriate pictures
- Suggestive or explicit comments or affiliations
- Language or content that would be deemed inappropriate for service in a church setting

This list of things to consider applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether hosted by (your church) or hosted by others. "Social media" refers to social networking services, short-message services, message boards, podcasts, image/video sharing sites and other methods for sharing real time information among users.

## **Supplement 05**

### **Internet and Social Media Check Guidelines**

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Due to the ever-changing speed of social media, this policy applies to all new social media platforms, whether or not they are mentioned. All social media platforms are relevant and included.

**\*\*NOTE:** These are suggestions. Your organization is responsible for compliance with all applicable laws. Accordingly, this sample (suggestion) should not be used or adopted by your organization without first being reviewed extensively by an attorney. The Alabama Baptist State Convention assumes no liability in connection with the use or distribution of these suggestions.

## Supplement 06

### Domestic Violence Safety Plan

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#### 1. Danger Assessment for Domestic Violence Victims

- Help domestic violence victims recognize danger.
- Help a victim develop a safety plan for herself and her children.
- If she wants to go to law enforcement, aid her in these efforts.

**VICTIMS ARE ENCOURAGED TO WORK WITH EXPERTS EVEN IF THE EXPERTS AREN'T BELIEVERS. THESE "PERSONS OF PEACE" CAN BE ASSETS, JUST LIKE THE NON-BELIEVERS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES WHO WORK ALONGSIDE MISSIONARIES (Hambrick, 28).**

- Local Law Enforcement: \_\_\_\_\_
- District Attorney's Office: \_\_\_\_\_
- Abuse advocacy Organizations: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOLLOW THE ACRONYM "DANGEROUS" TO ASSESS FOR COMMON RISK FACTORS OF VIOLENCE IN YOUR LIFE.** The following are nine indicators that increase your risk of danger. Check all that apply.

- **D**ivorce or Separation
- **A**lcohol or Drug Use
- **N**arcissistic tendencies or disordered personality of the abuser
- **G**uns or weapons in the home.
- **E**ntitled attitudes and behaviors
- **R**ebellious—history of being unwilling to obey authority figures
- **O**ther history of violent behavior
- **U**nstable mental health history
- **S**uicidal or homicidal threats history

## **Supplement 06**

### **Domestic Violence Safety Plan**

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#### **Important Phone Numbers:**

Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-650-6522

Local Police -

Local Shelter -

Work -

Work supervisor -

Doctor -

Attorney -

#### **Resources for Developing a Domestic Violence Safety Plan:**

[www.alabamalegalhelp.org](http://www.alabamalegalhelp.org)

[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

[www.dhr.alabama.gov](http://www.dhr.alabama.gov)

[www.alabamapublichealth.gov](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov)

# Supplement 07

## Sample Authorization and Release Form

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I authorize and request the companies, ministries, and organizations identified on Exhibit A (the Organizations), including any members of the Organizations, to share with [Your church or Ministry's Name] (the Church) information and opinions of any kind related to my employment, volunteer work, or other service with the Organizations.

I release the Organizations and their members from any restrictions which might otherwise make the information or opinions confidential or privileged.

I also release the Organizations, their members, and the Church from any liability and any claim for damages I might have because of this request for information and opinions, or because of the information and opinions which are shared because of this request.

I understand that the Church is considering me for a position of ministry. I am giving permission to the Organizations and their members to share information and opinions of a religious and ecclesiastical nature arising out of my previous ministry.

I have read this Authorization and Release Form and had the option and opportunity to consult with my attorney about it. I am signing this Authorization and Release Form willingly and with full understanding that I am waiving some of my legal rights.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_ Name of Applicant (Printed)

Exhibit A: List of Reference Organizations

**Organization Name, Supervisor, Contact Address, Email, Phone Number**

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## Supplement 08

### Helpful Definitions

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**“Church Leadership”** is the term used in this document to refer to the intended audience for these materials and instructions. “Church Leadership,” depending on your church’s structure, could apply to the following: pastors, directors of various ministries (children’s ministry, youth ministry, women’s ministry, discipleship ministry, etc.), elders, deacons, or other governing bodies. **THE RECOMMENDATION IS TO SHARE THIS MATERIAL WITH ANYONE WITHIN YOUR CONGREGATION THAT MAY RECEIVE DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE FROM A SURVIVOR.**

**“Disclosure”** is a term used to describe the action of making a fact known, especially a secret. When an adult or child reports his or her abuse, it is called a disclosure. A disclosure may be intentional, when the survivor makes the decision to tell someone about their abuse, or in the case of children, the disclosure may be accidental. Accidental or unintentional disclosures can manifest through role play, drawings, or a display of sexual behaviors that is inappropriate for the child’s developmental age or stage.

