

Safeguarding and Care Policy

for the German Protestant Kirchentag

Please note before reading on...

With this Safeguarding and Care Policy, the German Protestant Kirchentag sets out its strategies for the prevention of sexualised discrimination and violence.

We draw attention to the fact that this document describes discrimination and violence. It does so by reproducing discriminatory conditions and descriptions of assaults.

Sexualised discrimination and violence are often directly related to understandings of gender and sexual identities that do not represent all people (groups).

The language used is as gender-appropriate as possible in order to draw attention to the diversity of gender and sexual identities.

Due to a lack of diversity-sensitive surveys on the topic of sexualised discrimination and violence, this policy is unable to address intersectional discrimination, especially in relation to the concept of heteronormative bisexuality.

This policy addresses various aspects that can trigger psychological stress and stressful memories for people who have experienced discrimination and/or violence:

- The document describes (violent) assaults.
- The document talks about the vulnerability of groups of people without an explicit representation of their diversity.
- The policy does not address non-binary gender identities.

If you personally cannot exclude such a risk, please do not read the document alone. Get help, especially in acute cases, e.g. here:

Hotline Gewalt gegen Frauen
Counselling service for women
Tel. 0800 0116016
<https://www.hilfetelefon.de>
(Help through chat and email)

Beratungsstelle gewaltfreileben
Counselling for trans* and
queer people
Tel. 069 43005233
beratung@broken-rainbow.de
gewaltfreileben.org

Hotline Gewalt an Männern
Counselling service for men
Tel. 0800 1239900
beratung@maennerhilfetelefon.de
maennerhilfetelefon.com

If you need further information and/or explanations in another form, you are welcome to contact us via www.kirchentag.de/schutz or schutz@kirchentag.de.

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1 Basics

The German Protestant Kirchentag is supported by the Kirchentag support association (Verein zur Förderung des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentages e.V.) and the respective "implementing association" of a German Protestant Kirchentag (currently 39. Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag Hannover 2025 e.V.). They undertake to respect this policy with regard to the working conditions of their staff and volunteers.

1.1. Need for a Safeguarding and Care Policy

The German Protestant Kirchentag is committed to living the Christian faith in public. Many people come together in the various areas of work involved in its planning, implementation and follow-up. Preventing sexualised discrimination and violence, as well as dealing with cases of abuse, has been a constant topic in society for many years, also in church structures. The Kirchentag addresses this issue. Due to the special nature of this church gathering, a comprehensive safeguarding and care policy is required that takes into account both the specific organisational structure and the large number of people involved.

The Safeguarding and Care Policy sets out a safeguarding mandate that obliges all staff, volunteers and participants to take responsibility for the safety of the people entrusted to them and, beyond that, for all persons who come into contact with the Kirchentag in the broadest sense.

This Safeguarding and Care Policy defines the minimum standards for the German Protestant Kirchentag, presenting and explaining communication structures. The Kirchentag is aware that the policy must be constantly adapted to newly emerging dimensions of as yet unknown forms of violence.

1.2 Sexualised discrimination and violence

Sexualised discrimination and violence constitute a violation of personal rights and an attack on the dignity of the person concerned. A characteristic of the behaviour is that it exclusively targets the integrity of another person. This form of violence is never solely related to sexuality - it is also about exercising power over the other person.

The issue of sexualised discrimination and violence is very slowly becoming less of a taboo topic. The great publicity this issue has received in recent years has led to an awareness of the failure of society in all its areas. In particular, institutions which, according to their mission statement should have acted protectively and impartially for those concerned, did not do so. Instead, there have been systematic cover-ups and silencing.

An above-average amount of sexual violence continues to be directed against young women, with an enormous range of abuse – from unwanted physical contact to rape. A study by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2004) showed on the basis of a representative survey that a total of 58.2 % of all women interviewed had experienced sexual harassment. Almost half (49 %) of the women who stated that they had already been sexually harassed had experienced situations in which they felt seriously threatened or were afraid for their personal safety. In addition, 9% of women who had experienced sexual harassment reported that one or more situations had led to unwanted sexual intercourse or physical violence. Experience shows that the number of unreported cases is probably much higher. Due to this everyday experience of many people, the premise also applies here: any case of violence is taken seriously and always has consequences for the perpetrators.

There is no universal definition of what sexualised discrimination and violence includes, what it does not and who is impacted by it. Sexualised discrimination and violence are generally understood to include gross sexual violations of boundaries, sexualised violence and criminally relevant forms of sexual abuse. The transitions from boundary-violating misconduct to sexualised violence can be fluid. As a rule, there are always borderline cases that cause uncertainty. It is therefore important to address ambiguities in observed behaviour and to provide professional clarification. The incident should be clarified according to the principle laid down in this safeguarding and care policy (see chapter 5).

Sexualised violence is always an act that violates boundaries. However, we need distinguish between unintentional action and assaultive/coercive acts, which are then intentional.

Unintentional violations of boundaries can be corrected in everyday interaction. The basis for this is, on the one hand, sensitivity for an appropriate proximity-distance relationship with clear rules and, on the other, a climate in which boundary-violating behaviour can be openly named and such actions do not take place in future.

