



PONTIFICIA COMMISSIONE PER LA TUTELA DEI MINORI

How to Develop Local Survivors' Advisory Panels

Mission Statement, Structure, Direction and Working Modality

April 2020

Pope Francis in the March 22, 2014, Chirograph, directed the specific task of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors by stating, *"The Commission's specific task is to propose to me the most opportune initiatives for protecting minors and vulnerable adults, in order that we may do everything possible to ensure that crimes such as those which have occurred are no longer repeated in the Church. **The Commission is to promote local responsibility** in the particular Churches, uniting their efforts to those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the protection of all children and vulnerable adults."*

From this task, the idea of global Survivor Advisory Panels (SAPs) was developed for implementation consideration by all local Episcopal Conferences.

A. MISSION STATEMENT FOR LOCAL SAPS

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was established to advise the Holy Father on how best to safeguard minors in our Church from sexual abuse. Since its inception, the Commission has, in turn, counted on the advice of people who have experienced sexual abuse, their families and their communities.

Establishing a local Survivor Advisory Panel (SAP) is one possible way to ensure that the "active participation" of the members of the Church, particularly those wounded by abuse, is possible and effective. The local Survivor Advisory Panel model is based on the structure first established by the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales. The local SAPs will be safe spaces where victims/survivors can collaborate with their local Church to explore healing and' safeguarding outreach and methodologies from the perspective of someone who has experienced abuse. Fundamental to the work of the SAPs is ensuring that the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life as two Catholic foundational beliefs are incorporated into the SAPs' work.

These SAPs are to serve as consultative bodies and resources for the local Church so that together survivors and Church leaders can discern how to welcome and listen to a person who has been abused, how to improve canonical processes related to abuse, how to create safe environments for children and vulnerable adults in parishes, schools, institutions and communities and how we, as the Holy People of God, communicate our commitment to safeguarding minors from abuse. For these reasons SAPs are not to be intended as therapy or support groups, although the personal experience of members, past, present and future will be carefully considered.

Below is an outline of the **structure, direction** and **working modality** for the development of a local Survivor Advisory Panel.

B. STRUCTURE

1. SAP Membership

In areas where there is a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, local panel member candidates will be sought by the PCPM member, and are to have the following qualities, experience and attributes as listed below.

In areas where there is no member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, local panel member candidates will be sought by the local Episcopal Conference (or via a liaison selected by the President) and are to have the following qualities, experience and attributes as listed below.

Note: As an option of the local Episcopal Conference President, a liaison may be appointed by the President to serve in the President's place wherein "President" is noted in this document.

Panel members need to be open to a thorough recruitment process, for their own protection, and because of the sensitive ministry of the panel. This will include interviews, and the gathering of references.

1.1. All panel members will:

1.1.1. Have experience on the theme of abuse - this will include one or more of the below:

- Direct personal experience of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy or religious
- Direct personal experience of sexual abuse
- A parent of a child who has been sexually abused
- Husband or wife of a survivor
- A sibling of a survivor
- Extensive experience of working with survivors of sexual abuse
- Health/social care professional with relevant knowledge and experience.

- Ideally will be 5 - 7 in number.
- 1.1.2. Be committed to helping the Catholic Church to affirm, strengthen and improve its initial response to victims/survivors.
 - 1.1.3. Be committed to helping the Catholic Church to affirm, strengthen and improve its healing response to the victims/survivors.
 - 1.1.4. Be committed to helping the Catholic Church improve its policies and procedures for safeguarding.
 - 1.1.5. Commit to holding confidential the work of the panel. All discussions and matters brought before the panel are confidential and are to be shared only with the President of the Episcopal Conference or the PCPM if applicable.
- 1.2. *All panel members are to be able to demonstrate:*
- 1.2.1. Experience of working on a panel or committee, and an understanding of the importance of working as a team coordinated by a Chair.
 - 1.2.2. An understanding of the importance of effective communication including expressing their own views; working with differing opinions; challenging appropriately, professionally and respectfully.
 - 1.2.3. An ability to manage personal emotions and issues that may be raised from discussions in meetings, or viewing of documents pertaining to abuse.
 - 1.2.4. An understanding of the importance of working appropriately with confidential information.
 - 1.2.5. Personal integrity: the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles and professional standards.
- 1.3. *Terms of Appointment:*
- 1.3.1. During the initial start-up phase the term of appointment for members will be for one year, and 2 years for the Chair: renewable by the President of the Episcopal Conference. Subsequent tenure times will be determined after the initial assessment phase of one year from time of inception, which will be subsequent to the initial start-up phase.
 - 1.3.2. It is desirable that the local SAP meet at least quarterly with the timing of meetings such that these can anticipate the semi-annual local Episcopal Conference Plenary Assemblies. At such a time their recommendations can be shared with the local Episcopal Conference.
 - 1.3.3. The panel member may terminate their participation at any time for whatever reason they wish, giving notes to the Chair of their decision.
 - 1.3.4. If, after being appointed to the panel, a member has concerns about any of the other members, be it a confidentiality concern or a

concern which significantly influences the safety and dynamics of the group, those concerns must immediately be brought in writing to the attention of the Chair.

