

Review Board – Breakout Session

CMSM Safeguarding Workshop – October 15, 2025

Purpose: The purpose of a review board is to act in a consultative and advisory capacity to the major superior.

Primary Responsibilities of a Review Board

1. Provide consultation and advice in the assessment of an allegation
2. Review the pastoral response to the victim (and others affected by the abuse)
3. Determine that a proper investigation has been completed to the extent possible
4. Ensure that all legal and canonical notifications have been met
5. Provide consultation and advice in evaluating Safety Plans & compliance
6. Review documents, policies, procedures, and practices of the religious community in safeguarding ministry
7. Maintain an awareness of all relevant documents and current issues

Essential Practices and Procedures

8. Members sign confidentiality agreement, release and hold harmless, undergo background check
9. Written bylaws, board policies and procedures
10. Membership composition & selection (at least 5, max of 2 from community), term limits
11. Chairperson & secretary (liaison to major superior / draft minutes & recommendations)
12. Minimum of one meeting per year; can be in-person, virtual or a conference call
13. Must be informed within 30 days of a new allegation, new or modified safety plan
14. Agreed-upon deliberation and decision process: credible / established; believable & plausible; reasonable & probable; preponderance of evidence
15. Clearly formulated recommendations after receiving sufficient information

Keys to a Successful Review Board

16. Get it in writing, not a verbal or written summary (Praesidium Standard 16, R.5)
17. Don't be bullied by the institute's attorney
18. Keep the major superior honest
19. Don't "do"; focus on reviewing and advising
20. Don't become complacent or grow weary
21. Admit feelings of secondary trauma
22. Don't create a discoverable paper trail

Going Beyond Sexual Abuse of Minors / Issues Arising from Adult Misconduct

23. This is a new frontier, but an age-old problem not confined to the church
24. Policies will need to be enacted separately from those for sexual abuse of a minor
25. Who is a vulnerable adult (person with mental/emotional/physical disabilities or infirmity)
26. Is every adult vulnerable due to power differential and religious beliefs
27. Canon & civil law treat adult misconduct differently than child sexual abuse
28. Solely sexual misconduct vs. all forms of harassment & discrimination
29. Skill set and training of Review Board members for adult misconduct matters
30. Procedures of Review Board in youth abuse should be followed in adult cases

Thomas Artz, Director of Child Protection

Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province / Techny, IL

847-412-1653

tomartz@uscsvd.org