

An Overview of the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF)

HOW THE TASK FORCE IS HELPING SOUTHERN
BAPTIST CHURCHES HELP EACH OTHER

The Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) has undertaken significant efforts to bring about key abuse reform measures within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). As part of our commitment to help churches help each other, we created this resource at the request of Associational Mission Strategists in hopes that it can be used by state conventions and local associations to help Southern Baptists better understand the work of the task force.

Why Does the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) Exist?

In June of 2019, SBC Messengers approved the creation of a Credentials Committee to address questions of whether a member church is in "friendly cooperation" with the Convention as described in the SBC Constitution, Article III. Messengers also approved language stating that churches not acting in line with the Convention's beliefs regarding sexual

abuse would not be considered "in friendly cooperation." Following allegations of misconduct, Messengers to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting commissioned an independent investigation into the SBC Executive Committee's (EC) handling of sexual abuse claims. In light of the investigation's findings, the Messengers created the ARITF to oversee the process of implementing reforms in June of 2022.

What was the ARITF asked to do?

The ARITF was tasked with the creation of Ministry Check, a database that will provide leaders with the ability to search for information about individuals who have been convicted, found liable, or confessed to sexual abuse. Furthermore, the Messengers gave the ARITF a broad mandate to make recommendations and assist various Baptist bodies with identifying and implementing needed abuse reforms. Among other responsibilities, the ARITF was specifically charged with studying the recommendations in the report from the independent investigation of the Executive Committee's handling of sexual abuse allegations, including an audit and revision of the Caring Well curriculum and the possible creation of a permanent committee or entity. Additionally, the ARITF was tasked with serving as a resource in abuse prevention, crisis response, and survivor care.

What has the ARITF done this year?

The ARITF [held an in-person meeting in Dallas](#), following changes announced by President Bart Barber in August 2023. Since that time, they've met with various SBC leaders and are [developing a website](#) to serve as a central hub for abuse prevention resources within the SBC:

- **Ministry Check:** Ministry Check will provide leaders with the ability to search for information about individuals who have at any time been credibly accused of sexual abuse.
- **Ministry Toolkit:** The desire and goal of this toolbox is to make every church a safe place for every child, student, and

adult who comes to a church. These tools are not designed to force anything upon churches, but instead, to help make your church a safer place for survivors and safe from abuse.

Additionally, the ARITF has continued holding listening sessions with national, state, and local Baptist leaders including a broad spectrum of AMS Leaders.

What will the ARITF do between now and June 2024?

Between now and June 2024, the ARITF plans to continue the development and maintenance of the [SBCabuseprevention.com](#) website, including Ministry Check and the Ministry Toolkit.

The ARITF will:

- Begin adding individuals to the Ministry Check database based on Messenger-approved criteria.
- Maintain and expand the resources in the Ministry Toolbox.
- Continue assisting the Credentials Committee and SBC entities to ensure the implementation of abuse reform measures.
- Provide regular communication and updates to the Southern Baptists regarding progress and initiatives related to abuse reform and continue engaging with survivors of sexual abuse.
- Continue working toward a long-term home for abuse prevention and reform to serve Southern Baptist churches and entities.