

SAFEGUARDING AND TITLE IV

THE TOPIC

This committee was engaged in the ongoing work of improving Safe Church practices, amending Title IV proceedings and further developing best practices related to the proper care and handling of parties involved in these cases. This committee dealt with 43 resolutions, of which 32 were adopted, four received no action, six were referred to interim bodies and one was redirected to another committee.

WHAT HAPPENED AT GENERAL CONVENTION

Regarding Safe Church, we can look forward to a further development of resources that are more specific to different ministries and/or cultural contexts. Resolution A048 requires that “safe church training materials for the prevention of sexual misconduct include written and web-based training materials that include responsive and multilingual online web-based resources, a modern content management system and a curated resource list, such training to provide Universal Training accessible to all congregants and ministry participants that fosters a culture of safety and inclusion for all people and Specialized Training consisting of discrete modules on topics directly related to ministry roles and functions.”

Regarding Title IV, many resolutions were passed addressing various issues related to implementing consistent best practices (compatible with civil law) in a timely manner. Special concern was given to the care of victims, the imbalance of power inherent in the system and the dearth of data needed to do this work. There was great overlap with the #MeToo movement of this Convention, as this committee worked to strengthen transparency, accountability and accessibility, while providing adequate care and protection for those harmed.

FAQS

What’s this I hear about a snappy new website?

Yes, it’s true! TitleIV.org has been launched. It is a splendid new site that provides excellent information at your fingertips.

What’s this about a “database” on misconduct? I’m freaking out!

No need to worry. Unlike other professional bodies—like the medical board or the law review—TEC has NO information compiled about TitleIV cases, outcomes and consequences. And this serious lack of data causes huge problems—e.g. bishops implementing wildly different sanctions because they have no idea what has been done elsewhere, a lack of knowledge of trends that need to be addressed, etc. This database will NOT have names; it is about compiling much-needed data on cases.

So just how bad was it to be stuck in a room for hours at a time with so many lawyers, chancellors and priests who used to be lawyers?

Actually, it was a great experience—and I’m not just saying that because there was a Starbucks nearby! In addition to being awed by the level of expertise around the table, I was humbled by the level of dedication. One chancellor has been working on the definition of “sexual misconduct” for 24 years. It’s not often you see an attorney engaged in hand-wringing, but I witnessed it as these committed folks hammered out this legislation. And every effort was made to ensure care, accountability, transparency and protection of victims. I think we can feel good about our Church’s earnest desire to atone for past mistakes and implement the very best practices moving forward.

NEXT STEPS IN OUR DIOCESE

We can look forward to new Safe Church training materials being developed this triennium, which our trainers will implement.

The new TitleIV.org website will be prominently displayed and easily accessible from our diocesan website.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the Rev. Jamie Edwards at motherjamie@mac.com.