

# **Task force releases call for proposals for third-party review**

August 9, 2021

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP)—Members of a seven-member task force named to oversee an independent, third-party review of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee’s handling of sexual abuse claims have released an update calling for proposals from firms interested in conducting the review.

Bruce Frank, chairman of the task force appointed by SBC President Ed Litton, provided the update to Baptist Press and other media outlets Aug. 6.

## **The task force stated the intended scope of its review includes:**

- Allegations of abuse by Executive Committee members.
- Mishandling of abuse allegations by Executive Committee members between Jan. 1, 2000, and June 14, 2021.
- Allegations of mistreatment of sexual abuse victims by Executive Committee members during that same period.
- Patterns of intimidation of sexual abuse victims or advocates during that same period.
- Resistance to sexual abuse reform initiatives during that same period.
- An audit of the procedures and actions of the SBC Credentials Committee as related to sexual abuse.

The review and the task force are the result of a motion passed at the 2021 SBC annual meeting calling for a review of “any allegations of abuse,

mishandling of abuse, mistreatment of victims, a pattern of intimidation of victims or advocates, and resistance to sexual abuse reform initiatives.”

The motion also called for an audit of the procedures and actions related to the SBC Credentials Committee, which was repurposed in 2019 in response to calls for a better way to address allegations of sexual abuse in Southern Baptist churches.

## **The task force requested:**

- Retaining a firm that is hired as assessors and investigators, without any creation of attorney-client privilege.
- Waiver of the Executive Committee’s attorney-client privilege and attorney-client privilege for all witnesses or relevant individuals pertinent to this investigation, excluding survivors of sexual abuse who choose to participate in this investigation regarding their experiences with the SBC. This step is critical to ensure full access to relevant information, complete accountability and transparency, and properly assess steps for reform. It is important to note that privilege is held not with the attorney but with the individual and entity, and is fully within the respective parties’ rights to waive.
- A full, written, public report that details the methodology and process of the investigation, its factual findings, and recommendations based on those findings.
- This report shall include notations of where information was not available, not provided, or where privilege was claimed or attempted to be claimed.
- A protection of all survivor identities from any individual or entity outside of the investigative agency, including this Task Force. A channel for confidential and anonymous communication will also be opened by the investigative agency, and information obtained anonymously will be pursued to the extent possible.

The 86-member SBC Executive Committee is scheduled to meet Sept. 20-21 and is expected to evaluate the requests of the task force at that time.

Organizations interested in submitting a proposal can submit those proposals via email to [contact@sataskforce.net](mailto:contact@sataskforce.net) with an Aug. 12 deadline for submissions.

Members of the task force are Bruce Frank of North Carolina, Marshall Blalock of South Carolina, John Damon of Mississippi, Liz Evan of Tennessee, Heather Evans of Pennsylvania, Andrew Hébert of Texas and Bucas Sterling III of Maryland.