- 1.3.5. A panel member may be asked to step aside from the panel if the panel member believes that any of the above requirements have been compromised. and the stepping down or stepping aside is in the best interest of the mission of the Episcopal Conference.
- 1.3.6. All removals shall follow an established process wherein the reason for removal must be presented to the Chair in writing, the Chair will present to the member concerned for response. The response will be requested within two weeks of request. The Chair may bring the issue to the entire panel or decide that the allegation was unfounded and advise the presenting member accordingly. If the presenting member disagrees, then the issue shall be brought to the full panel for review and decision. If that does not resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction, then the Chair will bring the issue to the President of the Episcopal Conference for resolution.

2. Chair (Criteria and Role)

2.1. The individual taking on this leadership role is to be able to demonstrate:

- 2.1.1. To be capable of empathy;
- 2.1.2. To have effective communication skills (managing conflicts, problem solving);
- 2.1.3. To have an attitude of constructive and positive leadership, within a complexity of levels;
- 2.1.4. An ability to:
 - facilitate a group such as local SAP group, knowing the boundaries between therapy, counselling, developmental, self-help groups;
 - explore issues/concerns effectively and to address personal issues, if they arise, to the appropriate forum;
- 2.1.5. To have knowledge of the culture (local and Church) where the local SAP is established;
- 2.1.6. To have the ability and flexibility to give the necessary time to the position.
- 2.1.7. Availability to establish and maintain communication exchanges with PCPM if applicable;
- 2.1.8. Have experience of media work.

C. DIRECTION

3. Agreement for participants and Chair

3.1 *Commitment:*

- 3.1.2. Panel members via its Chair are to provide advice to the Episcopal Conference on prevention, protection, and healing issues presented to them by the Episcopal Conference or developed internally by the SAP. With regard to information sought by the Episcopal Conference, particular issues of interest will be presented to the SAP, through its Chair.
- 3.1.3. The local SAP Chair is to provide general minutes or summaries of each meeting within 2 weeks of a meeting, along with a list of recommendations in the area of the prevention, healing and protection of victims/survivors for the local Church through the President of the Episcopal Conference.
- 3.1.4. The local SAP may also be presented with specific questions from the local Episcopal Conference President through the Chair for their thoughts and advice. These questions will be presented to the local SAP who will share the responses the President of the Episcopal Conference.
- 3.1.5. The local SAP may also be asked to provide advice to the respective Episcopal Conference on those issues presented them by the President of the Episcopal Conference.

3.2 *Communication:*

- 3.2.1. The Chair will coordinate all communications internal to the panel with regards the activities of said panel in a clear and transparent manner. He/she will be copied in all correspondence be it digital or written. He/she will copy respective panel members in all communications that regard them directly.
- 3.2.2. Communications with the respective Episcopal Conferences will be coordinated by the local SAP Chair who will refer all requests/responses to the local SAP.

3.3. *Recruitment:*

The local Episcopal Conference President will appoint the members of the local SAP whose members will then elect their Chair.

3.4. Confidentiality:

- 3.4.1. Every person who accepts in various ways to be involved in the SAP is invested with one of the most important functions for the Church: listening to the victims, the survivors and their families and helping them heal from the hurt and betrayal.
- 3.4.2. Precisely because of the seriousness of this partnership, which deals with painful and serious moments of life, every person who participates in a SAP promoted by PCPM - in offering her/his valuable contribution - must also accept **to treat all experiences and information with the utmost human and personal respect due to the privacy of others.**

D. WORKING MODALITY:

4.1 Safe space and process

- 4.1.1. Safe space and processes will be guaranteed for meetings and proper physical and emotional boundaries will be made explicit and enforced. Members will be free to participate/share or not to participate/share as they feel so moved.
- 4.1.2. The process will also include respect for emotional boundaries and thus there is no coercion either physically or emotionally. Members can disengage and/or leave at any time.

4.2 Frequency:

- 4.2.1. At least quarterly during their mandate, with the timing of meetings to anticipate the semi-annual plenary assemblies of the local Episcopal Conference.
- 4.2.2. Material support for meetings will be provided by the local Episcopal Conference.

4.3 Media and communication:

- 4.3.1. The local SAP Members and the Chair will observe professional confidentiality in all communications, be they private, public, with press or on social media communication platforms, related to the local SAP's work, including the discussions, reports, and materials developed for the meetings.
- 4.3.2. Local SAP Members will not communicate to any person outside the local SAP the reports, materials, or information developed for the meetings.

- 4.3.4. The chair is delegated to respond to media inquiries on behalf of the local SAP. Prior to making any communication regarding the local SAP's work the Chair will advise the local Episcopal Conference and coordinate such communication.
- 4.3.5. If a panel member has a question or concern regarding contact from the media, he/she should seek advice through the Chair.

“The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults” [...] “it is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People”. (Pope Francis, Letter to the People of God, 20 August 2018)