



Factsheet

Being a support person

From time to time, Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) may be required to conduct an investigation into the conduct of an employee or volunteer. In some cases, allegations are made regarding conduct which, if proven, may result in disciplinary action and/or other corrective action.

In all of these circumstances, TCS is committed to implementing an investigation process that is thorough, fair, timely and focused on resolution for all parties where possible.

Employees and volunteers who are subject of an investigation process have a right to be heard and to respond to any allegation before a finding or decision is made. This may involve an employee or volunteer participating in interviews with investigators, or formal meetings with their supervisor or other TCS representative.

In these situations, employees and volunteers are advised of their right to have a suitable support person of their choosing attend the interview or meeting. A support person could be, for example

- a trusted colleague
- a family member
- a friend
- a union or employee representative.
- a supervisor

The role of a support person

The role of the support person is

- to provide moral and emotional support to the employee or volunteer
- to observe the interview or meeting and take notes if desired
- to request breaks in the interview where appropriate, for example to privately discuss relevant issues
- to ask appropriate questions, and clarify any questions being asked of the employee or volunteer
- not to advocate or speak for the employee or volunteer, rather to allow the employee or volunteer to answer any questions themselves
- not to suggest answers or guide the employee or volunteer in their responses
- not to provide their own views or opinions during the interview or meeting.

It is expected that all parties will conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner during an interview or meeting. Where a party, including the support person, is hostile or negatively impacts on the process, the interview or meeting will cease and be adjourned to a suitable time and date.

Conflicts of interest

A person may be approached by an employee or volunteer to be a support person, however may have a conflict of interest in taking on this role. For example, the person being asked may also be involved in the investigation process as a witness. This may compromise the investigation process, and therefore where such a conflict arises, the person must not take on the role of support person. Where there is any uncertainty in this area, this should be discussed with the Professional Standards team within TCS People and Engagement Services.

Confidentiality

Support persons, like any other person involved in an investigation process, are bound by confidentiality requirements. This means respecting the privacy and dignity of everyone involved in the process by

- not discussing the allegations with anyone other than the respondent or investigator
- not discussing information gathered from any meeting or interview with anyone other than the respondent or investigator
- not distributing any documentation or material that forms part of the investigation process.

Please contact the Professional Standards team at the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office should you have any additional queries about the role of a support person. Phone (07) 4637 1400 Email professionalstandards@twb.catholic.edu.au