

Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Guide



ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE GUIDE

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

1 PETER 5:2-3

Sexual abuse is widespread and permeates every aspect of our society. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one out of three women and one out of four men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact. While these statistics may seem staggering, they only begin to tell the story. Actual incidences of sexual abuse far exceed the number of reported occurrences because most survivors never report their abuse. Out of every 1000 incidents of sexual abuse, only 25 abusers ever face incarceration.

Churches are not immune to these statistics, but church leaders are often overwhelmed by the scope of the problem and unsure how to implement best practices surrounding abuse prevention, abuse response, and survivor care. How can you develop policies to better protect your most vulnerable members? How can you screen and train your employees and volunteers to improve the safety and security of your ministries? What do you do when someone discloses abuse to your church leadership? How can church leaders shepherd victims through the devastation of abuse?

While the answers to these questions are complex, this guide is designed to provide general principles that can be a starting point for church leaders who are working to implement effective abuse prevention and response policies and practices.

(NOTE: The information contained in this guide is general in nature and is not intended to provide legal advice. The Mississippi Baptist Convention does not have the authority in your church to implement policies and procedures, participate in screening and hiring employees, or investigate and prosecute claims of abuse. The Mississippi Baptist Convention encourages each church to consult with legal counsel when implementing local policies and practices.)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE PATHWAY	2
TRAIN	3
SCREEN	7
PROTECT	9
REPORT	12
CARE	17
RESOURCES	20
FAQ	21
SUPPLEMENT 1: Profile of an Abuser	22
SUPPLEMENT 2: Sample Application	24
SUPPLEMENT 3: Sample Background Check	28
SUPPLEMENT 4: Chart of Providers	29
SUPPLEMENT 5: Sample Reference Check	31
SUPPLEMENT 6: Sample Interview Form	33
SUPPLEMENT 7: Internet and Social Media Check	35
SUPPLEMENT 8: Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report Form	36
SUPPLEMENT 9: Profile of a Victim	39

To help make our churches safe from abuse, we must be **proactive**. Developing policies and procedures ahead of time, training and educating staff and volunteers, as well as partnering with abuse experts will set your church up well to be a safe place for your community. It is up to the pastors and leaders of a church to lead this charge. Here is The Pathway to begin to protect your church from predators who seek to prey on the vulnerable among you and to help care for victims and survivors of abuse in your church and community.

TRAIN

“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.”
Proverbs 3:13-14

“Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.”
Proverbs 2:11

TRAIN

Proverbs 3:13-14; 2:11

SCREEN

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”
Ephesians 4:25

SCREEN

Ephesians 4:25

CARE

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
Psalm 147:3

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.”
Psalm 9:9

CARE

Psalm 147:3; 9:9

The Pathway to Prevention & Response

PROTECT

Psalm 140:4

PROTECT
“Keep me safe, Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent, who devise ways to trip my feet.”
Psalm 140:4

REPORT

Proverbs 31:8-9

REPORT
“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”
Proverbs 31:8-9

TRAIN

“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.”

“Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.”

PROVERBS 3:13-14; 2:11

Though pastors and church leaders think they are completely aware of the importance of protecting and caring for the vulnerable in their churches, the reality is sometimes they are not. Often this can be due to some common misconceptions or misunderstandings. We must understand the full scope of the problem before we can set up protection measures and proper responses to abuse. **So, we must provide initial and ongoing TRAINING for staff, volunteers, and church members that raises awareness and shares effective actions to help prevent and respond well to incidents of abuse in the church.** Let’s look at some potential cultural misconceptions and misunderstandings that often slow or stop churches from preventing and responding to abuse.

MISCONCEPTIONS/ MISUNDERSTANDINGS CHURCHES OFTEN HAVE

- ✓ This couldn’t or wouldn’t happen at their church because they know everyone.
- ✓ Criminal background checks alone are adequate.
- ✓ Sexual abuse isn’t that prevalent or that much of a problem.
- ✓ Abuse is minimized as a “mistake” that should just be forgiven and forgotten.
- ✓ They don’t know how to recognize grooming behavior/patterns in potential offenders.
- ✓ They fail to implement best practices regarding abuse prevention, response, and survivor care due to feelings of inadequacy or being overwhelmed as to where to start.

FACTS ABOUT MISCONCEPTIONS/ MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- In 2021, CPS reported on average almost 3 children were sexually abused every day in Mississippi. That translates into 1006 reported cases for the year. (Child Welfare League of America)
- 93% of child abuse victims know their perpetrators, someone they know and trust. (Department of Justice)
- Only 16% of child victims ever tell about their abuse. (National Children’s Advocacy Center)
- 90% of abusers self-identify as ‘religious’ (MinistrySafe).
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before they turn 18. (Darkness to Light)
- A male abuser who molests boys has an average of 150 victims. A male abuser who molests girls has an average of 52 victims. (Emory University)
- The devastation of sexual abuse doesn’t stop when the abuse ends. The physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual effects last for a lifetime.
- Less than 10% of offenders ever encounter the criminal justice system. (MinistrySafe)
- Mississippi law states all adults, including clergy, are mandatory reporters of suspected or known child abuse.

A great place for churches to begin is to turn to Scripture. Remember, we have a clear compelling **Gospel** and **Scriptural call** to provide a safe environment for children, students, and vulnerable adults. We must do our best to prevent abuse and care well for those who have experienced abuse. We must not turn a blind eye or deaf ear since it may be difficult or hard.

“But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me — it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!”

MATTHEW 18:6

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

MICAH 6:8

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”

PROVERBS 31:8-9

When Jesus began His ministry, He read from Isaiah 61 and said that He had come to “proclaim release to the captives” and to “set free the oppressed.” It is a clear call of the Gospel to care for the oppressed—the victims within our congregations.

A. ENDING A VICTIM’S SUFFERING SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE PRIORITY.

A logical response is to address the sin of the alleged abuser if the abuser is part of the congregation, but this presents a challenge in ministry because the sin that results in abuse is often illegal and confronting the abuser can be very dangerous for the victim.

Thankfully, the Bible provides guidance in this area. Matthew 18 explains how to handle sin within the church body while Romans 13 provides guidance concerning sin that is also illegal.

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

MATTHEW 18:15-17

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.”

ROMANS 13:1-5

“In my experience, churches make mistakes when they try to handle everything in-house. This is problematic because churches are not equipped in all of the proficiency needed in an abuse situation. Church leaders are often hesitant to get the ‘government’ involved—usually due to mistrust, coupled with a desire to handle abuse internally. Rather than mistrust, the church should view these authorities as a resource — God-ordained entities that have been put in place for the safety of those they serve and protect.”

