

On Mandatory Reporting of Allegations of Sexual Abuse

It is the responsibility of all to ensure a safe environment for everyone who enters our church and associational facilities. At the same time, all of us must respond promptly and appropriately when we are contacted by anyone with allegations of sexual abuse or physical neglect in their church or among church members.

Missouri law requires all “ministers” to be mandatory reporters of sexual abuse or neglect allegations. This certainly includes pastors and other ministerial staff members at MBC-affiliated churches, associations or contractors.

If you are contacted about alleged sexual abuse or physical neglect, please follow these guidelines:

First, gather as many details as you can and document each conversation. It’s not your responsibility to judge whether the allegations are true or false, but to collect as much information as you can regarding names, dates, and specific allegations. The person bringing the allegations may remain anonymous. The person also may wish to keep the names of other survivors anonymous. This request should be honored, although local, state, and national authorities do seek as much detail as possible.

Note, if you receive an inquiry from a news outlet, do not discuss the situation with them. They are skilled in trapping you into breaking confidences that you don’t have permission in writing to share.

Second, you must immediately file a mandated report with one or more of the following:

- Law enforcement (local police or sheriff’s office; 911)
- Abuse hotlines:
 - Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (800.392.3738)
 - National Child Abuse Hotline (call or text 800.4.A.CHILD)
 - Cyber Tipline (800.THE.LOST)
- Currently, the SBC Abuse Hotline is using a third party to report an instance of abuse in the SBC church or entity (202.864.5578 or www.sbchotline@guidepostsolutions.com)

It’s very important that the allegations be reported immediately.

Third, call your insurance carrier. To adequately cover an array of expenses, your agent and carrier needs to be informed. They do not need details like law enforcement. They just need to be informed about incidents that may have occurred on the premises or at a church event or in the context of the church/association’s ministry.

Fourth, we are a church and we are compelled by the love of Christ to help people victimized by sexual abuse, leaders of an impacted church may seek assistance for abuse survivors and their families. This may include:

- Legal help – Missouri Legal Services (www.lsmo.org)

- Victim advocacy – Missouri Crime Victim Services (573.526.1464)
- Treatment providers – Dept. of Mental Health (800.364.9687)
- Children’s Advocacy Center (www.nationalcac.org/find-a-cac)

Finally, it’s always a good idea to urge your church, your associational leaders, and other MBC-affiliated churches to receive training in sexual abuse prevention and response. Three excellent resources are:

- [Stewards of Children Training](#) (Darkness to Light) from the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home.
- [Ministry Safe](#), a video-driven training that is free to MBC-affiliated churches, along with discounted annual memberships.
- [Caring Well](#), a compilation of free resources made available by churches giving thru the Cooperative Program to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

There are more comprehensive resources forthcoming for Southern Baptist churches and for Missouri Baptists. As a “minister,” use this information as a basic frame work of response. It is marked “Draft” because there is more comprehensive content in the works.

We must work together unceasingly and uncompromisingly to ensure that MBC-affiliated churches, associations, MBC entities, boards, commissions, and convention staff provide the safest of all possible spaces for all people, especially the most vulnerable among us.

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