

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 could give 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. If the task of forming a Team is assigned to one person to accomplish, the task is more likely than not to fail.

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 four distinct mandates:

- offer education to the churches in classis;
- provide support services to a claimant and accused person in the advisory panel process;
- conduct an advisory panel process when called upon; and
- offer advocacy to a claimant in the advisory panel process.

A person can be recruited to serve the Team for one or more of the four mandates depending on that person's interests and skills. Ideally, if the Team has several members, then each member will likely serve for only one of the four mandates.

Third Step

Nominees from the churches to serve on the Team can be recruited in several ways.

- 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 from hearing of another classis' Team 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. Usually, frequent reminders are sent to the churches to submit their nominations.

The recruitment of a sufficient number of Team members is difficult. If each church council nominates one person, then a sufficient number of Team members results. The ideal Team size is 10-12 members. Historically, Teams with fewer than 8 members disband or break down quickly.

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 regardless of which mandate they serve for. The insurance companies that provide liability coverage for Team members indicate a strong preference that members receive training prior to service on the Team.

The recommended training is 11-hours long and it includes learning the dynamics of church-leader misconduct, studying the advisory panel process, and conducting a role-play. The role play is an interactive way to learn how to implement the panel process while utilizing the dynamics of church-leader misconduct. The training is required of any Team member who will serve as a panelist, an advocate, a support person, or an educator.

Safe Church Ministry provides that training at no cost to the classis. In addition, Safe Church Ministry provides training on the role of the advocate and the role of a support person. Safe Church Ministry also provides two networks: one for equipping and supporting the Team chairperson, and the other for the Team advocate.

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 expenses 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, usually a vice-chair is appointed, a secretary is appointed to handle the Team's correspondence and membership list, and coordinators are appointed who head up the education mandate and oversee the 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.