

## CHURCH INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCESS

This is the process to follow when there has been a suspected case of abuse (or a child put at risk of significant harm), which occurred in the context of a church program or while the suspected offender was acting on behalf of the church.

If the suspected incident DID NOT occur in the context of a church program or while the suspected offender was acting on behalf of the church, follow the [External Incident Response Process](#).

STEP	CHECKBOX
1. Write (or have the reporter write) a record of the suspected abuse with as much detail as possible. Attach the record to this Process Sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Together with the other Safe Ministry Supervisors, assess the written report. If there is full consensus that the report is either inadequate, overzealous, unsubstantiated, or does not constitute abuse or risk of significant harm, then this will end the Incident Response Process (attach notes with reasons to this Process Sheet).	<b>END PROCESS / CONTINUE PROCESS</b>
3. The SMSs will	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1 inform the Church Leadership that a suspected incident of abuse has been reported (and if any any external agencies have requested the church to take particular actions)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 if the matter regards a form of suspected sexual abuse, inform the suspected offender that they will be suspended from their responsibilities at the church until the matter is properly investigated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The SMSs will inform the Insurance Provider that a suspected incident of abuse has been reported	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Unless otherwise informed by external agencies (e.g FACS, Police, Ombudsman, etc.) the Church Leadership and the SMSs will...	
5.1 Appoint an Independent Ministry Investigator (IMI) to examine the suspected incident. An appropriate IMI will; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be independent (they should not attend the Church).</li> <li>• Be qualified (they should have appropriate skills to perform the task).</li> <li>• Be experienced (they should have some level of understanding of the processes and consequences)</li> <li>• Liaise with and submit to the any external authority's instructions</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 The SMS will inform the suspected Victim (or Victim's guardians if a child) and the suspected offender that an IMI has been appointed to investigate the incident.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>5.3 The SMS will Provide the IMI with contact details for both the suspected Victim (or Victim’s guardians if a child) and the suspected offender.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5.4 The IMI will contact both the suspected Victim (or Victim’s guardians if a child) and the suspected offender to clarify the incident and the circumstances in which it allegedly happened.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5.5 The IMI will present a formal report to the Church Leadership with a judgement on the validity and severity of the alleged incident, and recommendations (if any) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to avoid such an incident in the future.</li> <li>• What steps should be taken for the suspected offender.</li> <li>• What steps should be taken for the suspected victim.</li> <li>• Attach the IMI’s report to this Process Sheet.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5.6 The Senior Leadership will review the IMI’s report and determine what actions they will implement.</p> <p>NOTE: If a person is found guilty of committing sexual abuse (either by an internal investigation or by a court) their employment/involvement will be terminated.</p> <p>Attach the Leadership’s decisions and plans to this Process Sheet.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5.7 These decisions will be provided to the Insurance Provider and any other external organisation which require them (E.g. State Ombudsman, Office of the Children’s Guardian, etc.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>6. This is the end of the Incident Response Process</p>	

Note: It is not the job of the SMS or the IMI to counsel either the suspected Victim or suspected offender, the SMS and IMI are for liaison and referral purposes only. Either party has a right at all times to have a support person present. A responsible parent/guardian must be present when speaking to someone under 18.