Abusive action, i.e. intentional and/or planned, implies a conscious disregard for the shame boundaries of the other person. This is assessed as a perpetrator strategy, which represents a targeted preparation for sexualised violence as it tests the person concerned.

Coercive actions can always have legal action as a consequence.

A high level of awareness is therefore necessary and required for every boundary violation in order to define appropriate measures (see chapter 4).

This Safeguarding and Care Policy is based on the principle "in case of doubt, always for the person concerned". So first there has to be a conversation - in the case of minors with a trusted person - in order to understand the individual case. Then appropriate measures are taken (see chapter 4).

Forms of sexualised discrimination and violence are for example:

- degrading sexualised remarks about persons or their bodies
- repeated unwanted contact/(cyber)stalking
- sexualised insult, abuse, harassment, exclusion in the digital sphere (cyber-grooming/cyberharassment/hate speech/cyberbullying)
- exposing, blackening (revenge porn/non-consensual pornography)
- coercion, blackmail (sexting, sextortion)
- exhibitionism
- non-consensual showing of pornography
- identity abuse and theft
- fraud, marriage scamming (love or romance scamming), lover boys
- open threat of violence
- perpetrator touches the body of the person concerned or forces them to touch their own
- non-consensual kisses, French kisses
- perpetrator masturbates in front of the person concerned or the person is forced to masturbate in front of the perpetrator
- attempted or completed vaginal, anal or oral rape

1.3 Abuse of power structures

Sexualised violence is an abuse of power structures and trust. This is particularly evident in institutions due to various risk factors.

Examples of risk factors include:

- closed, compartmentalised structures with strong dependencies and high loyalty pressure towards people as well as the cause itself
- rigid hierarchies with large power imbalances
- lack of pedagogical methods
- lack of transparency in the organisation of work and high staff turnover
- inadequate professional control and no binding rules for border-compliant handling

- insufficient separation of work and private life by those authorised and bound by directives
- trust and dependencies in the particular context of faith and spirituality

At the German Protestant Kirchentag, the power structures differ, depending on whether it is the preparatory period, accompanied by the Kirchentag offices, and the actual event, accompanied by many volunteers.

1.3.1 Hierarchies in the Kirchentag offices

The offices of the Kirchentag represent clear responsibilities and a hierarchical structure characterised by decision-making authority in certain areas. There are three Executive Board areas with various staff positions, department heads and staff members.

A department is headed by a director and is sometimes subdivided into teams. In order to deal with specific tasks, officers can be appointed or staff positions can be established which report directly to the Executive Board.

Setting up a Kirchentag office every two years in a new host city entails a certain turnover of staff and at the same time a strong social fabric between those who move together to a new city. Much knowledge of how to perform tasks is passed on through those with experience, leading to a certain hierarchy between 'old' and 'new', depending on the length of affiliation.

It is true for all Kirchentag offices that the intermittent, very intensive work with many business trips, planning meetings and frequent overnight stays has a high potential for diffuse relationship structures. The process of advising groups often extends into the evening hours. The risk is very high in these informal encounters and requires a strong sense of awareness among the individual employees so that they react appropriately in case of doubt and protect others, if necessary.

1.3.2 Hierarchies during the German Protestant Kirchentag

In order to implement the planning, but also to facilitate making decisions at short notice, the hierarchical structure changes during the actual Kirchentag, when further dependencies arise through decision-making powers.

This manifests itself through an identity card system that reflects decision-making powers. Hierarchies arise in the most diverse constellations, for example between the coordination table and reception group or programme planner, between technical or organisational groups and contributors, between staff and volunteers, as well as between organisational groups and stewards.

1.4 Objectives of the Safeguarding and Care Policy

The policy's dedicated goal is to empower the persons concerned with well-founded support so that they show agency in taking control of the next steps. The assessment must always depend on the gravity of the experience of violence. The principle of this policy is that any assault must always have a consequence for the perpetrator. The victims are supported if they decide to file a complaint.

The principle applies: what is – and what is not – boundary-crossing, discriminatory behaviour in individual cases depends solely on the individual lines drawn by the person concerned; it is not laid down in general terms. The position of the Kirchentag is to act on behalf of the person concerned. The latter is never to blame, it is the perpetrator!

A distinction must be made between those who are capable of communicating border-crossing, discriminatory behaviour and those who cannot due to their age or physical/mental abilities. The latter group requires an adapted code and special attention to their vulnerability.

2 Scope

The German Protestant Kirchentag is characterised, on the one hand, by different association structures in which staff work and, on the other, by different 'time phases' in which staff and volunteers prepare for the Kirchentag.

These structures and phases are named below and the scope of this safeguarding and care policy is determined in all these areas.

2.1 Kirchentag offices

At the German Protestant Kirchentag, people work for the employing association (Verein zur Förderung des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentages e.V.) and the respective implementing association (currently 39. Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag Hannover 2025 e.V.). This safeguarding and care policy applies to them as well as to freelancers, federal volunteers, employees under public or private law of a sending church and all other persons who regularly work in the Kirchentag offices.

2.2 Preparatory phase

In the preparatory phase, preparatory bodies and project planning groups work intensively together. This includes meetings with both full groups and subgroups. In addition, there are larger "preparatory meetings" for individual topics. This Safeguarding and Care Policy applies to all these digital and in-person meetings without exception.