**“Minor”** is the term used to refer to any child, age birth to 18 years old.

**“Vulnerable Adult”** is the term used to refer to any disabled adult, elderly person with limited or impaired decision-making abilities, or adult under the custodial responsibility of another adult.

**“Sexual Abuse”** is an umbrella term that is used to cover the following:

- **Sexual Assault:** illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
  - Sexual assault involving a minor or vulnerable adult includes any sexual activity between an adult and a child/vulnerable adult for the purpose of sexually stimulating the adult, the child or others.
  - Sexual assault may also be committed by/to a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the survivor or is in a position of power or control over the child.
- **Sexual Harassment:** uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate.

## Supplement 08

### Helpful Definitions

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- **Sexual Abuse of Power:** when a church leader is abusive in their role as a pastor or ministry leader, the power differential between that church member and the church leader makes the consent language of “having an affair” inaccurate in most cases. The more accurate language is “sexualized abuse of power.” (Hambrick, 153)

“**Domestic Abuse**” is a term used to describe abuse that occurs in a marriage or intimate relationship when one spouse or partner pursues their own self-interests by seeking to control and dominate the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviors.

“**Child Abuse**” is a term defined by Alabama statutes as harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child, which includes non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or neglect.

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE** is non-accidental physical injury to a child.
- **MENTAL INJURY** is an injury to a child’s psychological growth and development. It is caused by a chronic pattern of behaviors, such as belittling, humiliating, and ridiculing a child.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE** in general terms, includes any sexual activity between an adult and a child for the purpose of sexually stimulating the adult, the child or others. Sexual abuse may also be committed by/to a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the survivor or is in a position of power or control over the child.
- **NEGLECT** is the failure of the parent or caretaker to provide a child with the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, protection and supervision.
- **THREATENED HARM** means a substantial risk of harm to the child. It may include acts that express the intention to inflict actual harm presently or in the future.

“**Forensic Interviewing**” is a term used to describe the means of gathering information from a survivor or witness for use in a legal setting, such as a court hearing. It is a key component of many child protective services investigations. The purpose of these interviews is to gather factual information in a legally defensible and developmentally appropriate manner about whether a child (or other person) has been abused. Forensic interviews are conducted by trained professionals, including child welfare caseworkers, law enforcement, and specialized forensic interviewers at child advocacy centers



## Supplement 08

### Helpful Definitions

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**“Stalking”** is a term that refers to the action of willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly following the survivor, which causes him or her to feel frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested.

**“Harassment”** is an action that causes another person distress. This can include following a survivor, sending or leaving things at his or her home or workplace, or calling his or her in order to cause distress.

#### **IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT, TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTION:**

- Contact the Alabama Child Abuse Hotline: 800-422-4453
- Contact your County DHR Office
- If the child is in imminent danger, contact 911 or your local law enforcement.
- If reporting in good faith, the reporter will not be held liable and will remain confidential.

## Supplement 09

### Survivor Advocacy

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Often abuse survivors will talk to church leaders first because of a pre-existing relationship of trust. We want to be good stewards of that trust.

We recognize that as pastors preach about holiness and sin, justice, and perfect love, a pastor's response to abuse will become intertwined with a survivor's understanding of the gospel.

To foster continued trust and honor the survivor's courage to come forward, we must handle disclosures of abuse with great care. It is so important to believe the survivor. **WE TAKE THE POSTURE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7, "LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS" UNTIL THERE IS EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY.**

#### **BEGIN WITH THE FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SURVIVOR ADVOCACY:**

- **SAFETY FIRST** - Attending to the survivor's immediate safety is the priority.
- **"DO NO HARM"** - Ensure that no additional harm comes to the survivor. Additional harm occurs when we do not believe the survivor or imply that the survivor is to blame.
- **EMPOWER** - Abuse is about denying a survivor power and control. Allow the survivor to reclaim control over his/her own decisions, opinions, actions, goals, and future.
- **TRAUMA-INFORMED** - Sexual assault and domestic violence are complex and traumatic events. Focus on "What has happened to the person?" not "What is wrong with the person?"
- **CONFIDENTIALITY** - Protect confidentiality, which is critically linked to safety and justice for the survivor.

