



FACT SHEET: The Role of a Support Person

Upon receipt of a Safeguarding Complaint, individual meetings with the Complainant and Respondent will be arranged. You have the right to have a Support Person of your choice to attend meetings with you. Outlined below is an overview of the role of a Support Person.

What is a Support Person?

A Support Person is someone chosen by the person being interviewed to attend the meeting with them.

What is the role of the Support Person?

The role of the Support Person is to:

- Support the person being interviewed from a welfare perspective, ensuring that the person takes a break if they appear to need one;
- Observe the response of the person in order to give appropriate emotional support if the person being interviewed becomes distressed during the meeting;
- Ensure that the person being interviewed has the appropriate opportunity to be heard and respected;
- Ensure that the interviewer allows for the dignity of the person being interviewed;
- Consult privately with the person being interviewed if necessary, during the course of the meeting;
- Take notes if necessary and ask to adjourn any meeting which becomes untenable for the person being interviewed; and
- Provide support and comfort after the meeting has concluded.

Suitability of a Support Person

The Safeguarding Office will not reasonably refuse the presence of a Support Person during meetings. However, there may be occasions where the Support Person selected by the person being interviewed is inappropriate, such as when the Support Person is:

- In a more senior role than the interviewer;
- Is involved in the issues being addressed in the meeting; or

- Is someone who may be disruptive to the process, such as an ex-employee.

If the selected Support Person is inappropriate for the purposes of the meeting, the Safeguarding Office will advise the person being interviewed that they are able to select a more appropriate Support Person in accordance with our obligations under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

What is not the role of a Support Person?

It is not the role of a Support Person to:

- Answer questions on behalf of the person being interviewed;
- Act as the counsellor of the person being interviewed; or
- Represent them in a legal capacity, advocating on their behalf.

Related documents

Located on the Diocese's Safeguarding website are the following documents:

1. **Protocol:** Managing Safeguarding Complaints
2. **Fact Sheet:** What to expect if you are the Subject of a Safeguarding Complaint
3. **Fact Sheet:** What to expect if you are bringing forward a Safeguarding Complaint