2.3 During the Kirchentag

This Safeguarding and Care Policy applies to all those involved in the Kirchentag - participants, contributors, stewards, volunteers in the organisation and on occasion.

Participants: have a ticket.

Contributors: shape the content of the Kirchentag. They have a contributor pass.

Volunteers in the organisation

Volunteering within organisational structures of the Kirchentag includes the following groups of people:

- stewards
- “fire brigades” (leading stewards)
- representatives of local congregations

Volunteers for the occasion

People volunteer for the German Protestant Kirchentag without experiencing intensive involvement in organisational structures:

- Hosts and stewards for decentralised programmes

Furthermore, the content of this Safeguarding and Care Policy shall also apply to the participating employees of external companies and institutions.

3 Existing structures

Before the introduction of this Safeguarding and Care Policy, there were facilities at the German Protestant Kirchentag that fitted into the structure and also dealt with safeguarding and care in cases of sexualised violence. These remain in force and have been integrated into this Safeguarding and Care Policy.

3.1 Standing Committee on Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care

The Kirchentag’s Standing Committee on Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care sets up the centre of the same name at a given Kirchentag.

During the Kirchentag, the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care offers people in personal crises and stressful situations the opportunity to talk as individuals, couples or in groups. The talks take place in a prepared setting in the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care, at the Market of Opportunities and at other locations. All counsellors are trained psychologists or pastoral workers with additional training and qualifications.

Its main tasks:

- designing the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care (including "market counselling", "youth counselling", "thematic counselling")
- selecting counsellors and staff at the "reception" of the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care
- establishing a "logistics group" to accompany the organisational and administrative preparations for the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care
- choosing the topics for group programmes and conducting the corresponding discussion groups during the Kirchentag
- offering counselling in sign language and cooperating with the Inclusion Centre in the event of crisis interventions
- holding a preparatory meeting with all counsellors of the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care
- evaluating the Centre for Psychological Counselling and Pastoral Care
- arranging crisis intervention and pastoral accompaniment in the event of special incidents during the Kirchentag
- establishing contact with the local psychiatric outpatient department of the respective host city

3.2 "Watchful and active", the safeguarding policy of the steward services

For stewards, the 36th Kirchentag in Berlin (2017) had the safeguarding policy motto "Watchful and Active". It contained a code of conduct that was made available to all stewards and serves as the basis for the code of conduct of this Safeguarding and Care Policy (see appendices):

"As a steward, you have the right,

... to be treated fairly. No one has the right to threaten or scare you. No matter whether this is with looks, words, pictures or actions. No one is allowed to blackmail you, exclude you, treat you in a derogatory way or hit you.

... to decide for yourself when, where and by whom you want to be photographed or filmed.

... to decide for yourself how close someone comes to you, when, how and where. No one may touch, massage, caress, kiss or urge you to do so with someone else against your will.

... to say NO and to defend yourself when someone hurts your feelings or those of someone else! You can say NO with looks, words or through your body posture!

... not to participate if something scares you, if you find something disgusting or if it makes you feel uncomfortable. This can also be a test of courage or humiliating or scary traditions within your group.

... to get support from others. If you feel uncomfortable or unwell, getting help is not sneaky or a betrayal!"

3.3 Kirchentag psychologist

The Kirchentag usually appoints a psychologist who is structurally linked to the organisational management and is on call particularly for the main staff and the tutors in the stewards' area.

4 Application

The German Protestant Kirchentag is a large-scale event, characterised by encounters and fellowship between different people. This is accompanied by the possibility of power abuse and sexualised violence. The sustained application of this Safeguarding and Care Policy therefore calls for an overall strategy through which the abuse of power at the various levels can be identified and prevented.

4.1 Persons to be considered

All those described in 2.4 must apply it:

- staff of the Kirchentag offices
- participants
- governing bodies
- standing committees and working groups
- project planning groups
- organisational management
- stewards
- “fire brigades” (leading stewards)
- Kirchentag ambassadors (e.g. for communal accommodation, for the Evening of Encounters, ...)
- contributors
- employees of external companies/institutions

4.2 Action and responsibilities for application

Action	Responsibility (responsible for the process steps and ensuring they are carried out)	Target group
Adoption of the Safeguarding and Care Policy by the Kirchentag Presidium	General Secretariat	All persons within the scope
Inclusion in the Kirchentag constitution by its Presidial Assembly	General Secretariat	All persons within the scope
Establishment of a Safeguarding and Care Policy steering committee	Board of Directors	All persons within the scope
Appointment and training of safeguarding and care officers (contact persons) in the spirit of this policy	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	
A direct help number is set up and communicated during the Kirchentag with 24-hour availability of contact persons. Clarification of accessibility at night or redirection of the help number to visitor services	Visitor services, Protection and Care steering committee	All persons within the scope
Hall managers are trained and names communicated as contact persons for their venues	Steward services	Project planning