(These suggestions are adapted from the "Crisis Line Handbook" provided by the Centers for Disease Control Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, pages 10-22).

#### **THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF SURVIVOR ADVOCACY**

The following Do's and Don'ts" is not an exhaustive list. We encourage church leaders to do more research regarding these best practices.

## Supplement 09

### Survivor Advocacy

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#### FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES IN SURVIVOR ADVOCACY

##### What to Do:

- Listen with compassion, talk little.
- Make sure the survivor feels heard, believed, and safe.
- Take notes, do not ask for details.
- Explore needed resources, refer them to experts.
- Plan a time to reconnect.

##### What Not to Do:

- Do NOT investigate the validity of the claims. Allow experts to determine legitimacy of the claims.
- Do NOT engage the abuser. This can be very dangerous for the survivor.
- Do NOT make any decisions for the survivor.
- Do NOT point out sin or blame the survivor in any way.
- Do NOT reframe the situation into “What God is doing.”
- Do NOT question children or lead them during a disclosure in any way.

(These suggestions are adapted from *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*, “Lesson 3: Ministry Responsibilities”).

## Supplement 10

# Template for a Local Sexual Abuse Prevention Symposium

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### Importance of the Work

None of us want to have to deal with the subject of sexual abuse prevention. It grieves our hearts that it is necessary for our churches to have to prepare, protect, and be proactive against the epidemic of child abuse and abuse of all kinds.

We have to do this because according to the CDC, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience child sexual abuse. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence ([www.ncadv.org/statistics](http://www.ncadv.org/statistics)). We know that actual incidences of sexual abuse far exceed the number of reported incidences because many survivors never report their abuse. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, out of every 1,000 incidents of sexual abuse, only 25 abusers ever face incarceration.

Churches are not immune to these statistics. The problem is we are being thrust into this issue with little knowledge. We are trying to catch up because most of us have not really dealt with this issue before, and if we have, we most likely dealt with it properly. That is why there is a concerted effort to correct our response, as churches, to the issue of sexual abuse. That is why we are scurrying to develop best practices so that we can improve our response and be better equipped to respond when we are faced with this issue.

Let's be reminded that:

- It is clear sin for anyone to use their power to mistreat people made in God's image (Psalm 11:5).
- Violence against the weak and needy is abhorrent to God, and so Christians have a much higher calling than merely not abusing people (Psalm 82:4).
- As Christians, we are called not only to avoid abuse and protect people from abuse, but to refuse to conceal abuse when we know it is happening or has happened (Proverbs 10:6).
- We live in a sinful world where abuse is happening. There is a high likelihood that someone who has been abused is already a part of your congregation, no matter the size of your church. As leaders, we must be doggedly determined to care for these people who are struggling (Psalm 147:3)

**“A church that shows itself to care about the public is much more likely to lead to a public that cares about the church.” –Michael Wear**

## Supplement 10

### Template for a Local Sexual Abuse Prevention Symposium

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The area of sexual abuse prevention and protection and response to survivors is an important way we can show that we care about our community.

While I am grateful for the efforts of our Southern Baptist Convention and our Alabama Baptist State Convention to heighten our awareness and help us learn from our experiences in the past, I believe if we are going to see true and genuine reform, prevention, and protection in our churches our Associations are going to be vital and crucial.

Since serving as chair of the Alabama Baptist Sexual Abuse Advisory Task Force, the primary burden I have carried is concern for connecting with our normative size churches. Many of our larger churches have taken precautions and established policies. Several have enrolled with MinistrySafe for guidance and help. Let me say, MinistrySafe is a wonderful choice and they offer so much assistance. Our State Convention has setup scholarships that are available for any church. ALSBOM will scholarship \$200 of the \$250 enrollment fee. You can take advantage of this by going to [alsbom.org/MinistrySafe](http://alsbom.org/MinistrySafe).

