

- j. The panel's chairperson presents the report first to the executive committee. Then the executive committee shall convene the consistory or council to hear the report. The alleged victim's advocate attends each meeting.
- k. The consistory or council then adjudicates the matter.
- l. If the consistory or council takes no action or takes action contrary to the information in the written report, the chairperson in consultation with the advocate may submit a copy of the report to the Classical Interim Committee for further action.
- m. Both alleged victim and accused person should be notified in writing of the outcome of the consistory or council's work.
- n. Either alleged victim or accused person may appeal the decision of a consistory or council.

\*For information about the Advocate role, visit [www.crcna.org/abuse](http://www.crcna.org/abuse) and link to Safe Church Team.

\*\*For information about Safe Church Team, visit [www.crcna.org/abuse](http://www.crcna.org/abuse) and link to Safe Church Team.

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



# SAFE CHURCH TEAM

*A Classis Partner helping build and sustain healthy congregations*

## **Advisory Panel Process**

*Procedures for handling  
abuse allegations  
against a church leader*

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Classis Safe Church Team is trained by the Office of Abuse Prevention a denominational partner helping build and sustain healthy congregations

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).

### Question

Who may request an advisory panel?

### Answer

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 the Safe Church Team\*\* chairperson in that classis.
- b. The executive committee should notify their classis Safe Church Team or a team from a neighboring classis to convene an advisory panel.
- c. The chairperson of the advisory panel contacts the alleged victim to attend an advisory panel meeting.

- d. Members of the advisory panel 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 to the advisory panel.
- f. The advisory panel evaluates the alleged victim's information. If the advisory panel evaluates the allegations as either not probable or not serious, the advisory panel ceases its work. The matter is turned over to the executive committee that requested the panel.

### Question

Are the police notified of the allegations?

### Answer

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 prohibit the accuser from taking criminal or civil action.

- g. If the panel evaluates the allegations as probable and serious, an advisory panel member contacts the accused person to meet with the panel. Charges must be in writing indicating the nature of the allegation and corroborating testimony.
- h. The accused person should present information in support of his or her defense to the advisory panel.

### Question

Who may serve on the Advisory Panel?

### Answer

Panelists are members of the classis Safe Church Team. Team members attend a church in the classis. They represent different occupations. Team members undergo extensive training to conduct the advisory panel process.

- i. The advisory panel re-evaluates the probability and the gravity of the allegations in light of the information presented by the accused person. The panel writes a report based on their findings.