Staff and volunteers at the service telephone/helpdesk/social media are trained as contact persons and their names communicated	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	Service point staff and firefighters, helpline services, social media
Cooperating counselling centres for the respective Kirchentag city and for the Fulda office are contacted and their names communicated	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	Staff
Communication of contacts of cooperating counselling centres for participants, volunteers and contributors	Visitor services, steward services	All persons within the scope
Information on counselling locations and contact options on information towers, in the A-Z of the programme booklet, in the “stewards’ compass” and as portfolio notes	BauTec, programmes department, steward services	All persons within the scope
Information on counselling services and contact options e.g. in registration confirmations, on the website, push messages on the app, via chat, a cookie banner and a notice in analog packages for participants	Visitor services, press, marketing, IT, steward services	All persons within the scope
Website with detailed information on the Safeguarding and Care Policy, and contact addresses	Press	All persons within the scope
Use app for awareness-raising and information (link to website, push messages)	Programme department, organisational management	All persons within the scope
Establishment of a recognisable logo or symbol	Marketing	All persons within the scope
Safe places have visible, standardised marking everywhere	BauTec, organisation	Participants, contributors, stewards, speakers, management, leading and “hard-core” stewards
Accessible explanatory video	Inclusion staff unit	All persons within the scope
Slide with awareness-raising advice in basic PowerPoint	Knowledge management	All persons within the scope
Training for accommodation leadership in publication and at information events	Visitor services, steward services	accommodation management
Training of school caretakers in a publication and at information event	Visitor services, steward services	school caretaker
Recurring part in training week for existing and new staff in the Kirchentag office	Knowledge management	Staff
Part of a seminar of the federal volunteers	Federal Volunteer Service, supervisors, staff	Federal Volunteer Service

Awareness-raising project groups and standing committees	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	Project planning groups and standing committee members
Special awareness-raising of participants in dealing with vulnerable groups of people	Programmes	Contributors at the Centre for Children and Young People, Inclusion Centre, Evening of Encounters
Special awareness-raising about discrimination-sensitive communication in the digital world (etiquette etc.)	Programmes, press	contributors, stewards
Acceptance of the Safeguarding and Care Policy by declaration of consent to it or terms of use when registering	Visitor services, steward services	All persons within the scope
Standard text on the Safeguarding and Care Policy in all tender texts and contracts with service-providers and venues	Bautec, BeLog, Orga	Service-providers, operators of venues, operators of accommodation agencies
Press releases	Press	interested public
Displaying Code of Conduct in communal accommodation	Visitor services, steward services	those sleeping in communal accommodation, its management and teams
Reference to Code of Conduct at the beginning of a digital event	Programmes department, IT, programme presentation	All persons within the scope
Reference in programme publication to Safeguarding and Care Policy and contact addresses	Programme presentation, marketing	All persons within the scope
Memo with chain of actions (cf. 5 "Intervention") for employees of the service telephone in the office	Organisation, Safeguarding and Care steering committee	Staff, leading and other stewards
Inclusion in guidelines for job interviews	Staff, staff representative body, works council	Interview guide
Note in job advertisement	Staff, staff representative body, works council	Applicants
The results of an annual survey on psychological stress at the workplace with regard to the topic of sexualised violence and discrimination and how to deal with it are made transparent and, as far as possible, documented	Staff representative body, works council, occupational safety committee, Executive Board	Staff
Awareness-raising notices on corridors in the Kirchentag offices	Marketing, cleaning services	Staff, visitors
Inclusion of the latest Safeguarding and Care Policy in the respective house rules	BeLog, Executive Board	Staff, visitors

Networking on safeguarding and care policies with festivals, other events and associations	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	Organisers of other major events, networks of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), “Breaking the taboo” working group
Evaluation of the policy and assessment of the actions, e.g. checking within market research	Safeguarding and Care steering committee	
Sensitive handling of trigger warnings	Include in the programme	All persons within the scope

4.3 Safe places

Safe places are physical locations or persons to whom victims turn for help. In order to ensure spatial protection, both direct contact with contact persons and physical safe places should be made possible. During the Kirchentag itself, safe places are set up and sign-posted at suitable locations.

The Kirchentag contact persons are stationed at sensitive locations (e.g. Youth Centre). They provide spatial protection for these centres.

At all other Kirchentag locations, the offices of the hall managers or event leaders are usually safe places. These are the places and groups to which impacted persons can turn for help. The hall managers or event leaders, or those responsible for reception and organisation, will immediately establish contact with the Kirchentag contact persons and discuss what to do next.

4.4 Safeguarding and Care steering committee

The Safeguarding and Care steering committee is convened by the Kirchentag’s Board of Directors and works with operational responsibility for applying the Safeguarding and Care Policy at the Kirchentag.

It has the following central tasks:

- expanding or adapting the Safeguarding and Care Policy
- preparing training materials to implement the Safeguarding and Care Policy
- managing content information
- ensuring responsiveness to the issue
- communicating steps to apply the policy
- guaranteeing that case documentation is kept on file
- reflecting on the case and process

4.5 Safeguarding and Care support group at the Kirchentag

In order to handle and accompany the Kirchentag with regard to its Safeguarding and Care policy, the Safeguarding and Care support group was set up by the Presidium in agreement with the Presidial Assembly under §22 of the Kirchentag constitution.

This support group comprises up to eight members who are not employed by the Kirchentag and who support the Safeguarding and Care steering committee in handling and applying the Safeguarding and Care Policy by providing professional expertise.

