

Criteria for Recruiting and Selecting Safe Church Team Members

Ideally, recruit at least one person from each of the churches in the classis. If all the churches will recruit one person, each church is implying their ownership of the Safe Church Team.

Team size will range from 10-20 based on the number of churches in the classis. If the geographical size of classis is large, classis should consider two Teams, each one representing about one-half of the churches. Both Teams fall under the jurisdiction of the same classis.

A diverse Team includes men and women and should reflect the ethnic composition of the churches in classis. A variety of individuals, professionals and non-professionals, should be considered for the team. Some professional groups to consider: teacher, nurse, social worker, psychologist, physician, attorney, licensed day care provider, police officer, accountant, business owner, personnel manager, etc. A pastor may serve on the Safe Church Team, although he should not serve on an advisory panel if it poses a conflict of interest. A survivor of abuse who has worked through a significant part of her or his healing could be considered for the Team. A para-professional or non-professional person with a keen interest in justice issues or the dynamics of abuse should also be considered for the Team.

May classis appoint individuals who are not members of the Christian Reformed Church yet have desirable expertise or experience? Yes, although classis should acknowledge difficulty arising with accountability and liability insurance coverage.

All nominees to the Safe Church Team will not be equally informed about abuse. However, nominees should agree that abuse exists, abuse is harmful and sinful, and the church should deal with abuse swiftly and justly - without cheap grace. Further, Team members should demonstrate a willingness to learn more about abuse within the church context.

If a committee of classis committee is forming the Team, the committee can choose to interview each person nominated to serve. The committee could devise a brief questionnaire to facilitate this interview or in place of the interview. During an interview, an informal discussion could cover the Safe Church Team mandates and the expected time commitment.

We recommend that people serve on the Team without terms of office. If a rotation of members is used, the turnover reduces consistency and requires a constant training schedule. The activity is greatest for panelists when an advisory panel is convened. However, a Team may experience one panel in 4 years, so the overall time commitment is minimal.

There are important skills to look for when recruiting people to serve on the Team. Those skills include: excellent communication skills; a personal commitment to the mandate(s); empathy skills; confrontation skills; awareness of personal and professional boundaries; ability to apply church polity to situations; and anger management skills. Further, people who function well as a team player, work objectively, and work by consensus demonstrate the skills we need. Because there is some writing involved with the advisory panel process and the education mandate, excellent written communication skills are important, too.