SAMANTHA KILPATRICK

We are called to let the governing authorities deal with all things illegal as the church simultaneously deals with the sin—always taking care to put the safety of the victim first.

B. TRAINING ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

It is critical to provide initial and ongoing TRAINING for staff, volunteers, and church members that raises awareness and shares effective actions to help prevent incidents of abuse in the church, respond well if abuse occurs, and care well for those who have experienced abuse.

The welcoming environment of many churches and the church’s need to rely on volunteers to run its ministries makes many churches soft targets for predators. If employees, volunteers, and congregation members are not trained to recognize and prevent abuse, and if safety policies and practices are ignored, churches can be exploited by those seeking to abuse the vulnerable.

It is imperative that all church employees and volunteers be required to attend periodic training on how to prevent and identify grooming behavior and sexual abuse. The safety and protection of the children and vulnerable members of your congregation are well worth every penny and hour devoted to equipping your staff and volunteers.

WHAT DOES GOOD SEXUAL ABUSE TRAINING LOOK LIKE?

Good Training helps to...

- define and understand the problem and identify the risk of sexual abuse.
- define and understand peer-to-peer sexual abuse.
- recognize predatory grooming habits and behaviors of abusers.
- recognize indicators of those who have possibly been abused
- handle disclosures from a child or youth of abuse.
- develop proper reporting procedures both externally and internally.
- track & measure participation and completion of the training.

Although in-person training is recommended, as it allows participants to personally engage and ask questions during the training, there are also many excellent online training resources including: MinistrySafe, Protect My Ministry, Darkness to Light, and Lifeway Ministry Grid to name a few. **The Mississippi Baptist Convention will pay the cost for the first year of membership of MinistrySafe for any participating Mississippi church.**

For more information, please visit www.mbc.org/sart or www.ministysafe.com/mbcb.

C. BE AWARE OF GROOMING PRACTICES

It is difficult to believe someone you know would abuse a child or that it would happen at your church, but that mindset can be problematic. Churches can attract offenders and can be easy targets because there tends to be a high level of trust. Churches should indeed be institutions with a high level of trust, but also with a high level of accountability.

Offenders can use relationships, positions of authority, and the trust of parents and organizations to groom children and those who care for them. Offenders will look for opportunities to be isolated with their victims. This creates an environment where they can do harm and keep their victims compliant without using physical force.

The best defenses against grooming are adequate training and rigid, enforced policies. When you have volunteers who are on alert for signs of grooming, and safety policies that are applied across the board to everyone in your ministry without exception, it will be much more difficult for a predator to gain the access they need to exploit a victim.

Learn more about abusers and how they operate. **(SUPPLEMENT 1: Profile of an Abuser)**

HERE ARE SEVERAL GROOMING PRACTICES TO WATCH FOR:

- Gifts or special attention given to a specific child
- Attempts to get a child alone
- Increased physical touch of a child
- Helping a child break rules
- Keeping secrets with a child
- Shaming or blaming a child
- Inappropriate communication with a child in person, by phone, or online

SCREEN

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”

EPHESIANS 4:25

While being thorough in our hiring of staff and volunteers for children’s and youth ministries requires effort – it takes seriously the duty of the shepherd to protect the flock. Increasing our levels of awareness and consistency for abuse-related prevention will not only help us in hiring staff or volunteers but also in making it much more difficult for abusers to have access to children, teenagers, and vulnerable adults. Screening staff and volunteers, especially those who work with these groups should go beyond a simple background check. **We should also require a careful vetting process for all those working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. SCREENING should include an application, interview, references, social media review, and background checks.**

Working with children, teenagers, or vulnerable adults is not a right. There may be potential volunteers, who may elect not to participate in the process, because they view it as too time consuming or a hassle. However, we must do our very best to properly vet those who have access to those in our churches and ministries who are vulnerable to abuse and to ensure their safety.

A. Who Gets Screened? Because this ministry is so important, anyone – staff and volunteers – who has access to minors and vulnerable adults through ministry or in ministry areas must be screened.

B. Screening – Screening is the process by which ministry leaders gather information about an applicant’s past behavior to better predict future behavior. An effective ministry screening process should include the following elements for paid staff positions and volunteers:

- 1. Written Application:** A written application allows you to gain information about a person in an efficient manner. Among other things, the application should contain the standard questions necessary to run a background check. **(SUPPLEMENT 2: Sample Application)**
- 2. Background Check:** Background checks must be conducted on all employees and volunteers at regular intervals (i.e., every two years). Background checks are critical, but they are never a guarantee that a person is safe. **(SUPPLEMENT 3: Background Check).** 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 requires at a minimum, identity research, national database, and sex offender registry checks. **(SUPPLEMENT 4: Chart of Providers)**

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

Abuse tactics and offenses are varied and can take many different forms and degrees of severity. 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. Please see examples of “Red or Yellow Flags” of potential abuse. **See Supplement 3 for List of Red Flag Offenses.**

In addition, there may be other offenses that show up on a background check that are potentially problematic that are not related to abuse necessarily, but may cause concern or a need for further screening and questions. **See Supplement 3 for List of Yellow Flag Offenses.**

- 3. 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. It is suggested that three references be submitted, one of which can be a family member. Be sure these references are unbiased and objective. **(SUPPLEMENT 5: Reference Check Sample).**
- 4. 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, ministries, 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. **(SUPPLEMENT 6: Sample Interview Questions).**
- 5. Internet Check and Social Media Review:** In an era in which most people have an online and/or social media presence, it is helpful to review an applicant’s social media history for content that could indicate improper behavior. 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. **(SUPPLEMENT 7: Internet and Social Media Check Guidelines).**

C. For most volunteers, screening is a simple process. For most volunteers, screening is a simple process. Most volunteers will have no red flags arise in their screening process. In the event something is discovered, the volunteer will be informed by the person designated by the church to discuss the problems uncovered. While this is happening, the volunteer will not be allowed to work in the ministry of the church until the red flags are resolved favorably.

PROTECT

*“Keep me safe, Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent, who devise ways to trip my feet.”*

PSALM 140:4

The church should create and implement policies that PROTECT children, youth, and vulnerable adults from grooming and abuse. After training in the policies and procedures of the church, implementing the protective strategy is the next important step in the process.