5 Intervention

Action plan for dealing with reports of sexualised violence

Accusations of all kinds must be consistently followed up in a spirit of justice for those affected. The steps to be taken as a consequence must be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Weighing up which consequences are necessary, in order to avoid distress in the truest sense of the word, calls for a decisive and transparent procedure. This must be based on what is known so far (statement by the person concerned or what has been observed).

In the following, we describe the standardised procedure provided by this Safeguarding and Care Policy, starting from an incident.

5.1 What should I do if a person confides in me?

If a person suggests or tells you about an incident of sexual discrimination or violence, the following tips may be helpful.

Keep calm and react as objectively as possible

The person needs someone who listens calmly. This is especially true of children and adolescents who are overwhelmed with reactions such as horror and panic and then usually withdraw their reports.

Take those affected seriously

As a rule, victims, especially children and adolescents, play down their reports of abuse - or they keep quiet about the experience in order to protect the perpetrator and/or their trusted caregivers. If the experiences are played down, such as "It's not that bad!" or "It's best if you forget everything as soon as possible", this supports the assessment of the perpetrator.

Avoid probing questions

Frequent questioning signals that there may be doubts about what is being said. Leave it up to the person to decide what they want to say and when. You usually do not need to say much. What is important is that you are there for the person and put that across. It is important to agree on the further course of action with the person.

Never blame the person concerned

Tell the victim explicitly that she/he is not to blame. The responsibility always lies with the perpetrator.

Accept the feelings of those affected

Victims, for example children, have the right to love the perpetrator despite everything. If you cannot cope with this yourself, seek support (yourself).

Do not blame the person concerned

Do not blame the person, even if she/he confided in you a while after the event. Rather, praise them for having the courage to speak up now.

This has also happened to other people

Tell the person that what has happened to them has happened to other people.

Show yourself to be trustworthy

Do not make hasty promises and promises you cannot keep. Do not raise false hopes.

Get help

In any case, seek support from the contact persons mentioned in this safeguarding and care policy or in a counselling centre (see chapter 6) in order to sort out your feelings and thoughts and take further steps to protect those concerned.

5.2 What should I do if I suspect sexual discrimination or violence against a person?

If you suspect sexualised violence or discrimination, the first thing to do is to get an overview of the actual facts in order to be able to act appropriately to protect those affected.

Keep calm

The suspicion of sexualised violence or discrimination triggers diverse and often conflicting emotions. So the first thing to do is to stay calm and plan the next steps.

Perceive signals from those impacted

Not all of those impacted show behavioural problems. Only rarely, for example, are there physical traces. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to clear changes in behaviour. It is important to understand their behaviour as a strategy or "symptom language".

Strengthen the contact to the person

Be open, interested and willing to talk. The more you allow the person to have his/her own opinion and evaluation, the easier it is to reveal the secrets bothering them.

Note what you observe

It is often helpful to record observations of behavioural changes in bullet points. On the one hand, this serves the purpose of internal clarification – i.e. the question of how these changes are to be classified – and on the other, of documentation that may be necessary later. This also includes recording all physical, psychological, social and family circumstances and changes.

Seek exchange with others

If you have to deal with impacted persons in the context of the Kirchentag, talk to other responsible people in your environment about possible changes in their behaviour.

Inform the contact persons

Discuss the suspicion with a contact person at the Kirchentag. The contact details of the contact persons for the Kirchentag can be found in section 6 of this safeguarding and care policy.

It is important that further steps are planned by a contact person and, if necessary, in consultation with a specialist counselling centre. In the discussion with the contact person, you can also address the following points on your own:

- Who will keep in touch with the person concerned?
- What about the possibility of filing criminal charges? (It is important to know that you are not obliged to file a criminal complaint).
- In the case of children or young people, who tells the parents, if necessary?
- Who contacts the competent youth welfare office in the case of children or adolescents, if necessary?

Clarify your suspicions with the help of a specialist counselling service

You can also clear up your suspicions with the help of one of the specialist counselling centres listed in section 6 of this safeguarding and care policy. Keep in mind that all behavioural problems may have a variety of causes. Possible sexualised violence or discrimination is one of them. It is therefore important not to interpret too early, but equally not to trivialise the signals.

Assessing your own strengths correctly

Be aware of your attitude and your personal limits. No one can solve such a problem alone!

5.3 Forming an intervention team

If a suspected or assumed case becomes known, or if one of the contact persons of the Kirchentag (see chapter 6) learns of a suspected or assumed case, an intervention team will be formed immediately to shed more light on the matter. The contact person will report to the general secretary (preparatory phase) or the organisational management (during the Kirchentag itself).

The intervention team is convened by the following three persons:

- The general secretary in the preparatory phase /the organisational management during the Kirchentag
- If applicable, the contact person will already be involved.
- Someone from the Safeguarding and Care support group

Composition of the intervention team

An intervention team is formed on a case-by-case basis and comprises at least three and at most six people. In addition to the general secretary (preparatory phase) / a member of the organisational management (during the Kirchentag), the contact person involved, if any, is part of the intervention team. If necessary, substitutes for the general secretary / organisational management can be appointed.

