

**Report and Recommended Actions
Regarding Sex Abuse Prevention and Ministry to Survivors
September 13, 2022**

At its September 13, 2022 meeting, the IBSA Board unanimously affirmed the following summary report and recommended actions related to sex abuse prevention and ministry to survivors, as presented by the IBSA Board Administrative Committee and IBSA's Executive Director.

Background:

During its June 14-15, 2022 meeting in Anaheim, the Southern Baptist Convention approved a report from the SBC Sex Abuse Task Force that included several recommendations and requests, including some addressed directly to Baptist State Conventions. Anticipating this report, IBSA Executive Director Nate Adams had in December 2021 appointed an IBSA staff-led task force to help IBSA evaluate its current practices related to the prevention of sexual abuse in church and network settings, and also the proper handling of sex abuse claims by IBSA. This 6-person IBSA Task Force also connected with task forces from other Baptist State Conventions, with the SBC Sex Abuse Task Force, and with the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission staff to share information and best practices. The IBSA Task Force report was completed August 1, 2022. While both the SBC and IBSA Task Force reports are extensive in length, the two lists following this background section (the first list was in response to the SBC SATF Report in June and the second with additional actions is in response to the IBSA SATF report and recommendations) provide a summary of actions recommended by IBSA's Executive Director.

It should be noted that since 2018 IBSA has responded to the growing need for sex abuse prevention by:

- Setting high standards for vetting and approving volunteer leaders at IBSA camps and on IBSA-led mission trips.
- Creating a child protection training process for churches, initially designed for in-person training, then later developed as an online training tool.
- Publishing a brochure to help churches establish effective, contextual policies related to sex abuse prevention.
- Developing an internal strategy to advise pastors and churches through crisis response.

During the past year specifically, IBSA has delivered value to churches dealing with sex abuse in the following ways:

- In-person training was offered to several churches. This training was also recorded and delivered virtually for the first time.
- Two churches were assisted in a sex abuse crisis in caring for victims, assistance in appropriately communicating the incident with transparency, and offering ongoing support to church leaders.
- Three churches were assisted in offering counsel to the pastor regarding how to appropriately respond to suspected abuse.
- IBSA followed proper protocols in making calls to the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline from situations discovered through IBSA Camp ministry (e.g., abuse revealed to counselors). DCHFS was contacted in five of the eight IBSA camps this year for reportable cases.

In addition to the above actions and those described in the following pages, IBSA remains committed to networking and cooperating with other Baptist entities and experts in discovering and implementing additional best practices in sex abuse prevention and effective ministry to survivors.

IBSA Responses to the SBC Sex Abuse Task Force Recommendations for State Conventions:

(These were first published June 8, 2022, when the recommendations from the SBC Task Force were made public prior to the June 14-15 SBC.)

The following (in the bold paragraphs below) are the requests from the SBC SATF's report that relate specifically to Baptist state conventions, along with responses by Executive Director Nate Adams on behalf of the Illinois Baptist State Association:

#1: We request that state conventions consider having a designated, trained staff person or independent contractor to receive calls regarding allegations of sexual abuse and provide initial guidance. We request this person be trained in trauma to be able to assist both survivors and churches and will be able to assist submitters who may need help in filing an allegation report with the appropriate party.

Illinois Baptist State Association plans to respond to this request in three ways.

1. We will train IBSA Directors and Associational leaders in responding appropriately to victims, perpetrators, and churches when abuse reports are received. In addition to designated people on IBSA's staff being trained to receive calls from victims or pastors in crisis, we will work to train a broad spectrum of Illinois Baptist leaders in initial response best practices.
2. We will offer resources and training to church leaders in making an appropriate response to victims of sexual abuse. We understand that a supportive initial response is crucial in the healing process of a survivor. A series of in-person and online trainings, accompanied by an easily accessible checklist, will be made available to all Illinois Baptist leaders.
3. IBSA has discovered several trauma-informed counselors in our Illinois Baptist Family. A list of available trauma-informed counselors will be maintained by IBSA and kept readily available. We will strive to connect victims, leaders, and churches who are ministering in a sexual abuse crisis with one of these counselors.

