

Background Investigations for Sexual Misconduct

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Background investigations are an important element in the protection of churches when they are seeking staff members for employment. The church or Minister Search Committee will never ask too many questions.

1. Ask previous churches if they would employ this person again. If there is any hesitancy, check further.
2. When checking with references, ask each of them for references not given by the candidate including non-ministers.
3. Ask if there is behavior that has ever caused an interruption in his/her tenure at any church.
4. Ask about significant spaces of time that are unaccounted for. If so, explain.
5. Ask the candidate how he/she feels about accountability groups. Have they ever belonged to an accountability group?
6. Does the candidate have a plan or pattern for guarding against ministerial burn out? Allowing time for family?
7. Do the candidate's credentials include a "covenant of clergy sexual ethics"?
8. Would the candidate be willing to sign an employment agreement?
9. Check background and references thoroughly.

Consider developing questions that will adequately screen any candidates for a position of ministry with the church. See Sample Screening Questionnaire for Applicants and Sample Screening Questionnaire for References.

To find organizations that will conduct background checks, you may want to connect to this link:

<http://www.ultimatechurchsuppliersguide.com/results.php?category=Personal+Services&heading=10>

When checking for criminal activity related to sexual offenses refer to https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/DPS_WEB/Portal/index.aspx, which lists registered sex offenders by name, city, zip code, etc.

Though many churches will conduct a criminal background check of potential candidates, many do not realize that sexual misconduct that does not break the law will not be included. For that purpose the Baptist General Convention of Texas maintains a file of congregational incidents of clergy sexual misconduct. The Convention relies on local churches to provide information about such cases. A case is put into the file only when a minister **confesses** to the abuse or misconduct; there is a legal **conviction**; or there is substantial evidence that the abuse or misconduct took place. The issue of whether **substantial evidence** is present is always reviewed by Convention attorneys. Information related to this file can only be submitted or requested by duly elected officers of a local autonomous church or institution which voluntarily relates to The Baptist General Convention of Texas. See [Church Reporting of Clergy Sexual Misconduct](#) (pdf).

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