Other members may be (attention should be paid to the professionalism necessary for the intervention team when appointing them):

- one person from the Safeguarding and Care steering committee
- further contact persons of the Kirchentag offices as described in chapter 6
- experienced volunteers with a professional background who are confident in this task
- staff members from the respective departments involved
- employee representation or works council

The intervention team is also encouraged to seek support from external counselling services, as required.

5.4 Procedure of the intervention

The entire process is accompanied and shaped by the intervention team until its conclusion. The more complex and serious the incident, the more indispensable it is that the members of the process involved have a long-term understanding of the problem. Therefore, it is necessary that the steps taken by the intervention team are explained again and again during the process.

The objectives of the intervention team's work are (depending on the severity of the incident):

- to open up suitable spaces in which the person concerned feels safe
- to report and to accompany the clarification process with all consequences
- to open up possible communication spaces for victims and perpetrators, if this is desired.

5.4.1 Beginning of the intervention: differentiation

A one-off sexual violation of boundaries is to be assessed differently in the choice of consequence than structural sexualised violence or offences against sexual self-determination. The classification at which, for example, a suspension or exclusion from the German Protestant Kirchentag takes place must be determined on a case-by-case basis and also communicated transparently in each case.

For that reason, after an abused person has contacted a contact person directly or indirectly, or abuse is suspected and an intervention team has been formed, the following questions must first be clarified before further steps are taken.

A) Asymmetry

Consider the components of power, age and dependency relationships for the following question:

What is the relationship between the person concerned and the perpetrator?

Child to Child | Adolescent to Adolescent | Adolescent to Child | Adult to Child/Adolescent | Adult to Adult?

B) Frequency and time frame

- Is this a one-off assault?
- Is it a case of repeated assaults?
- Is it structural sexualised violence?
- In what time frame did the sexualised violence take place?

C) Differentiation of sexual violence

Was the sexualised violence boundary-crossing?

without intention - out of ignorance - no perception of shame boundaries - not (erotically) power-intended

Was the sexualised violence abusive?

deliberate - planned action - disregard of shame boundaries - (erotic) power-intended

Was the sexualised violence coercive?

as with assault - offences against sexual self-determination according to German penal code (StGB)

D) Assumption / suspicion

The suspicion is articulated by third parties who have observed or experienced a situation that leaves them with an uneasy feeling. The suspicion is expressed by the person concerned by reporting the assault. It should be noted that both situations, as long as they happened in one of the Kirchentag offices, must be handled differently from during the Kirchentag or in the context of preparing for large events involving volunteers.

If a suspicion or an assumption is reported between staff in the professional environment, the first priority is to initiate a clarification process that is appropriate for the person concerned, but also to initiate a process that de-escalates the conflict as far as possible. It is important that everyone, other than the person concerned, knows how to deal with the tension in the work environment in a professional and trained manner. It is likewise important to

distinguish between statement and contradiction, and not between true and untrue, in a spirit of justice for those concerned.

E) Levels of suspicion

Is it a **proven** suspicion?

There is very strong indirect or direct evidence.

Witnesses, photos, writing, statements by the perpetrator

Is it a **reasonable** suspicion?

- *The present suspicions are considerable and plausible.*
- *Detailed reports, explicit acts of a sexual nature (verbal / physical)*

Is it a **vague** suspicion?

- *Suspicious that (also) suggest sexual violence.*
- *Sexualised behaviour, suspicious remarks.*

Is it an **unproven** suspicion?

- *Suspicious can be ruled out beyond doubt by explanations.*
- *Misunderstood statements, unambiguous situations without border-crossings*

F) Conflict history

In most cases, perpetrators build up closeness and trust in order to be able to assault/coerce. Hence it can basically be assumed that no conflict existed at the time of the alleged behaviour. However, when people are in conflict with one another, "face-destroying" accusations/assumptions often become part of the "weapons arsenal" as of a certain level of escalation.

If the alleged behaviour is expressed within a history of conflict, this must be taken into account. If necessary, a conflict management exercise may be a useful intervention here.

So we must make the following distinctions:

- There is no known conflict.
- There was already a conflict before the alleged behaviour.
- There is a conflict after the alleged conduct.

In the clarification process, it is essential to clearly name the observed or alleged misconduct as the problem to be dealt with and to treat all actors respectfully and with dignity.

5.4.2 Further steps in the intervention: involvement and feedback

The intervention team reflects on and discusses the individual steps of the process in the team. The course of the process is openly communicated. It is essential that clear and unambiguous communication takes place with all those impacted by the process. This is one of the ways to make the process de-escalate the conflict. Open communication about the individual steps strengthens trust in the process itself and promotes clarification.

The guiding principle is the perspective of the person concerned, the core statement (facts) of the assumption or accusation and the resulting duty of care. The person concerned should be enabled to describe the case only once, if possible.

Based on this, the following two directions of communication towards a solution should be regarded as

fundamental:

- **Involvement/participation:** clarification of the relation to, and participation in, the clarification process (who should be involved in the process, when and in what way?).
- **Feedback/information management:** feedback on progress and results of the clarification process - who should be informed about (interim) results of the process, when and in what way?

Different forms of participation in the intervention can be identified. Note that the boundaries between the groups are not clearly delineated and the transitions are fluid.

