

Safety Equation: Internal Feedback Systems

Running church events, schools, or camps is not easy. In many organizations, these tasks fall to a small number of staff. Despite making the best effort, signs may be missed that something is going wrong. An individual could be contributing to an environment that allows sexual abuse to occur, or problems may be occurring due to lax policies or program rules not being followed. But by developing an Internal Feedback System, weak points can be identified.

Steps to Creating an Effective Internal Feedback System

An Internal Feedback System is a method for gathering and analyzing information within your own organization. When you create an environment that encourages honest feedback and use that feedback appropriately, your organization will be able to identify risk areas in need of attention.

STEP ONE: *Gather information*

Collect data related to any programs involving children or individuals who work with children. This data could include:

- Incident reports
- Injury reports
- Restraint reports
- Employee disciplinary problems
- Satisfaction surveys
- Staff exit interviews
- Staff turnover statistics
- Surveys of former staff and/or volunteers
- Enrollment and referral numbers
- Parent/guardian complaints
- Participant absenteeism
- Grievances

Identify which of these types of data you already use, and which you need to begin to collect.

STEP TWO: *Compile the information*

Potential abusers can benefit from disorganization. For example, concerns about a certain person or program may have been voiced to two different volunteers who have not cross-referenced these complaints. Get everything in one place.

STEP THREE: *Analyze the information*

The data should be reviewed at different levels by staff, supervisors, administrators, and the board of directors. For example, the board of directors should examine the data to watch for drifts from standards, while supervisors should look for red flags to address.

If you identify an area in which changes should be made, take the necessary next steps to bolster safety. You may, for example, need to amend policies or increase monitoring and supervision.

Climate for Reporting

Many factors may create barriers for reporting, including fears that:

- Concerns will not be taken seriously
- Concerns will be blown out of proportion
- Confidentiality will not be protected
- Reprisal may occur
- False allegations may be made

Address those fears and you can create a culture in which reporting is the norm.

The Safety Equation

The *Safety Equation* was created by Praesidium, Inc., the organization with which the Church Pension Group has collaborated to create its *Safeguarding God's Children* and *SafeguardingOnline* materials. Solid Internal Feedback Systems are one part of the *Safety Equation*, which also includes:

- **Screening and Selection** <https://www.cpg.org/linkservid/42DC4559-F265-EDA9-9A9A528B6E739B4D/showMeta/0/?label=Good-March%202017%3A%20Safety%20Equation%3A%20Screening%20and%20Selection>
- **Supervision and Monitoring** <https://www.cpg.org/linkservid/10EA32BF-9AE9-D0C6-FA43FEC2695D3033/showMeta/0/?label=Good-May%202017%3A%20How%20to%20Supervise%20and%20Monitor%20Counselors>
- Policies
- Consumer Participation
- Responding
- Administrative Practices
- Training

A safe environment is a happy environment.

Build and maintain a robust Internal Feedback System to close the gaps and make your environment safe. To find out more about what you can do to build an Internal Feedback System or for more information about the **Safety Equation**, visit http://armatus2.praesidiuminc.com/publicCourse/kys_1/story_html5.html.