However, many of our normative size churches will not choose this route, so we must find another way to connect with them. In the Etowah Baptist Association we held a Sexual Abuse Prevention Symposium that targeted our normative size churches. The idea was that if we focused on our local issues with sexual abuse we might be able to get our smaller church's attention. We assembled a panel of community leaders who deal directly with sexual abuse in our county. The good news is God favored our effort and it worked. We had over half of our normative size churches in attendance. Pastors and laypeople alike attended and they paid attention. The results have been fantastic as we have seen our churches ask for help and reach out to some of our community leaders for assistance.

Here is who we invited:

**Sheriff** - The Sheriff was able to speak to child abuse in our county. He shared how many registered sex offenders we have living in our community. He also shared what he and his deputies are doing to combat this issue in our community. The Sheriff also shared about how they address cyber abuse and pornography along with some of the methods they use to catch criminals online.

You could also invite the police chiefs of the municipalities in your county.

## Supplement 10

### Template for a Local Sexual Abuse Prevention Symposium

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**Child Advocacy Center Director (CAC)** - I realize not every county has a CAC, but most likely there is one in your region. The CAC Director can speak to the counseling aspect of abuse survivors. The CAC is directly connected to the DA's office. The CAC is the organization that does the interviews with abuse survivors. One of the most alarming things we learned was how many child abuse survivors were seen in our county in January 2023. Our local CAC set a record in January for the number of survivors they saw. The CAC Director can also speak to predatory behavior and will even come to your church and offer training for your volunteers, at no cost.

**Department of Human Resources** - DHR is helpful in explaining mandatory reporting, especially as it pertains to ministers and church volunteers. DHR can also talk about their process of removing children and placing children in a safe place. DHR can also talk about their State Sexual Abuse Registry which is one of the best tools for screening pastors, staff members and employees.

**Probate Judge** - the Probate Judge is an excellent resource for helping to understand the placement of children. He handles the foster child adoptions and can speak to the need for foster parents and homes for the survivors. He will also have other resources to assist your church with the issue of abuse of all kinds.

**Counselor** - If you have a local Christian or trauma-informed counselor in your area they are an excellent addition to your panel. They can speak to the impact abuse has on survivors. They can also speak about how to respond to a survivor of abuse, especially if they have shared their story with you. Pathways Professional Counseling through the Alabama Baptist Children's Home & Families is an excellent resource for this. You can contact them at [pathwaysprofessionals.org](http://pathwaysprofessionals.org).

**District Attorney or Assistant DA** - the District Attorney can enlighten you on the prevalence of abuse in your community by sharing how many cases he/she prosecutes in your area. You will be shocked by how much abuse is going on in your area.

## Supplement 10

### Template for a Local Sexual Abuse Prevention Symposium

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The format of the Symposium was a panel discussion. We set up chairs and tables on the platform. I served as the emcee introducing the panel and inviting them to share. What they shared opened the door for me to ask more specific questions. At the end, we opened it up for the people in attendance to ask questions. They took advantage and asked great questions. A couple of other panelists you might consider would be someone who deals with church security or a local pastor whose church has already developed and implemented policies.

I can speak first hand that if you want to connect with your normative size churches in the hopes that they will pay attention and take action, localizing and personalizing the issue to your county and community will make a difference. You can Google all the national and state statistics, but when you have someone who is on the frontlines of protecting the vulnerable in your community, no matter what age, and you hear them share the real stories and what they are doing in your neighborhoods to keep people safe, it will make a profound impact.

I truly hope that this information will be helpful to you as you lead in your Association. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (256) 328-5757 or [craigc@etowahbaptist.com](mailto:craigc@etowahbaptist.com)

Sincerely,  
Craig Carlisle  
Director of Missions  
Etowah Baptist Association  
Chair, Alabama Baptist Sexual Abuse Advisory Task Force

## CONTACT

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At any time, if our Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions can be of assistance in these efforts or answer any questions please contact us at: **(800) 264-1225**

## WORD OF THANKS

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We wish to express thanks to our sister State Conventions of Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Kentucky for allowing us to use their work in the formulation of the Alabama Baptist Abuse Prevention and Response Guide.



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