- The intervention team** acts as an advisory body. Operational decisions are made by the legal representatives of the two associations (leadership).
The intervention team forms the core of the clarification process. Impacted persons are allowed to co-determine the team and exclude individuals. After its composition, this team plans and coordinates the further process.
In constant consultation with person concerned, they are responsible for shaping the process. The intervention team is under the responsibility of the association leadership, who is informed about the process but does not receive comprehensive information. The intervention team is not bound by instructions at this point, but is only obliged to report on the process to a limited extent in order to create transparency and to enable the leadership to address possible tensions across departments and to steer them in a meaningful way.
- A special role is given to **those participating in/impacted by the process**. They are considered to have a special interest in the development and resolution. We distinguish between internal and external process participants. Internal process participants are defined as being within the staff. External process participants are defined as being from all the other groups mentioned in chapter 2 (scope).
By being involved in the process design, the process participants become an important authority. They can exert pressure, but also define negotiating spaces and contribute to clarification with their resources. Here, too, full transparency is of enormous importance, as it is precisely those involved in the process who bring the incident into the public eye.
- Interested parties** are the social resonance space in which implementation efforts take place. They influence the actions of those involved both positively and negatively. Especially due to the recent growth in awareness of sexualised discrimination and violence, and of an appropriate approach and relentless processing with sustained structural changes, open communication in this social resonance space is of absolute priority.

The following groups of people must therefore be considered in their role when getting involved in the process, and must be appropriately informed about the process in each case:

- leadership of the associations > responsible for the implementation and the process
- stakeholders (participants in the process such as victims, perpetrators and the relatives of both)
- public environment that can have a lasting influence on the process

The intervention will call for different decision-making processes which, depending on the situation, focus more on information and more on dialogue. The following questions must therefore be considered in the process design and the decisions that go along with it:

Involvement (participation)

- Who should be involved in the process and how should they take part in the discussions?
- Whose perspective or concerns should still be taken into account so that the risk is well described and understood in the associations - and so that the possible solutions are also supported by all?

- What framework should be provided from above (provision of resources, instructions, safety guarantees, etc.) so that everyone can engage in the process?
- Who should be informed about the results of the clarification and the consequences (or some of them)?
- Whose consent or assistance is needed for the intervention to be implemented?

Feedback (information)

- Who should be informed about what and when?
- From whom do the intervention team and the leadership involved need feedback, approval or some other form of support?

5.4.3 Completion of the intervention: documentation and evaluation

An intervention is concluded after the process has been completed. The following steps must be observed:

The intervention team is responsible for documenting the case and process procedure.

The case documentation is done by the head of personnel in the case of staff members, and by the Safeguarding and Care steering committee in all other cases. The filing is passed on to the respective working group across the organisation. Case-specific information must be protected with the utmost sensitivity.

At the end of the process, an appropriate evaluation must be carried out by the intervention team. Any conspicuous cases will be forwarded to the Safeguarding and Care steering committee. If it becomes clear during the processing of the suspicion or assumption that certain structures promote sexualised violence, the Kirchentag undertakes to make lasting changes to these structures.

The intervention team will communicate it clearly when terminates its work; the intervention team will then disband.

6 Contact persons

In counselling situations, spaces are created for those seeking counselling in which they can report on their problem situation or their challenge and receive understanding, information and appropriate links to qualified persons or organisations. Following on from this, they can apply for further information or assistance and/or receive practical recommendations for action to improve their situation.

The relationship between guidance seekers and guidance practitioners is always characterised by a difference in agency. Guidance seekers are usually driven by a pressure of suffering or a lack of access to information, whereas guidance practitioners do not have a comparable emotional starting situation and have direct access to information and structures (peer-to-peer guidance may be an exception here). Counsellors need to be aware of this.

Even if the sensitive handling of counselling situations is learned in training courses for pastoral workers and social workers, this is no guarantee that a corresponding attitude will be reflected in behaviour. People in church ministry also need to be tested before they are employed as counsellors.

In particular, people who turn to counsellors because they have experienced (sexualised) violence need special protection in counselling situations against renewed assaults. People seeking counselling must be able to report their fear of being abused again and be sure that the perpetrator will be blamed.

6.1 Prerequisites for contact persons

The prerequisites for qualified contact persons in the area of (sexualised) violence in the Kirchentag offices as well as during the Kirchentag are therefore as follows:

- They have a qualification in counselling people who have experienced violence and have ideally acquired

skills in women's or other counselling centres in the field of sexualised violence.

- They have reflected on their role as counsellors and act on behalf of those seeking counselling.
- They are diversity-sensitive and not missionary-minded.
- They are team-players and do not shy away from professional discussions in a care team.
- They have a clean police record of good conduct (*erweitertes Führungszeugnis*).
- They provide counselling exclusively on the premises or in the context set aside for this purpose.
- They refer individuals to further institutions and ensure that those seeking counselling are offered long-term support, if desired. After handing over the case, they no longer contact the person concerned without being asked.
- They take part in a training course on the Kirchentag's Safeguarding and Care Policy.
- If necessary, they sign a declaration of commitment with their registration in which they acknowledge this prevention policy as well as a declaration of confidentiality.

Boundary violations and assaults by counsellors in counselling situations will be investigated regardless of the position of the counsellor.

