

Who are we?

The Classical Abuse Response Team(CART) is a group of men and women belonging to Christian Reformed Churches of Classis Chatham.

Our mandate includes three areas: Advisory Panel, Education and Support

Advisory Panel: When requested by a church council, to provide a fact finding panel to investigate an allegation of abuse made by an adult survivor against a present or former church leader. The accused must currently be a member of the church making the request. The panel will provide a written report on its findings along with recommendations to council. All members of the Advisory Panel will have had training in the panel process and work under a strict pledge of confidentiality. For more information on the panel process, see "The Advisory Panel Process."

Education: To provide education to classis churches upon request to either pastors, councils, congregations, etc. on the dynamics of abuse and to assist in establishing congregational abuse prevention teams and policies.

Support: To provide initial and ongoing support to victims and/or offenders of abuse in the areas of civil/criminal proceedings, family breakdown, the stress of relationships within the church and personal impacts.

The Advisory Panel Process

Note: If the alleged victim is under 18, the proper authorities, CAS or the police, **must** be notified.

1. The alleged victim contacts a member of the church council where the accused is a member.
2. Once the council is informed, its Executive should contact the Classical Abuse Response Team and the Advisory Panel process begins.
3. The panel meets first with the alleged victim and his/her support person. The allegations are detailed along with any and all supporting evidence, witnesses, written material, etc.
4. The Panel then weighs the information from the meeting to determine probability and gravity. If the Panel finds the allegations not substantiated, the Panel will write a report for the Executive and the process ceases.
5. If the Panel determines the allegation to be both probable and serious, the accused person is notified that an accusation has been brought against him/her and that an Advisory Panel meeting with the alleged victim has taken place. The accused is then invited to present his/her defense before the same Panel.
6. Following the meeting with the accused, a written report of findings and any recommendations by the Advisory Panel will be given to the Council's Executive and a brief summary of the report given to both the alleged victim and accused.
7. The Council has responsibility to proceed with the matter. They may decide to accept the report of the Advisory Panel, or they may decide to conduct their own hearing.
8. If at any time during the above process, the alleged victim decides to take criminal or civil action, the work of the Advisory Panel ceases. The alleged victim retains the right to take this action at any time.