FORM A SAFETY TEAM TO DEVELOP, REVIEW, AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

No matter the size of your church, it is helpful to put together a safety team to help develop, review, and implement safety policies and practices to help prevent abuse. The team should include both male and female members.

The team should be made up of both church employees and church members whose background could contribute expertise or a unique perspective to the area of abuse prevention. For example, consider members of your congregation with backgrounds in law enforcement, social work, counseling, law, or education.

It would also be valuable to consider a church member who is an abuse survivor and is far enough along in their recovery for this team to be a healthy experience for them.

All team members should go through a screening process and abuse prevention training prior to serving on the team.

IMPLEMENT CHURCH-WIDE SAFETY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Churches need to formulate and evaluate policies for employee and volunteer behavior that seeks to protect against potential abuse.

- Following good policies and responding well to violations of policies are ways to help protect and shepherd your congregation.
- As God’s people, we should prioritize protecting the vulnerable.
- We understand that good policies are a way to love and care for people well by keeping them safe from harm.
- Making and following good policy for abuse prevention is God-honoring and a way to protect the individuals in your church, not just the church itself.

SAFETY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

When determining specific policies and practices, it is important to understand the church's increased responsibility when working with children, youth, and vulnerable populations. Here is a basic list of things to consider. **We strongly encourage your church to use MinistrySafe or something similar to develop a complete set of policies and procedures.**

- **Children Check In/Out Policy** – Ensure children are only allowed to be checked in and then leave with an approved adult. It is highly encouraged to release children only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.
- **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 person.
- **Two-Deep Policy** – Require at least two adults (preferably with no family connection) 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 be efficiently conducted.
- **Building Safety** – Ensure *all* areas of your building are safe and monitored including playgrounds and any potential places that are difficult to visually observe. No children should be left unattended in a ministry area or on a playground during regular programming, classes, or activities.
- **“Known To Your Church” Policy** – A volunteer should be known to your church for a specified length of time (many experts suggest 6 months or longer) 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 or going to the bathroom. This applies to giving them privacy from both adults and minors. Not only should privacy be maintained in the church setting, but also at off-site activities like retreats and church camps.
- **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 prevents 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.
- **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. For examples of several church policies, visit 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 children, youth, and vulnerable persons should not share a bed with an unrelated person.

When we KNOW SOMETHING, we must SAY SOMETHING, then DO SOMETHING!

We must ACKNOWLEDGE the problem of sexual abuse, ADDRESS the problem by defining proper policies and procedures and ACTIVELY implement those policies while caring for survivors.

REPORT

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”

PROVERBS 31:8-9

Have a written plan in place to REPORT abuse to appropriate government authorities and communicate with the church in the event of an abuse allegation.

A. RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ABUSE

What is disclosure?

Disclosure is when anyone tells another person that he/she has been sexually abused. Sharing can be scary and a difficult process for anyone. It may take someone who has been sexually abused weeks, months, or even years to fully reveal what was done to them.

RESPONSE TO THE VICTIM DURING DISCLOSURE

Your reaction to the disclosure will have an impact on how the victim deals with the trauma of sexual abuse and begins the healing process.

- PRIORITIZE SAFETY for anyone in harm’s way. If danger is imminent, call 911.
- STAY CALM.
- LISTEN with HUMILITY, EMPATHY, and COMPASSION.
- AFFIRM the victim’s choice to tell you about the abuse and their courage to tell someone.
- BELIEVE the victim and AVOID victim-blaming. Communicate what has happened to the victim is not ok.
- EXPRESS COMPASSION about what happened to them.
- ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS VERSUS SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
“Would you like to tell me more?” or “What happened next?”

False allegations of child sexual abuse are extremely rare.

Note: With children, youth, and vulnerable adults, only listen to what information is offered. Forensic interviews are conducted by trained professionals in the investigative process.

- AVOID PRODDING or PRESSURING for more information.
- SUMMARIZE and CLARIFY to ensure you have correctly understood the disclosure.
- TAKE NOTES. Document all conversations, information, and calls.
- HANDLE INFORMATION CAREFULLY.
- AVOID MAKING PROMISES THAT YOU CANNOT KEEP.
It is not possible to promise a minor that you will never tell anyone what they have disclosed. Let them know you are required to tell the proper authorities.
- PLAN A TIME TO FOLLOW UP.

EXAMPLE

“Thank you for telling me what happened. I believe you. It took great courage for you to share this. You’re bringing something dark and evil out into the light. What happened to you is NOT ok and it’s NOT your fault. I am so sorry you have suffered this way. This grieves the heart of God. He loves you and cares deeply about you. He will carry you through this and we’re going to walk through this with you. Your safety is important. I am going to call for help to keep you safe.”

B. REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS IS MANDATED BY LAW IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

It is wise for churches to have clear plans in place to ensure proper reporting of child abuse as required by law.

Who Must Report?

“Any attorney, physician, dentist, intern, resident, nurse, psychologist, social worker, family protection worker, family protection specialist, child caregiver, minister, law enforcement officer, public or private school employee **OR ANY OTHER PERSON** having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child, shall cause an oral report to be made immediately by telephone or otherwise...” MANDATORY REPORTING - Per Miss. Code Ann. § 43-21-353

- **EVERYONE** in the state of Mississippi is considered a **mandated reporter** and is **obligated by law** to report suspected abuse or neglect of a minor child or vulnerable adult to proper civil authorities.
- 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 or neglect**.

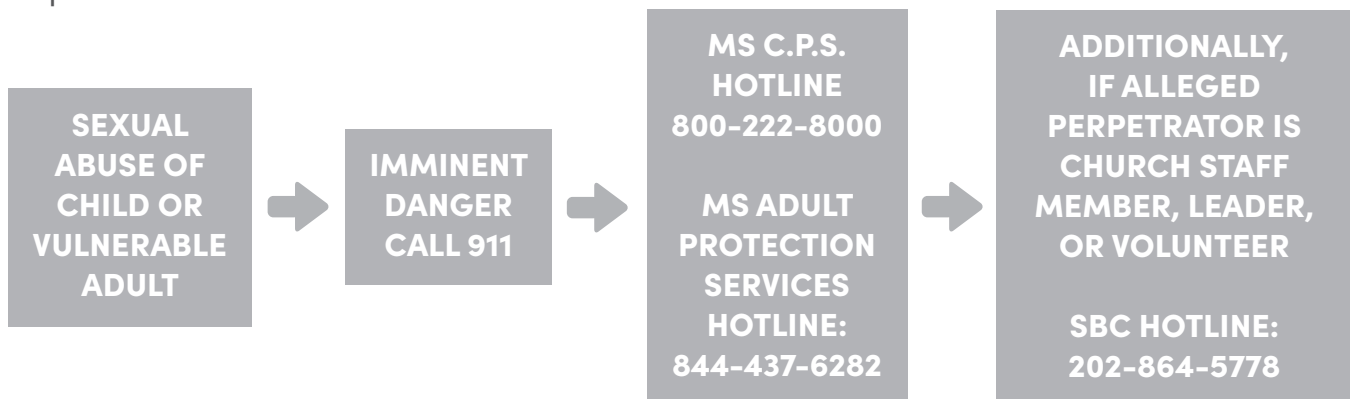
When to Report?