6.2 Cooperating counselling centres

In Fulda as well as in the city of the respective Kirchentag, there is cooperation with at least one counselling centre to which those impacted can turn or to which referrals can be made.

These counselling centres are:

- impartial and confidential
- free of charge
- also available for anonymous counselling at the request of affected persons
- non-denominational and not under church sponsorship
- safe spaces for conversation
- supportive for affected people to act on their own responsibility

The contacts to these counselling centres will be posted in all Kirchentag offices and communicated to the staff in training sessions.

Sources

Our thanks go to *inmedio*, and in particular to Holger Specht, for his support and for providing the materials on which this policy was based. Contact via www.inmedio.de

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[Annexes](#)

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for the German Protestant Kirchentag reads as follows:

You have the right to ...

...be treated fairly. No one has the right to threaten you or make you afraid. No matter whether with looks, words, pictures or deeds! No one may blackmail you, exclude you, treat you pejoratively or beat you!

...decide for yourself when, where and by whom you want to be photographed or filmed.

...decide for yourself how close someone comes to you, when, how and where. No one may touch, massage, caress, kiss or urge you to do so with someone else against your will.

...say NO and fight back when someone hurts your feelings or someone else's! You can say NO with looks, words or through your body posture!

...not participate if something scares you, you find something disgusting or it makes you feel uncomfortable. This can also be tests of courage or humiliating or scary traditions within a group.

...get support from others. If you are uncomfortable or feeling bad, getting help is not telling tales or a betrayal!

Commitment

The German Protestant Kirchentag has adopted a safeguarding mandate in order to provide a welcoming, safe space for all participants. The basic approach is characterised by acceptance, mutual recognition and appreciation. Any form of violating boundaries, discrimination and violence has no place at the Kirchentag. When taking part in any events and activities of the German Protestant Kirchentag, I commit myself to act according to these principles. All further information can be found at [Kirchentag.de/schutz](https://kirchentag.de/schutz).

Site and production regulations

The German Protestant Kirchentag has adopted a safeguarding mandate in order to provide a welcome, safe space for all involved. The basic approach is characterised by acceptance, mutual recognition and appreciation. By working at a Kirchentag venue, everyone on site commits to act according to these principles. There is no place for violating boundaries at the German Protestant Kirchentag.

Checklist: safeguarding and care

Procedure in the event of actual indications or suspicions of cases of sexualised discrimination and violence

This is a support for you. If you are approached, you are a contact person. Every situation is different. However, follow the chain of communication.

This plan of action aims to ensure that a case is told as rarely as possible. If possible, the person concerned should only share the experience once, and preferably in the presence of professionals.

More information at [Kirchentag.de/schutz](https://kirchentag.de/schutz)

Mail contact via schutz@kirchentag.de

As a general rule, **what is and what is not abusive, discriminatory behaviour depends solely on the individual boundaries drawn by the person concerned.**

Forms of sexualised discrimination and violence are, for example:

- degrading sexualised **remarks** about persons or their bodies
- repeated unwanted **contact**/(cyber)stalking
- sexualised **insult**, abuse, harassment, exclusion
- **exposing**, blackening
- **coercion**, extortion
- **exhibitionism**
- non-consensual **showing of pornography**
- **identity abuse** and theft
- **cheating**, marriage fraud, lover boys
- open **threat** of violence
- **unwanted touching** of the body of the affected person or perpetrator forces them to touch their own
- non-consensual **kisses**, French kisses
- perpetrator **masturbates** in front of the person concerned or the person is forced to masturbate in front of the perpetrator
- attempted or completed vaginal, anal or oral **rape**

Procedure for contact persons:

1. Listen actively

Listen calmly to the person's **concerns**. **Avoid in-depth questions**.

Signal **attention**, e.g. by keeping eye contact, making uh-huh sounds.

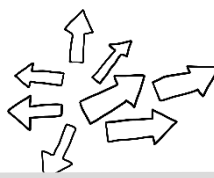
Say that the person is **not alone** and will be helped.



2. Assess the aim of the concern

Does the person want to share **information**?

Do they need **support** urgently?



3. Keep calm

Take a few deep **breaths**.

Such a case is a compelling reason to do so. **Everything else can wait**.

Take the **time** to act consciously.

Note the **reporting chain**.



4. Describe what you are going to do next

"There are people who know specifically about this and know what to do. If you agree, I will refer you to them."



5. Referral

-> If the person agrees: refer them directly to a contact person.

-> From 30 April to 4 May 2025 - 24h availability of a **contact person** on **0661 96648-099**

-> A **contact person** can be reached round the clock at schutz@kirchentag.de

-> If the person **does not agree**: Do not refer them! Pass on the reference to external counselling services. And ask what else you can do for them right now.



Violence against women helpline Counselling for women 0800 0116 016 Live chat via: hilfetelefon.de	Violence-free life counselling centre Counselling services for trans* and queer people 069 / 43005233 beratung@broken-rainbow.de gewaltfreileben.org	Violence against men hotline Counselling for men 0800 / 1239900 beratung@maennerhilfetelefon.de maennerhilfetelefon.de
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6. After the conversation

- If necessary, get support yourself to collect your own feelings and thoughts.
- **More is NOT your responsibility. You do not need to clarify any further formalities.**
- Check with the contact person if you want to be informed about the next steps.

