

- i. The advisory panel considers the probability and the seriousness of the allegations in light of the evidence presented by the accused.
- j. The panel's chairperson, along with the victim's advocate, reports the panel's written summary to the executive committee and then one week later to the consistory. If the accused confesses to the allegations, the confession is presented in the summary.
- k. If the consistory or council take no action or take action contrary to the written report, the chairperson in consultation with the advocate will submit a copy of the written summary to the Classical Interim Committee for further action.
- l. If the consistory or council judges the allegations to be probable and serious, then two members should notify the accused person within seven days that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her.
- m. If the accused person denies the allegations made against him/her, the consistory or council has the

responsibility to conduct a formal hearing to determine the likelihood of the accused's guilt. Regardless of the consistory's or council's decision, both accuser and accused should be notified in writing of the outcome.

- n. The accused may appeal the decision of the council in matters of his/her discipline. Both accuser and accused may appeal the decision of a formal hearing conducted by the council.

*For more information,  
contact the office of  
Abuse Prevention for the CRCNA at  
616-224-0735; fax 616-224-0834; or write  
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE,  
Grand Rapids, MI 49560.  
Email: [swagmanb@crcna.org](mailto:swagmanb@crcna.org)*

# Advisory Panel Process

Procedures

and

Guidelines

for

handling abuse

allegations

against a

church leader

Revised by Synod 2005

The following is a paraphrased edition of the Advisory Panel process as approved by Synod 1997 and revised by Synod 2005 (*see Acts of Synod 1997, pp 678-681 and Acts of Synod 2005 pp 776-777*)

**Q** Who may request an advisory panel?

An adult with allegations of sexual or physical abuse against a church leader (who is presently a member of the CRC). The person with the allegations does not have to be a member of the CRC.

- a. The alleged victim or his/her advocate should contact a member of the executive committee of the accused person's church or a member of the Classis Abuse Response Team.
- b. The executive committee should notify their Classis Abuse Response Team or the team from a neighboring classis to convene an advisory panel regarding the allegation.
- c. The chairperson of the advisory panel contacts the accuser that an

advisory panel meeting will be held.

- d. Members of the advisory panel agree to conduct all panel matters under the pledge of confidentiality.
- e. The alleged victim, accompanied by an advocate, should present all the information in support of the allegation at the time he/she meets with the advisory panel.

**Q** Are the police notified of the allegations?

No, the advisory panel is an ecclesiastical procedure intended to give accuser and accused a non-adversarial environment to discuss the allegations. However, the use of the advisory panel does not prevent the accuser from taking criminal or civil action if deemed necessary.

- f. The advisory panel weighs the information to determine whether the allegation is both probable and serious. If the advisory panel believes the allegations are neither probable nor serious, the

advisory panel ceases its work. The matter is turned over to the executive committee that requested the panel.

- g. A representative of the advisory panel contacts the accused person to notify him/her that a panel has taken place and to request a meeting. Charges must be in writing indicating the nature of the allegation, and including specific dates.
- h. The alleged offender should present all the information in support of his/her defense at the time he/she meets with the advisory panel.

**Q** Who may serve on the Advisory Panel?

Panelists are members of a Classis Abuse Response Team (ART). Team members are chosen from each church in the classis and represent different occupations/professions. ARTs undergo extensive training to conduct the advisory panel process.