- A report should be made **IMMEDIATELY** when there is **reasonable cause** to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused, neglected, or is in danger of being abused. This would also include a reasonable concern of peer to peer sexual abuse. **Peer to Peer sexual abuse could be defined as adult sexual behavior between children.** It can also be harmful behavior between children involving an aggressor and a child who does not seek or want the sexual interaction.
- A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation to ensure safety.
- These investigations are handled by the *Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (1-800-222-8000)* for victims ranging from birth to age 18. For victims who are considered vulnerable adults, investigations are handled by the *Mississippi Department of Adult Protective Services (844-437-6282)*.
- It **IS NOT** the responsibility of church staff and leaders to conduct investigations.
- It is **WISE** for us to treat all disclosures as credible until outside professionals demonstrate otherwise.

**IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT, TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTION:
CONTACT THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
ABUSE HOTLINE: 1-800-222-8000**

How to Report Externally? – THIS MUST BE DONE FIRST!!

- If danger is imminent, call **9-1-1**. After ensuring safety, proceed with mandated reporting to appropriate agencies.
- Reports can be made by calling the abuse reporting hotlines and speaking with an Intake Specialist.



What to report?

When making a report of sexual abuse involving a minor or vulnerable adult to proper agencies, it may be helpful to have the following information:

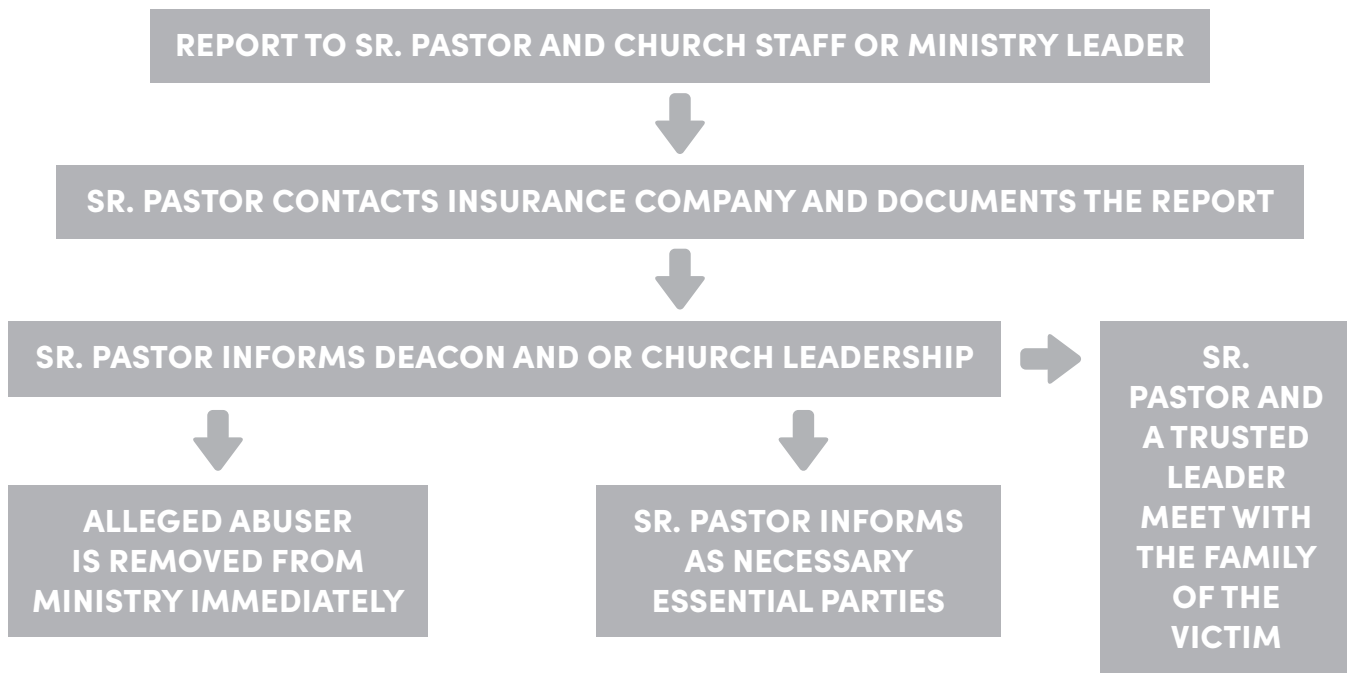
- Pertinent information such as victim’s full name, full address, phone numbers for caregivers, and names of other members of the household.
- Details disclosed to you about the alleged abuse.
- Any pertinent information related to the alleged perpetrator.
- See <https://www.mdcps.ms.gov/> for more information or to report online.

- Remember to keep documentation of your report. It might be helpful to ask the Intake Specialist for their “AGENT ID” to note in your personal documentation.

**It is not necessary to remember or to provide every detail.
It is also not your responsibility to provide proof or evidence.
Even if you only have partial information,
make the report with what information you do have.**

How to Report Internally?

As with the entirety of this Guide, your particular circumstances may dictate how you handle it internally. This needs to be completed within 24 hours. **(SUPPLEMENT 8: Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report Form)**



C. REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE WHEN THE VICTIM IS A COMPETENT ADULT

Who Reports?

When adults are sexually assaulted, they have the legal right to choose whether or not to report the abuse endured as an adult to local law enforcement.

- If anyone is in imminent danger, call 911.
- An adult victim may have come to you for your support and guidance in making a report to local law enforcement.
- **NOTE:** If at any point it is revealed that a minor or vulnerable adult is in danger of victimization, refer to mandatory reporting procedures.
- **NOTE:** If you are talking with an adult who was abused as a child, a question that needs to be addressed is, “Does your abuser have any access to minors or vulnerable adults at this time?” In this case, contact the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. If needed, seek counsel, legal or otherwise, as to the next step, keeping in mind the goal to prevent abuse of other victims. If the accused is a church staff member, leader, or volunteer, contact the **SBC HOTLINE**.

