

## **Step-by-Step Process for Establishing a Classis Safe Church Team**

### **First Step**

- A church in classis may submit to classis an overture to form a Safe Church Team; or,
- The classical interim committee or similar committee (Committee) may recommend a Safe Church Team (Team) to classis.

The Safe Church Ministry staff may provide a presentation to classis on the Safe Church Team concept so church leaders in classis have a clear understanding of the Team and its mandates.

### **Second Step**

If the overture or recommendation in the First Step is approved, classis should appoint a committee to begin the task of forming the Team. The process of forming a team is too big a job for one person, it is important to have a few people who are committed to the task and will work to see it through.

The task of forming a Team is made easier if classis approves the Team's mandates before recruitment for the Team begins. The Safe Church Team presently has three distinct mandates:

- Education: Offer opportunities to churches for increasing awareness and learning about abuse and issues surrounding abuse
- Support: Offer support to those who have been affected by abuse. This may include walking alongside someone who struggling with abuse and providing information about additional resources. It also includes providing trained claimant advocates to serve in the Advisory Panel Process.
- The Advisory Panel Process: Offer the Advisory Panel Process to be used in cases of serious allegations of church leader misconduct.

A person can be recruited to serve as a member of the Safe Church Ministry Team for one or more of the mandates depending on that person's interests and skills.

### **Third Step**

Nominees from the churches to serve on the Team can be recruited in several ways. These are not mutually exclusive.

- Invite specific individuals known in the classis or local church to have an interest or skill necessary to the Team. A nominee can be an interested church member who volunteers for the Team or council can select a person to consider serving on the Team. The council forwards the name of the nominee to the stated clerk of classis. The stated clerk adds the name to a slate of nominees for approval by classis.
- The committee of classis charged with forming a Team sends a letter to each council asking them to nominate a church member to serve. The letter should indicate the time line for submitting a nomination. Council forwards the name of the nominee to the stated clerk to add to a slate of nominees for approval by classis.

- The committee of classis charged with forming a Team could send a bulletin announcement to each church inviting interested church members to submit their name to council for nomination to the Team. Council forwards the name to the stated clerk to add to a slate of nominees for approval by classis.
- Another effective way to recruit is through word-of-mouth. People who are aware of the Team and its mandates may be interested in serving or they may have suggestions of people who may be interested in serving. People should be instructed to contact their own council to be nominated to serve on the Team.

To assist in the recruitment process, Safe Church Ministry provides: "Criteria for Selecting Safe Church Team Members", "Sample Recruitment Letter", and "Sample Bulletin Announcement"

#### **Fourth Step**

The committee to form a Team tracks the nomination process. The recruitment of a sufficient number of Team members may be difficult. If each church council nominates at least one person, a sufficient number of Team members usually results. The ideal Team size is 10-12 members. Individual churches may have more than one Safe Church Team representative.

#### **Fifth Step**

As nominees are submitted to the classis for approval, the committee to form the Team should contact Safe Church Ministry to schedule training for the Team members. Then, the nominees can be contacted to be available on the established training date.

Training is required for all Team members. The insurance companies that provide liability coverage for Team members indicate a strong preference that members receive training prior to service on the Team.

A general Safe Church Team training is currently being used and further developed. Additional more specialized training around individual themes related to abuse may be available upon request. The general training covers the following topics:

- The dynamics of abuse and church leader misconduct
- Foundational scriptural principles related to abuse
- Overview of the Advisory Panel Process
- Setting goals and strategic planning for Safe Church Ministry

Additional, more specialized training is needed for those who will serve as Panel Chairpersons and for those who will serve as Claimant Advocates. Additional and ongoing training for all Team members is available each year at the Safe Church Ministry Conference, usually held in April. The office of Safe Church Ministry will pay for materials, speakers, meals and conference space. Each church or classis should provide funds for Safe Church Team members to travel to the conference and also for lodging.

#### **Sixth Step**

After the classis Team is appointed and trained, either the classis or the Team appoints a chairperson. The chairperson functions as a liaison between the Team and classis, between the Team and the churches in classis, and between the Team and Safe Church Ministry.

Some of the tasks of the chairperson include:

- Attend classis meetings and represent the Team when issues about the Team arise at classis meetings
- Participate in the network established by Safe Church Ministry for the Safe Church Team chairpersons including the annual training conference
- Allow his or her name to be posted to the Safe Church Ministry web site as a contact person for the Team
- Present a budget of anticipated expenses to the classis treasurer as requested
- Convene an advisory panel when appropriate
- Ensure that each Team member receives the designated training
- Maintains or designates another Team member to maintain a current list of Team members and contact information
- Coordinates with other Team chairpersons if a regional advisory panel is needed
- Other tasks assigned by the chairperson's classis

### **Financial Costs**

The suggested start-up costs for a Safe Church Team are \$1,000 for the first year, and adjusted on a yearly basis after that. These funds would cover travel costs and additional expenses as needed, such as those associated with an advisory panel event, Team members providing education to the churches, or Team members offering advocacy or support services.

### **Organizational Structure**

In addition to the chairperson role, other officers may include a vice-chair to support the chairperson and to assume responsibilities in case the chairperson is unable to do so; a secretary, to handle the Team's correspondence and membership list, and coordinators to head up the mandated efforts in education, support and maintaining potential advisory panelists. These additional persons are appointed after the Team is constituted, training has taken place, and the Team has an understanding of its work. Classis does not need to approve the Team members appointed in this structure. The organizational structure plays a key role helping the Team to function when classis is not in session, in much the same way other classis committees operate. The structure also develops cohesiveness and commitment among the Team members.