

What is the Advisory Panel Process?

One of the mandates of the classis safe church team (SCT) is to provide an *Advisory Panel Process* when allegations of abuse are brought by an adult against a church leader.

The process is to be followed when:

- a) the claimant is a legal adult (there is no statute of limitations, so alleged abuse may have taken place when claimant was a child or adolescent)
- b) the alleged abuse is physical or sexual in nature, and involves a CRC church leader

The process is to be ecclesiastical in nature and does not prevent the claimant from taking criminal or civil action if deemed necessary.

The claimant may request a safe church advocate or may bring an advocate of his or her own choosing into the process. The advocate is to be present at the panel hearing and when the report is presented to council. The advocate and the claimant are allowed to attend any subsequent ecclesiastical meetings where the allegations are discussed.

Members of the panel must be safe church team members that have been specially trained in the *Advisory Panel Process*. They may not be members of the congregation of either the accused or the claimant, nor may they have any ongoing affiliation with the accused or the claimant. Panel members will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The *Advisory Panel Process* guidelines must be followed closely to maintain the integrity of the process. They are designed with important safeguards for all parties.

For more information and complete guidelines, please contact Safe Church Ministry or find them on the website: www.crcna.org/safechurch Safe Church Ministry is available to provide consultation to all parties during an *Advisory Panel Process*.