How to Report?

- **24-Hour Rape Crisis Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673) or Online Chat at <https://hotline.rainn.org/online>** is available to **assist a victim** with crisis support and guidance in locating a **crisis center** near them. A list of all rape crisis centers is available at <http://www.mscasa.org/crisis-centers/>
- The adult victim may call **911** if the abuse has just occurred.
- The adult may contact **local law enforcement** to file a report.



D. REPORTING WHEN THE ACCUSED IS CHURCH STAFF MEMBER, LEADER OR VOLUNTEER

What is Adult Clergy Sex Abuse?

Clergy Sexual Abuse happens when a person with religious authority uses their role, position, and power to sexually harass, exploit, or engage in sexual activity with a person in their care.

Clergy Sexual Abuse is about the misuse of power by the alleged perpetrator and the inability of the victim to provide consent because of that power differential. Even if an individual nominally agrees to some form of sexual interaction, contact, or relationship, that agreement DOES NOT constitute consent.

Please see for more information: David Pooler's *Preventing and Responding to Clergy Perpetrated Sexual Abuse*. Baylor University: Texas, 2017

- If the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult, **FIRST** follow mandated reporting guidelines by contacting *MS C.P.S. (800-222-8000)* when the victim is a minor or *Mississippi A.P.S. (844-437-6282)* when the victim is a vulnerable adult.
- If the alleged perpetrator is church staff member, leader, or volunteer in a Southern Baptist Church, contact the *SBC HOTLINE* by phone at **202-864-578** or online at SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com

DOES IT MATTER IF I PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE SBC HOTLINE THAT OCCURRED YEARS AGO?

All reports of sexual abuse can be reported, whether current or historic. All allegations relevant to SBC churches, even if the accused is deceased, are referred to the SBC Credentials Committee for their consideration and whatever action they deem appropriate.

CARE

*“He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.”
“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.”*

PSALM 147:3; 9:9

Identify and offer resources that will provide victims, survivors, and their families with options for on-going CARE.

A. RESPONDING TO SURVIVORS

Safety

- Prioritize survivor’s safety. If immediate help is needed, call 911.
- Adhere to church approved safety plans to ensure the alleged perpetrator can do no more harm while proper authorities investigate.
- Communicate clear boundaries and restrict the alleged perpetrator from church property.
- Avoid re-traumatizing a victim in anyway such as asking them to confront an alleged abuser or repeat the account of the abuse.
- Under no circumstances should church leadership ask the survivor and alleged perpetrator to participate in a “reconciliation” meeting or any other meeting involving both parties.
- Adhere to church training, screening, and protection policies.
- Provide a list of referral resources (medical care, trauma-informed counseling, legal counsel, etc.).

Communication

- Be diligent in protecting the survivor’s confidentiality when communicating inside and outside of the church.
NOTE: Protecting confidentiality DOES NOT mean avoiding MANDATED REPORTING.
- Maintain regular communication with the survivor.
- Keep the survivor informed regarding any necessary steps the church must take in enacting safety plans and cooperating with outside investigations.
- When contacting the SBC hotline, survivors will be notified of the available options for care and will be put in touch with an advocate.

Care

PRIORITIZE caring for the survivor, NOT protecting an institution or the alleged abuser. Respond with care and honor to survivors of abuse.

- Provide a list of trauma-informed counselors in your area to provide additional emotional support to the survivor and their family. (www.mbc.org/sart)

SURVIVORS

Psalm 9:9

Psalm 147:3

- Listen
- Empathize
- Believe
- Do not blame
- Ensure safety
- Report properly
- Refer for trauma-informed counseling

- Assure the survivor of on-going safety and ministry support for them and their family.
- Consider connecting them with a church-appointed support person from a Care Team trained and equipped to minister to them and their family.
- Continue to provide training for ministering to survivors.
- Consider utilizing resources to assist in ministering to survivors. **See Resources on Page 20.**
- **Understand more about victims and how to help. (SUPPLEMENT 9: Profile of a Victim)**

B. RESPONDING TO THE CHURCH

Safety

- Ensure the safety and care of the church body.
- Adhere to mandated reporting guidelines.
- Remove the alleged abuser from the church property.
- If the allegations of the accused are credible, determine if he or she had access to any other potential victims. Adhere to mandated reporting guidelines. Contact the SBC Hotline to promote long-term protection.
- Consider the use of resources such as MinistrySafe to promote ongoing training to protect against abuse in the church.

CHURCHES 1 Peter 5:2-3

- Be proactive
- Prioritize awareness, safety, training, and reporting
- Encourage transparency
- Provide resources
- Train female leadership as first responders

Communication

- Take great care in determining what information needs to be communicated and to whom.
- Be diligent in protecting the survivor's confidentiality when communicating inside and outside of the church.
- If the abuse occurred within the church, churches may benefit from obtaining trusted legal counsel to assist in how to respond during an investigative process.
- Consider preparing a cohesive statement available to church staff and leadership.
- Review resources such as ***Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*** <https://www.churchcares.com> or ***GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment*** <https://www.netgrace.org> for guidance in how to proceed as a church when abuse has occurred.

Care

- Ministry to survivors of abuse should involve more than just paid church staff.
- It may be helpful to compose a ministry team for the purposes of:
 - walking alongside victims/survivors in the church
 - continually assessing the church's strengths and weaknesses in abuse prevention and care.
- Consider utilizing discipleship resources to increase awareness and trauma-informed response to sexual abuse. **See Resources on Page 20.**

C. RESPONDING TO PERPETRATORS

Safety

- The safety of survivors and vulnerable others is a priority.

- The alleged perpetrator should not be allowed on campus.
- Under no circumstances should church leadership ask the survivor and perpetrator to participate in a “reconciliation” meeting or any other meeting involving both parties.
- While church discipline, according to Matthew 18, may be appropriately exercised, it is not a substitute for reporting abuse to the proper agencies or for outside investigation.

Communication

- If the alleged abuser is a church member/attender, clearly communicate boundaries and church policies related to restricting access to church property.
- Communicate with people on a “need-to-know” basis to ensure the victim’s privacy. Communication with the Preschool, Children’s, and/or Youth Minister as well as the Security/Safety Team may be helpful to ensure safety; however, avoid gossip and share only information essential to safety.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a church leader, member, or volunteer, consider designating a representative to act as a liaison for the accused and his/her family.

