

## ANSWERS TO ALLEGATIONS

1. **Spanking:** We did use corporal correction for many years as a means of controlling wrong behavior and correcting rebellious attitudes, however spankings were discontinued at Hephzibah House around 1996. These were not brutal, but intended for correction. Special chairs were used to be placed over feet and upper body to prevent thrashing around. These allowed discipline with nothing being struck except the bottom. 20 to 30 years ago, carefully regulated spankings were administered in Christian schools and even in public schools as an accepted means of correction. It is still legal in most states to administer spankings, but especially in public schools it has essentially stopped.

Students understandably would be in varying degrees of anger and frustration about being placed by their parents against their will in a place where they would be held accountable for their behavior. In retrospect, we probably should not have received several students because of their extreme rebellion and/or aberrant behavior.

2. **Strip Searches** were not our policy. Incoming students went into a private shower, and then handed their clothing over the door to the staff lady who was on the other side of the door.

3. **Physical Exams:** One young lady talked on CNN about a "man" in a "closet" giving her an examination. Such a testimony causes one to think of a strange man (maybe the gardener, a man off the street?) that suddenly appeared out of nowhere and forced this exam on her. The "closet" she is referring to was an 11' x 11' room used for such gynecological exams, complete with an exam table that was used by our licensed Medical Doctor and either a nurse or a woman staff member to check students for communicable diseases. These were students whose parents were unable to have this exam done on their daughter before bringing her to us (which is what we preferred), and agreed in writing that our ministry doctor would do so as soon as it could be arranged. Knowing the doctor as we do, it is unimaginable he did not properly introduce himself, as to not only who he was, but also the procedures he had to perform. He is a gracious, Christian gentleman, and it is grievous that his character and loving concern for his patients would be impugned in this way. Additionally, the woman nurse or staff person present would have also sought to allay any fears or concerns the student may have had.

Students were never "held down" for exams, they were never done on the floor, and they were always done in a room, not a "closet." **The parents of the students gave written consent for these exams** and paid for them. Students were never given a gynecological exam just to see if they were virginal, but were given to ensure they are free from sexually transmitted diseases, female problems, communicable disease and pregnancy. Many STD's have been discovered and treated over the years as well as other medical problems. We have recently discontinued required pelvic exams, but still do require a school physical to know if they are physically able to participate in a vigorous exercise program

4. **Medical Care:** For over 25 years, we have had a Registered Nurse on our staff and in recent years an Advanced EMT. Any problems they could not handle were referred to licensed medical providers in the area.
5. **"BM Charts":** (for bowel movements) were kept, not to embarrass students or compromise their dignity, but to ensure their health. Some students would go for dangerously protracted periods of time in a state of constipation until the chart was started. These charts are no longer public, but private.
6. **Menstrual Cycles:** Some girls would stop their menstrual cycle while a student, but our doctors always assured us this was a temporary problem, and would clear up when the girls returned home. They told us it was not harmful to the girl. Most of our students experience regular cycles.



7. **Finances:** Each year, our ministry files a form 990 with the IRS. Our Public Accountant does this for us. This form is a public record, and accordingly, this group viewed it online. They apparently did not know how to interpret the form. They were looking at a page that summarizes the total of four years of receipts, therefore they saw a figure of over a million dollars. Our true income for our 2010 fiscal year was \$327,550.00.
8. **Diapers:** Some students were incontinent after matriculating with us, and would urinate on furniture, etc. (some would even defecate). So, in order to protect the school environment and health of the other students, these girls were put in adult diapers. This was never for discipline, punishment or humiliation, but to ensure a clean and hygienic environment for all.
9. **Inspections:** Hephzibah House has been investigated by State Welfare officials in the past, after allegations made by family members who were not sympathetic with the custodial parent's choice to place the child with us. No charges were ever filed after these investigations. Routine health, fire and water inspections are made by local authorities. Local law enforcement officials, our state representative and senator, as well as our local newspaper editor have been invited to inspect the facility at any time, **unannounced**.
10. **Counseling:** Counseling from our staff ladies and Pastors takes place on an ongoing and regular basis for our students. Each child is challenged to: have the power of a clear conscience, develop character, overcome "blind spots" in their lives, learn self-control, develop servanthood, learn to be a loving and loyal part of their God-given family, and to seek a working relationship with their pastor. Each student is challenged with the claims of Christ, and is shown how to have Biblical salvation. They all are a regular part of Believers Baptist Church, attending all the services with the rest of the congregation.
11. **Correspondence:** Regular correspondence, phone calls and visits occur with the girl's parents and with their pastors. Because troubled, self-centered, rebellious hearts are capable of giving distorted/slanted news, all correspondence, phone calls and visits are monitored by staff. Truth has a better chance of surviving with a staff person present. If an outright lie or distortion is being told, the monitoring staff corrects the situation. We encourage the girls to be honest and forthright in their communications about how they are thinking and feeling, but we do not allow them to lie. Each student writes letters once a week to: Dr. Williams, their Pastor, and their custodial parent; and to a board member once a month. In these letters, they may complain about the ministry as long as what they say is truthful. We encourage their pastors to write, visit and call the girls as often as they can.
12. **Preys on Desperate Parents:** Some past students are alleging if their parents "really knew" what Hephzibah House was, they would never have placed them. Each family who has contacted us over the years concerning their daughter is first questioned on the phone to see if they are under the authority of a local Pastor. Many times, it was their pastor that referred them to us. We have required that the custodial parent be a regular attender in a Bible-teaching church in order that the family could be under pastoral care while the child was in our ministry. The senior pastor must agree that the child in question attend our boarding school. These are girls and families unknown to us until they arrive. Their problems are more severe than wearing pants or immodest clothing, listening to wrong music, or arguing with their parents, rather they include running away, moral problems, defiance against authority, etc.

It would be helpful in forming conclusions to remember these precious souls were brought to us by frustrated, concerned parents/guardians because they had either lost control of their daughter, or were very concerned about the wrong direction in which they were heading. The most common word we have heard over 40 years from inquiring parents is that they were "desperate."

13. **Withheld Meals:** In the past, if a girl was malingering, her meal was replaced with broth in the early years, then we switched to protein drinks and Ensure. This policy has not been used in many years.