

**BAPTIST CHURCH PLANTERS
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & REPORTING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Introduction

Baptist Church Planters desires to foster a culture of safety and openness in regard to protecting our children and teenagers. We know that the Bible clearly mandates that we are to care for and protect our children.

Therefore, we recognize our responsibility to train pastors, leaders, and missionaries of churches and provide them with the guidance that is necessary to protect “the least of these”—our children. It is a known fact that sex offenders and others who would harm children often seek out churches as opportune places to encounter children. Given this unique set of circumstances that comprises our constituency, Baptist Church Planters has implemented the following policies to protect children, our own employees, and the testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Policy

It is our belief that children are to be loved and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are to be protected and cherished, and anyone who would cause harm to a child should be reported in accordance with the laws of our state and country.

Procedures

1. Each employee, staff member, or missionary will be required to complete a criminal background check prior to employment or beginning their ministry with BCP.
2. Each employee and missionary must review the BCP Child Abuse Policies & Procedures annually and sign in agreement with said policies.
3. Ohio Revised Code (Sec. 2151.421) states that clergy members and anyone responsible for the care of a child (i.e. Sunday school teacher, youth worker, camp counselor, etc.) have a legal reporting obligation when they suspect that a child has been abused physically or sexually, or neglected.
4. Given this obligation, if any Baptist Church Planters (BCP) office staff or missionaries suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, that person should immediately report by telephone to the local police and/or county Child Protective Services (CPS) agency. Within 72 hours a written report should also be submitted to CPS and a copy filed at the BCP Office.
5. When a BCP employee or missionary files a report as described in item 4 above, the next steps are as follows:

- a. Inform their Regional Field Director (RFD).
 - b. This information will proceed from the RFD to the President of BCP, who will then inform the BCP Council.
6. Ohio law provides that anyone reporting suspected child abuse is immune from any civil or criminal liability that otherwise might be imposed as a result of such actions when taken in good faith. (ORC Sec. 2151.421 G).
7. BCP employees, missionaries, and staff will be familiar with and will follow the reporting procedures described by Ohio law, including:
 - a. name and address of the minor child and their parents/custodians, if known;
 - b. the minor child's age and the nature and extent of the abuse, physical injury, or neglect (including evidence of prior abuse, physical injury, or neglect);
 - c. any other information the person reporting believes might be helpful. (ORC Sec 2151.421 C)
8. BCP missionaries and church leaders are not considered qualified to investigate such reports. They may simply ask "Who? What? Where? When?" They are only responsible to report what they have observed or heard and then comply with the investigation by CPS or law enforcement.
9. If the allegation involves a church leader other than the BCP missionary, the BCP Church Planter will notify the local Child Protective Services and then remove that person from leadership until the CPS investigation is concluded.
 - a. The alleged perpetrator may not be involved in any ministry involving children until the investigation is completed and the allegation unfounded.
 - b. The Church Planter will provide counsel and support for the child victim and their family.
 - c. The Church Planter will arrange for a deacon or other responsible church member to provide support for the alleged perpetrator. The church planter will NOT attempt to provide support for both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.
10. It is required that each BCP church plant or any ministry that is led by a BCP missionary / employee have a written policy on physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse prevention, as well as a written policy for reporting suspected abuse within the church by pastors, deacons, or any other church personnel. These policies must comply fully with BCP's policy, as well as their own state's reporting procedures. A copy of the church's policy must be on file at BCP within 3 months of the effective dates of these policies or within 3 months of incorporating as a church. A sample prevention policy is available from BCP.
11. When an incident that involves a BCP employee, office staff member, or missionary is reported to the public children's service agency:
 - a. the Regional Field Director (RFD) must be notified.

- b. the RFD will then alert the sending church and the BCP president, who will then convene the BCP Council.
 - c. the President and Council will then make the decision to remove that person from all activities involving direct contact with youth until the matter is resolved.
 - d. the alleged offender may be requested to seek or voluntarily comply with professional and/or biblical counseling.
 - e. the church leadership along with the BCP RFD will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of the victim & their family.
 - f. If the investigation is proven false, all efforts will be made to clear the accusation and restore the person to a right relationship and position of leadership.
 - g. If the investigation is substantiated, the sending church will be notified and their employment with BCP will be terminated. Under NO circumstances will a missionary/employee be transferred to another state or ministry assignment once a report of child abuse/neglect has been substantiated.
12. BCP employees and missionaries will handle suspected child abuse information in a confidential manner. Involved employees/missionaries will not discuss these matters with anyone except their RFD and the CPS workers.
- a. All reports will be kept in a secure, locked file at the BCP Office or password protected & encrypted, if stored electronically.
 - b. Confidentiality would also prohibit the following scenarios:
 - 1. notifying a pastor, deacon, or church member that he/she has been accused of child abuse/neglect before the CPS/law enforcement investigation has begun;
 - 2. attempting to conduct a “reconciliation” meeting between the accused and the victim before reporting to CPS or law enforcement.
 - c. BCP will not release any details pertaining to an investigation, nor will we comply with a request for a “Character Reference” on behalf of an employee or missionary that is accused of child abuse or neglect.