PERPETRATORS Psalm 51

- **Remove from ministry setting**
- **Allow police to investigate**
- **Refer for treatment**
- **Minister to them away from church setting**

Care

- Refer perpetrators for professional counseling (someone that specializes in working with sexual offenders, abuse, control and power dynamics).
- Refer family members for trauma-informed counseling.
- Consider taking church to the accused in person by designated trained staff or lay leaders or via online sermons, Bible studies, etc.

D. FURTHER RESPONSE WHEN THE ACCUSED IS A PASTOR, STAFF, OR VOLUNTEER

1. Recall that if the abuse is against a minor or vulnerable adult, the abuse is illegal and should be reported immediately to either:

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (1-800-222-8000)

Mississippi Department of Adult Protective Services (844-437-6282)

2. The **SBC Hotline** for reporting abuse by pastors, church employees, or church volunteers can be reached directly at **202-864-5578** or SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com.
3. Put the minister, employee, or volunteer on a leave of absence. Though every person is “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/investigative process is complete.
4. Confiscate church technology from the alleged abuser immediately. Though private property cannot be confiscated, any technology owned by the church can be reclaimed.

RESOURCES

TO ASSIST WITH REPORTING AND CARE

- **National Sexual Assault Hotline:** Confidential 24/7 Support at 1-800-HOPE (4673) or online chat at online.rainn.org
- **SBC Abuse Prevention Website:** <https://sbcabuseprevention.com/ministry-toolkit/>
- **Child Advocacy Centers of Mississippi:** Locate a child advocacy center in your area <https://www.childadvocacymss.org/>
- **Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault:** Locate a Crisis Center in your area <http://www.msCasa.org/crisis-centers/>
- **GRACE:** Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment – <https://www.netgrace.org>
- **Trauma Healing Institute:** <https://traumahealinginstitute.org/>
- **Mississippi Baptist Convention Board:** www.mbc.org/sart
- **Fearless Series for Women & Men:** <https://fearlessresources.org>
- **Hambrick, Brad**
Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused Handbook.
(Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2019).
- **Diane Langberg, PhD. Website:** www.dianelangberg.com
Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores
- **Deepak Reju**
On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church

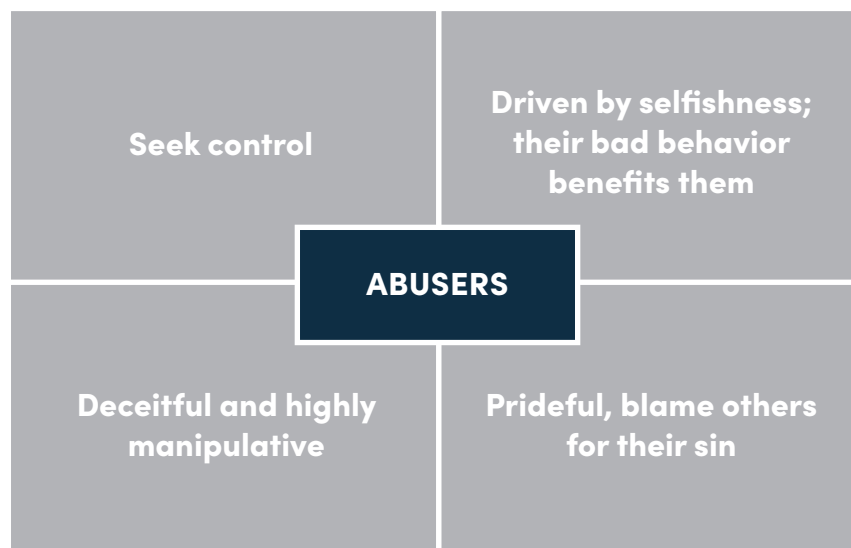
FAQ

- **What is considered sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult?** ANY sexual activity involving a minor or vulnerable adult (physical acts: fondling, intercourse, masturbation, exhibitionism. Non-physical acts: obscene images, sexting/inappropriate text messages).
- **Who is considered a “vulnerable person”?** Any person (minor or adult) whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or provide for his or her own care or protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or improper sexual contact is impaired due to mental, emotional, physical, or developmental disability or dysfunction, or brain damage or the infirmities of aging. A “vulnerable person” includes all residents or patients (regardless of age) in a care facility (such as a long-term care facility, hospital, home health agency, hospice, or adult day services facility). (DHS)
- **Who should report child sexual abuse?** EVERYONE is mandated by law to report abuse or suspected abuse in the state of Mississippi.
- **When should I report sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult?** As soon as someone discloses to you that the abuse occurred.
- **Should I attempt to investigate and gather evidence that the abuse actually occurred before placing the call?** No, appropriate agencies perform investigations into these matters.
- **Who do I call?** For a child, call the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services Reporting Hotline at 1-800-222-8000. For a vulnerable adult, call the Mississippi Department of Adult Protective Services at 1-844-437-6282.
- **What type of information should be included in the report?** Pertinent information about the person’s identity, family, address, and details about abuse.
- **After reporting to the Department of Child Protection Services, who do I call if the alleged perpetrator is or has been a SBC pastor, staff member, or volunteer?** SBC Hotline at 202-864-5578.
- **What do I do if the victim is an adult who has recently experienced sexual assault?** Listen empathetically and offer support if they choose to report to law enforcement. Connect them with a Crisis Center <http://www.msCasa.org/crisis-centers/>.
- **What do I do if an adult discloses to me past sexual abuse or assault?** Give empathy and support to the survivor. If the abuse occurred during childhood, report to proper agencies such as CPS to protect other children from potential danger. If the alleged perpetrator has been or is currently in ministry, contact the SBC Hotline at 202-864-5578.

SUPPLEMENT 1

PROFILE OF AN ABUSER

In a church context, **WE OFTEN KNOW THE ACCUSED ABUSER.** It is essential to know that abusers are deceptive and master manipulators. Often their own spouses fail to recognize that what is being done to them is abuse. We cannot rely on outward appearances or what we think we know about someone.



(Chart and information on abusers adapted from Darby Strickland's *Is It Abuse?*).