#2: We request that state conventions, in consultation with Lifeway and the Executive Committee, add a series of questions on the Annual Church Profile regarding background checks and sexual abuse training.

IBSA is open to working with LifeWay and in consultation with other Baptist state conventions on enhancements to ACP questions that can consistently and concisely address this need. In 2021, 97% of IBSA churches completed an Annual Church Profile, demonstrating their strong and transparent engagement in providing shared information.

#3: We request that state conventions maintain a list of professionally trained, licensed, trauma-informed Christian counselors in their respective states for those churches who voluntarily seek assistance as they minister to survivors.

As noted above, IBSA will seek to develop relationships with trauma-informed counselors, many of whom are members of our churches. A list of available trauma-informed counselors will be maintained by IBSA and kept readily available. We will strive to connect victims, leaders, and churches who are ministering in a sexual abuse crisis with one of these counselors.

#4: We request that state conventions establish a self-certification program for churches, including "best practices" in survivor care, hiring, investigatory protocols, and training for prevention.

IBSA is open to considering a self-certification program for churches and local associations and is actively learning about the possibility. For the past three years, we have sought to continually update our resources and training strategies as we have learned more effective ways to help victims and churches.

Child protection training continues to be offered through IBSA's Growth Team. Training can be accessed for churches in-person and online. A booklet "Child Protection: Creating Safe Environments" has been developed to help churches establish appropriate policies or update current strategies. IBSA is committed to continuing to grow in this key area.

#5: We request all state [convention] entities and committees provide training regarding sexual abuse prevention and survivor care to their denominational workers, as well as background checks, as part of their orientation and selection.

Background checks, social media checks, and reference checks are a requirement for employment at IBSA. Background checks are also required to participate in many ministries through IBSA, such as serving in Disaster Relief, state-led mission trip participation, and becoming a camp volunteer. Every camp volunteer is required to complete their camp-specific online training before they can be approved to serve as a camp leader or volunteer. We are considering making recommendations to messengers to extend this requirement to include additional volunteer leaders, and to enable all IBSA churches to access Sex Abuse Prevention Training for their leaders at a discounted rate.

Further Recommended Actions Based on the IBSA Sex Abuse Task Force Study:

(Additional details on these recommendations are available in the IBSA Task Force's 31-page report.)

1. Offer statewide "self-certification" training for those who "take the call" or "care for the survivor" regarding sex abuse. The training process will use the "Caring Well" resources from the ERLC as well as an Illinois-specific, self-paced, online course developed by IBSA.
2. Update the IBSA website with current sex abuse prevention and response resources.
 - a. Arrange the page with the user in mind. Offer resources in three categories: victims who need immediate assistance, pastors who need immediate help and training, and churches who need self-certification training and resources in the development of policies and procedures.
 - b. Give the page a prominent position where it can be easily identified and accessed.
3. Work with the IBSA Credentials Committee and the IBSA Constitution Committee to see if any wording needs to be added to IBSA's governing documents that would offer a process to discipline or disaffiliate an IBSA church that is determined to have willfully or persistently mishandled claims or cases of sex abuse. (Additional suggestions on how to address this issue are included in the larger IBSA Sex Abuse Task Force Report.)
4. Partner with the Ministry Safe organization, subsidizing the \$150 membership fee for each IBSA church requesting this assistance (e.g. "Go to ministrysafe.com/IBSA and use the code IBSA2022"). IBSA would pay the entirety of the church's first year membership, asking the church only to pay the \$5 fee for each member trained. This might be restricted to the church's first year of membership.
5. Establish a list of Trauma-Informed Counselors (prioritizing members of IBSA churches) who are willing to be used as a resource to guide pastors and counsel victims and perpetrators during any times of a sex abuse crisis in their church. IBSA would plan to subsidize the cost of these counselors (when the counselor is advising the pastor) when the church is unable to afford their services.