

Policy on Sex Crimes

1. Churches are particularly vulnerable to sex crimes

It is increasingly evident that churches are vulnerable to sexual predators because of the trust factor that is so common in the ministry of our churches. Although we may acknowledge this vulnerability, churches are slow in establishing procedures to deal with the problem of sexual predators (1 Corinthians 5:1-8). For various reasons, churches seem reluctant to conduct sexual crimes background checks on ordained personnel, staff, nursery workers, youth workers, and other church leaders. The pervasive nature of this problem in our churches has become evident even to the secular community. The safety and protection of women, children, and youth must become a real priority for our churches.

Baptist churches have an increased vulnerability due to the autonomy of our churches and Baptist organizations. While this autonomy allows each church/organization significant freedom for different expressions of their ministry, it also demands a commensurate responsibility to ensure that this freedom is not used to facilitate sexual crimes. It is totally inappropriate for perpetrators of sex crimes to hold positions of leadership within the church or to serve in any capacity where they can victimize children.

2. Churches/Organizations are responsible to protect those who are vulnerable

Each Baptist church/organization must assume responsibility for its own organization and its employees. Baptist denominational entities can no longer abrogate their responsibility by using the excuse, "Each church/organization is autonomous, and we can't do anything." Although comprised of autonomous churches, this association shall be diligent in monitoring the member churches for breeches in sound judgment concerning such matters as the employment of convicted sex offenders. Recognizing that the Association has no ecclesiastical authority over member churches, or any financial responsibility to those churches, the Association must establish guidelines for disciplining any member church which chooses to ignore its responsibilities in protecting others from sex crime offenders.

A. The Association's Policy on Sex Crime Offenders

- 1) The Association actively supports the redemption of all who are lost, as well as the growth, renewal, and spiritual maturation of each member of the family of God within in the Body of Christ.
- 2) Forgiveness of any sin is possible, permissible, and should be granted following biblical repentance by the sinner. However, the consequences of sin can not necessarily be ignored or dismissed.
- 3) It is inappropriate and intolerable for perpetrators of sex crimes to be in positions of leadership within the church. There are other ways in which such individuals can serve the Lord and honor Him with their lives that both protect themselves and those who might be victimized (2 Corinthians 5:20-6:3).
- 4) This Association will not hire staff personnel that have a Sex Crime record.

B. The Association's actions regarding member churches

- 1) The Association will conduct a Sex Crimes background check on each pastor within the association.
- 2) Any pastor that is found to be a registered sex offender will be counseled by the Director of Missions or his representative.
- 3) If the pastor chooses not to resign, the results of the Sex Crimes background check will be presented to the leaders of the church for action, as they deem appropriate.
- 4) If a church decides to allow a registered sex offender to serve as pastor, the church will be referred to the Credentials Committee of the Association for consideration of the church's continued membership in the Association.

C. The Association's actions regarding resumes and search committees

- 1) The Association will conduct a Sex Crimes background check on each resume that is received by the Association for distribution to local church search committees.
- 2) The Association will not submit the resume of any individual who has a Sex Crime record to a church for consideration.

D. Recommendations to the member churches

- 1) Each church is encouraged to develop a clear policy on Sex Crimes that reflects the heinousness of such sins within our society and especially within our churches. It is recommended that the church clearly express what actions will be taken.
- 2) Each church is strongly encouraged to conduct a sex crimes background check on all ordained personnel, staff, nursery workers, youth workers, and other church leaders.
- 3) When a church search committee is reviewing resumes, the committee is encouraged to conduct its own Sex Crimes background checks since not all resumes received by the committee come through the Association and since it is possible that a sex crime could have occurred after the Associational search was completed.

3. Procedure for conducting background checks

A. Sex Crimes Registry: Free Public Information

- 1) START @ FBI National/State Registry site: www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/registry.htm
- 2) Select state where individual resides (i.e. Texas) wait until state website appears
- 3) Texas department of Public Safety: <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/SexOffender/>
- 4) Select Sex Offender Search desired (name, address, etc.)
- 5) Select "Agree to Terms statement"
- 6) Conduct search

B. Criminal History System: A Fee Will Be Charged

The information provided here is for the state of Texas, but the same information may be obtained by

going to the Department of Public Safety website of any State.

- 1) <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/>
- 2) You will be required to register as a church with volunteer children providers. Select "Purchase Credits" to create an account
- 3) You must establish an account under the name of your church.
- 4) Searches are made through the use of purchased credits.
- 5) One search costs one credit which represents a \$3.00 charge plus a handling fee of \$1.25 if you purchase credits in advance by check.
- 6) If you pay by credit card you will pay an additional 2.25% credit card usage fee. The government does not pay those fees.