

SafeR Church Glossary of Terms

Abuse: There is no one single, common definition of abuse used by everyone, everywhere. Unless otherwise specified, the word “abuse” in these materials refers to mistreatment of individuals—sexual, physical, spiritual, psychological, emotional, etc.—including bullying and harassment.

Audit: An audit is an examination, a deliberate and deep look at something in order to understand it and how it works, and to identify its inherent and foreseeable risks— positive risks (opportunities) and negative risks (threats). In creating your parish’s Plan, you will audit its Ministries (i.e., programs, activities, services, and the positions associated with them, etc.), as well as its Governance, and its Intangibles.

Duty Of Care: The legal obligation to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm, damage, loss, or injury. The duty of care in any situation depends on the nature of the relationship between the individuals and/or organizations involved.

Enterprise Risk Management: An organization’s deliberate, organized efforts to exercise reasonable care in relation to the inherent and foreseeable risks generated by its enterprises (i.e., what it does, produces, provides, etc.).

Foreseeable: Predictable, something that one is aware of or can see beforehand, e.g., getting hit by a puck is a foreseeable risk in hockey, etc.

Governance: The way(s) an organization is organized, controlled, structured, managed, administered, etc., including its structures and processes.

Inherent: Existing in something as a permanent or characteristic attribute, e.g., abuse is an inherent risk of positions of trust.

Intangibles: A reality—e.g., trust— that has no physical being, that cannot be touched or precisely measured, but that affects some, many, or all aspects of the life of individuals and organizations.

Measures: The specific actions a parish takes in the effort to prevent and respond to abuse and to create SafeR Church. For example, measures include increasing the ratio of adults to youth on a trip, putting windows in the doors of offices, screening for all positions, etc.

Ministries: A collective term that encompasses all the programs, services, and activities that a parish undertakes.

Obligation: A duty—i.e., something one is morally, ethically, or legally (or some combination of the three) required to do.

Personnel: A generic, collective term used here to refer to all those who act on behalf of the parish in some way. Personnel may include clergy, laypeople, paid or unpaid staff, volunteers, interns, part-time or full time, temporary or permanent workers or employees. Unless it is important to distinguish, for example, between employees and volunteers, etc., we’ll use the term personnel

Plan: A blueprint for action. A parish SafeR Church Plan is the blueprint for its abuse prevention and response efforts. Its two primary elements are

- the Policy on which the Plan is grounded,

- a list of specific abuse prevention and response Measures, and a plan for their implementation

Policy: A set of statements that give general guidance and direction to an organization in relation to a specific topic or issue. A parish’s SafeR Church Policy will guide and direct the choice of its specific abuse prevention and response Measures.

Position Of Trust: A situation in which one person is relied on—i.e., a position in which “faith or confidence is placed in the loyalty, veracity, reliability, strength, [good character], etc., of a person”. A position of trust describes a situation in which one person is given a significant degree of power, control, or influence over another person, usually someone more vulnerable because of age, the nature of the relationship, disability, etc. The duty of care in such relationships is intense and the standard of care to be met is high.

Reasonable Care: What a reasonable person (i.e., an individual or an organization) would be expected to do in a given situation, “considering the circumstances and the foreseeable consequences.”

Risk: Uncertainty or possibility. Until recently, only the negative side of risk has been stressed, i.e., risk as “a chance or possibility of danger, loss, injury or other adverse consequences”. But risk—uncertainty, possibility, etc.—also has a positive side, i.e., risk as the chance or possibility of flourishing, of benefit, etc. That’s how we will look at risk here, using the following terms:

Threat: A “negative” risk—i.e., the risk of harm, loss, injury, or damage, the risk that something will go wrong or badly.

Opportunity: A “positive” risk— i.e., the risk of benefit, gain, flourishing, the risk that something will go right or well.

Risk Management: Risk management is the active, deliberate, organized response of individuals and organizations to risk, and to the harm or good that those risks may entail. Traditionally, risk management involved identifying and implementing prudent, reasonable, appropriate, and effective measures to prevent or minimize risks and the extent of harm that might be done if they are realized (i.e., the negative side of risk). The definition of risk management has become broader in recent years and now includes seeking to increase the likelihood and extent to which things will go well (i.e., the positive side of risk).

Standard Of Care: The nature and degree of care required in a specific situation. The standard of care depends primarily on the nature, character, and intensity of the relationship between individuals and/or organizations. The standard of care in relation to positions of trust over vulnerable persons is always high.

Trust: Reliance, confidence, faith placed in someone or something, in the absence of certainty or guarantees about the outcome.

Vulnerable Person: An individual who, by reason of age, disability, or other circumstance is particularly susceptible to influence or harm, especially from people who occupy positions of trust.