Psalm 10:2-6 explains the heart of the abuser:

***"In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak,
who are caught in the schemes he devises.
He boasts about the cravings of his heart;
he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.
In his pride the wicked man does not seek him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God.
His ways are always prosperous;
your laws are rejected by him;
he sneers at all his enemies.
He says to himself, "Nothing will ever shake me."
He swears, "No one will ever do me harm."***

A SPECIAL NOTE ON ALLEGED ABUSERS/ABUSERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

- Statistics show that alleged abusers are often well-liked and are believed more often over the victim.
- Church support and pastoral care often rally around the alleged abuser/abusers.
- An alleged abuser/abusers is often an exemplary member of the church.
- If the alleged abuser/abusers is married, he is often working hard to reconcile his marriage while the victim may be resisting efforts towards restoration.
- Many times, the alleged abuser/abusers immediately and sorrowfully repents.
- Church leaders and/or the church body may prematurely accept the alleged abuser's/abusers repentance without seeing its fruits.

NOTE: It is important to remember NOT to prioritize reconciliation over the well-being of the victim.

SUPPLEMENT 2

SAMPLE APPLICATION

Application Form for Staff and Volunteers

Our goal is to create the safest possible environment for those we serve and our staff and volunteers. This confidential application should be completed by any person seeking to fill a position involving the supervision of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The information gathered with this form is for the sole purpose of creating a safe environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults who participate in the programs of our church or use our facilities.

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Position applying for: _____

I have been a member or regular attender of this church for at least six months (if there is an exception to this screening requirement, please list below) Y / N

Please list any other name you may have gone by (i.e., maiden name):

Phone: _____ Driver's License #: _____

Social Security #: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Sex: M / F Marital Status: _____

Current Address: _____

How long have you lived at your current address? _____

Previous address:

List all other cities and states where you have lived as an adult:

Please list all previous volunteer work or employment involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Use the back of this application if you need more space.

Organization Name	Address	Dates Served	Duties/ Responsibilities	Contact Person	Reason for Leaving

List any skills, training, or other experiences that have equipped you to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

Why do you want to work with children, students, or vulnerable adults at our church?

Do you have a preference concerning the age group or sex of those with whom you would like to work? If so, what is the basis for this preference?

What is your philosophy concerning the re-direction or discipline of children?

When you are unhappy, angry, or emotional about a person or circumstance, what do you do?

Please list the last church(es) you have attended or have held membership:

Church Name	City and State

The following questions and answers will be kept confidential. Because we have zero tolerance for abuse and strive to provide the safest environments for our staff, volunteers, and those we serve, please answer the following questions.

Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted, or pled guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Y / N

If 'Yes,' please provide more information: _____

Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to any crime? Y / N

If 'Yes,' please provide more information: _____

Do you consider yourself physically or sexually abused as a child? Y / N

(We realize this information is sensitive. It will be kept entirely confidential, where another child's safety is not negatively impacted by confidentiality.)

If 'Yes,' please explain: _____

A separate reference form will be required. Please provide one professional reference (if applicable) and two other personal references (one of which can be a family member). One of these references should be a person of the opposite sex.

RELEASE

I (applicant's name) _____ understand that this church is relying on the accuracy of all information given on this application. With my signature below, I attest and affirm that the information provided is accurate and truthful. I understand any intentionally false or inaccurate information provided by myself on this application shall be grounds for denial of the application.

I authorize this church to contact all individuals, organizations, and references listed on this Application Form and the separate Reference Form. I also authorize any such person, church, or organization to provide this church with information and opinions relating to my background or qualifications.

I agree to release from liability any person, church, or organization providing information related to me, including those persons I have listed as references, as well as contact persons from my previous volunteer work or employment with children.

I specifically authorize this church to undertake a criminal background check concerning my past.

I understand and agree that any information received from the background check and application verification will not be disclosed to me except as required by law. I hereby waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me on this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

MINOR APPLICANTS PARENTAL CONSENT

I, (print name) _____ affirm that I am the parent/legal guardian of the applicant. With my signature below, I attest and affirm that the information provided is accurate and truthful. I further attest and affirm that I am not aware of any harmful tendencies or traits of the applicant that may pose any threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SUPPLEMENT 3

SAMPLE BACKGROUND CHECK FORM

[Church Name]
Authorization for Background Check

I authorize [Church Name] to solicit background information relative to my criminal record history. I understand that [Church Name] may make inquiries into my background that may include motor vehicle records, personal references, criminal records, and any other public record reports pertaining to me.

I authorize, without any reservation, any person, agency, or other entity contacted by [Church Name], or their agent, for purposes of obtaining background report information to furnish the above-mentioned information.

I release [Church Name], their respective employees, or agents, and employees of their agents and all persons, agencies and entities providing information or reports about me from any and all liability arising out of furnishing any such information.

Please Print

Name

First: _____ Middle: _____ Last: _____

Other Name(s) Used: _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Current Address

Street: _____ City: _____ State and Zip: _____

How long at this address? Years/Months: _____

Previous Address

Street: _____ City: _____ State and Zip: _____

How long at this address? Years/Months: _____

SUPPLEMENT 4

CHART OF POTENTIAL PROVIDERS FOR PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

In Alphabetical Order	Assessments	Consultation	Awareness Training (in-house)	Background Checks (in-house)	Sample Document Library	Reporting Resources	Response Resources	Digital Dashboard	Independent Investigations	Based on Membership
Darkness to Light			•			•				\$10/PP (group pricing available)
ECAP (accreditation)	•	•					•			Based on attendance
G.R.A.C.E.	•	•	•			•	•		•	See website
Lifeway One Source				•						\$9-\$40
MinistrySafe	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		\$250 annually
Plan to Protect	•	•	•		•	•	•			See website
Protect My Ministry			•	•	•			•		a la cart Ministry Mobilizer
Safe Ministry Solutions	•	•	•	•				•		SBC pricing
Safeguard from Abuse			•					•		\$6.75-\$7.75/PP
Zero Abuse Project			•			•	•			See website

CONTACT INFORMATION

Darkness to Light 1-800-656-4673

ECAP www.ecap.net

G.R.A.C.E. www.netgrace.org

Lifeway One Source 1-800-464-2799

MinistrySafe 833-737-7233

Plan to Protect 1-877-455-3555

Protect My Ministry 1-800-319-5581

Safe Ministry Solutions 1-888-215-8296

Safeguard from Abuse 720-420-3322

Zero Abuse Project 1-651-714-4673

Previous Address

Street: _____ City: _____ State and Zip: _____

How long at this address? Years/Months: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ State and Zip: _____

How long at this address? Years/Months: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The following is an example of Red Flag and Yellow Flag Offenses that could be incorporated into a church's safety policy and practices. The list is thorough but not exhaustive.

RED FLAG OFFENSES

(person should not be employed by, or allowed to volunteer in, the church)

- Providing alcohol/tobacco/drugs/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
- 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

(do additional screening 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 5

SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK

Reference Check for Candidate: _____

Interviews Conducted on the week of: _____ Prepared by: _____

Question	Reference #1: _____	Reference #2: _____	Reference #3: _____	Reference #4: _____
How do you know this person? In what capacity did you work or serve with him/her? Their job title at the time?				
Describe his/her spiritual life. Is he/she intentional about their time with God? Is he/she mentoring or discipling anyone?				
Describe his/her general personality, attitude, and disposition.				
Describe his/her general leadership and supervisory style and ability.				
What are some of his/her key strengths and skills that you observed?				
What would you see as his/her development needs, areas where they need improvement?				
How does he/she interact with other staff members? How do they perceive him/her?				

How does he/she interact with the church members, volunteers, and lay leaders? Their social and relational skills?				
How does he/she handle administrative responsibilities? Is there a focus on the details? How does he/she manage multiple tasks, deadlines and assignments?				
What type of leadership does he/she best work under?				
What areas of ministry is he/she most passionate about?				
How does he/she handle decisions made by others that may not match his/her own thinking? How does he/she manage conflict?				
Anything else you'd like to tell me about the candidate that you would want to know if you were in our position?				
If you could, would you hire or serve with him/her again for the same position?				
Other questions:				
Other comments:				

SUPPLEMENT 6

SAMPLE INTERVIEW FORM

Sample Interview Questions

Adults as volunteers:

1. Discuss your interest in working with children or youth.
2. Discuss how you set limits with children/youth.
3. Give examples of situations when you disciplined or corrected a child's or youth's behavior.
4. What gifts do you have for working with children or youth?
5. Describe a situation when you became angry or frustrated with a child or youth and how you handled it.
6. Describe a time when you interacted with a child or youth and felt guilty about the interaction.
7. Children and youth need affection and attention. Describe what you would and wouldn't do to meet those needs.
8. What would be your reaction to a child's or youth's complaint of inappropriate behavior by a parent or other caregiver?
9. What do you think should be the church's response to adults who are accused by a child or youth of misconduct?
10. Is there any part of the church's policy you disagree with and could not follow?
11. Describe the risks of meeting one to one with a child or youth.
12. Describe your social support network.
13. Describe how sexual contact between an adult and a child or youth could be harmful.
14. What are some examples of emotional abuse and why is it harmful?
15. Describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and also to this church.

Minors as volunteers:

1. Discuss your interest in working with children or youth.
2. Give some examples of situations when you disciplined or corrected a child's or youth's behavior.
3. Describe a situation when you became angry or frustrated with a child or youth and how you handled it.
4. Describe a time when you interacted with a child and youth and felt guilty about the interaction.
5. Why might it be important for you to work with an older person in this ministry?
6. Why does the church policy indicate that helpers shouldn't meet alone with children or youth?
7. If you needed help with a child or youth, who would you turn to for help?
8. What would you do if someone asked you to do something wrong or inappropriate or in violation of the policy?
9. To whom would you report a possible situation of child abuse?
10. What do you think will be the hardest part about working with children or youth?
11. If you have younger brothers and sisters, what frustrates you most about them? If you have older brothers and sisters, what frustrates you most about them?
12. If you call yourself a Christian, what does that mean to you?

SUPPLEMENT 7

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK

In an era in which most people have an online presence, it is helpful to review an 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. 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

SUPPLEMENT 8

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Always report to Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services **FIRST** by phone or their website. You can use this form to help record details of a child abuse incident or allegation for your own records.

Child Name: _____ Date of incident: _____

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Person making report: _____

Role/Relationship to the child: _____

Type of Incident (tick all that apply)

- Suspicion or allegation of abuse or neglect of the child based on visible observations
- Suspicion or allegation of abuse or neglect of the child as told by the child
- Suspicion of potential harm to the child

Alleged Perpetrator(s) Details (if known)

Name – if known: _____

Connection with the child – if known: _____

Any other relevant factors: _____

Were there any other witnesses to the incident? Yes No

If yes, please provide their details below:

Full Name: _____

Involvement as witness: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Details of Incident

(Please describe the incident, including alleged perpetrator/s behavior, sighted injury or other indicators of abuse, and conversation with the child. Be as thorough as you can.)

Incident Response

Please check which of the following have been informed of this incident and note the date.

Externally

- Police Date: _____
- Department of Health & Human Services County: _____ Date: _____
Name of dispatcher: _____ Case #: _____
- Other (please specify): _____ Date: _____

Internally

- Church Staff or Ministry Leader Date: _____ Senior Pastor Date: _____

Additional Comments

Acknowledgement of Form Completion

I have completed this form to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SENIOR PASTOR OR HEAD CHURCH LEADER

Date Pastor/Church Staff or Ministry Leader was notified: ____ / ____ / ____

Date Church Leadership Team or Deacons were notified: ____ / ____ / ____

Date report was shared with the insurance company: ____ / ____ / ____

Date Pastor attempted to contact family: ____ / ____ / ____

Date Pastor met with family: ____ / ____ / ____

Outcome from meeting with family:

Date Pastor communicated with the alleged abuser: ____ / ____ / ____

Outcome from that meeting (termination, suspension, etc):

SUPPLEMENT 9

PROFILE OF A VICTIM

A victim is any oppressed individual who is subject to abuse. For the purposes of this document, we will refer to the victim with a female pronoun, understanding that this could apply to men as well.

The statistics on domestic abuse are staggering, and sadly, do not change within the context of the church. According to the National Center for Prevention and Control's Division of Violence Prevention, **1 IN 4 WOMEN** experience severe physical violence from an intimate partner. While both men and women experience domestic violence, **85% ARE WOMEN.**

- A victim is often disoriented, fearful, and shamed.
- A victim has endured significant trauma and is often facing extreme self-doubt.
- A victim is terrified that the pastor won't believe her.
- Often, a victim discloses very little at first to determine if the pastor is a "safe person."
- A victim can seem mentally unstable.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT ONLY 3-9% OF ABUSE REPORTS ARE FALSE.

"Bear in mind that false accusations are incredibly rare, and if you fail to heed this warning, you will not only do incredible damage to the survivor, but may in fact facilitate the abuse of others yet unharmed."

RACHEL DENHOLLANDER





MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Mississippi Baptist Convention Board
Shawn Parker, Executive Director-Treasurer
P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205
mbcb.org