

# Institutional Protection Plan

of the *Fachstelle Freiwilligendienste*



Fachstelle



**Freiwilligendienste**

im Bistum Limburg

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# Foreword

The *Fachstelle Freiwilligendienste (FaFDi, Volunteer Services Unit)* of the Diocese of Limburg sees its purpose as supplying professional and personal support to young people during their voluntary service either in Germany or abroad. The aim is to provide the volunteers with a secure space where they can continue their development while feeling valued and appreciated. In this context we see the prevention of sexualised violence both as an »integral part«<sup>1</sup> and as a »fundamental principle of education«.<sup>2</sup>

We undertake to protect the volunteers entrusted to us against violations of personal space, abuses of power and sexual attacks. All our members of staff (regular employees and freelancers) share the responsibility for ensuring that this protection is in place.

Being aware that sexualised violence can occur anywhere, including our facilities, we intend that in our work with volunteers this Protection Plan will foster a culture of vigilance and of sensitivity and attentiveness to the warning signs. This is embodied in the following principles:

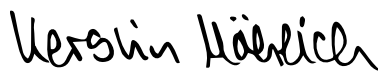
- Creating transparency concerning requirements, structures and workflows
- Promoting confidence and competence for employees and freelance workers to take appropriate action
- Protecting potential victims

Before this Protection Plan was drawn up, a risk assessment was carried out among 87 volunteers and 21 employees and freelancers. The Institutional Protection Plan (IPP) working group evaluated the responses and the results of the risk assessment can be viewed in the *FaFDi*. We hope that this Protection Plan contributes to successful volunteer services, and welcome suggestions for its further development.

For the team of the *Fachstelle Freiwilligendienste*



Michael Ziegler  
Leader



Kerstin Möhlich  
Project leader

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Framework Regulation, Prevention of sexualised violence against minors and adult wards within the domain of the German Bishops' Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

# Staff recruitment and staff development

The *FaFDi*'s volunteer support is provided solely by employees<sup>3</sup> and freelance workers<sup>4</sup> who have the relevant personal and professional qualifications and have been sensitised to the topic of »preventing sexualised violence«. The following aspects should feed into the process of staff recruitment and staff development:

## Interviews

- During the interview for an appointment, the candidate's attention is drawn to the plan for institutional protection against sexualised violence. Questions about attitudes, and about handling closeness and distance, also form part of the interview.
- Any candidates who demonstrate a negative attitude to preventing sexualised violence and/or an inappropriate approach to dealing with closeness and distance are eliminated from the selection procedure.

## Expanded police certificate of good conduct/ declaration of commitment

- All of our employees and freelancers are required to submit an expanded police certificate of good conduct before taking up their position. We do not enter into employment contracts or other agreements with persons whose certificate of good conduct contains a relevant entry. A new certificate must be submitted every five years.
- *FaFDi* employees are required to submit their expanded police certificates of good conduct when they take up their posts, and every five years thereafter. The requests to submit a certificate are issued by the Offizialat [Bishop's Court] of the Diocese of Limburg. The Director of the *FaFDi* is informed if the certificate contains a relevant entry.
- Freelancers' expanded police certificates of good conduct are requested by the Director of the *FaFDi* or another designated person in a letter from the Generalvikar [Vicar General]. The certificates are sent confidentially to the Offizialat [Bishop's Court], where they are inspected. The Director or another designated person views the information concerning receipt of the certificate and whether it contains any relevant entries. After five years, he/she requests a new expanded police certificate of good conduct in the same manner.
- Receipt and examination of the expanded police certificate of good conduct are documented in an Excel table.
- Before commencing their work, all our employees and freelancers sign a declaration of their undertaking to do everything they can to ensure that no person entrusted to them experiences psychological, physical or sexualised violence (declaration of commitment). This declaration by freelancers includes commitment to the IPP.

<sup>3</sup> Full-time employees of the Diocese of Limburg working in the *FaFDi*

<sup>4</sup> Freelance workers who are contracted for individual projects (e.g. running training weeks) by the *FaFDi*

## Induction

- New employees and freelancers can access the IPP on the *FaFDi* website. During their induction, the line manager presents the IPP to the new members of staff and provides an opportunity for questions.
- All new employees attend the two-day training course in »Geschulte Fachkraft Prävention« [»Professionals Trained in Prevention«]. Freelancers are offered the opportunity to attend a course in prevention organised and paid for by the Diocese of Limburg.
- In the interview at the end of the probationary period, the responsible line manager addresses the perceived attitude of the new member of staff regarding professional closeness/distance to the volunteers.

## Staff/reflection meetings

- The annual staff assessment talks with the line manager provide an opportunity to reflect on attitudes and actions. The *FaFDi* Director is available for personal discussions with the freelancers. If necessary, the Director will request a personal meeting with a freelancer.
- After the training weeks/seminars, the team of seminar leaders holds evaluation meetings at regular intervals to reflect on the actions and the attitudes of the team. If the seminar leadership does not include a full-time employee, the evaluation results are reported to the education officer [Referent\*in] responsible.

## Training opportunities

- In addition to the two-day induction course, all employees can attend the further training courses offered by the Diocese of Limburg. The annual training programme also offers additional courses.
- Freelancers receive the newsletter of the Diocese of Limburg's prevention unit, provided that they have given their consent. The newsletter carries notices about offers of training in the field of prevention.

# Organisational Standards

The *FaFDi* supports volunteers in national projects first and foremost by providing training programmes lasting one or several days, which are also sometimes called courses, training weeks or seminars.<sup>5</sup> In the case of youth volunteers, these courses usually last for five days and include staying overnight in an »education hostel«. The following requirements apply to the delivery of the training seminar and to the accommodation:

## Seminar hostel

- Before booking a seminar hostel, the *FaFDi* checks whether it satisfies the requirements of the IPP and generally enables compliance with the code of conduct. Preference is given to seminar hostels that meet the requirements.<sup>6</sup>
- Volunteers can find information about the educational hostels, their location, amenities and types of rooms on the *FaFDi* website.

## Dormitories

- Volunteers and employees/freelancers sleep in separate dormitories.
- Volunteers are generally accommodated in shared single-sex dormitories. The showers are also used by men and women separately.
- In order to protect personal privacy, wherever possible no more than four volunteers are assigned to each room. In justified exceptional cases volunteers may be accommodated in single rooms. These decisions are taken by the responsible education officer [Referent\*in].
- Wherever possible, an extra room will be booked for emergencies.
- At the induction event before the volunteers commence their assignments, they are instructed to report in advance any special needs or other aspects relating to the seminar week (e.g. the need for a single room, non-standard occupancy owing to sexual orientation).
- If the attendees do not know one another before the seminar, the assignment to the dormitories is announced in the late afternoon on the first day of the seminar. This gives the volunteers some time to get to know one another before going to their rooms.
- The dormitories are places to which volunteers can withdraw for peace and quiet. For this reason, they are not used for gatherings during free time.

## Host families

- Families hosting German volunteers on international assignments, and families hosting exchange volunteers<sup>7</sup> in Germany, are subject to standards and recommendations regarding accommodation, meals, participating in family life, etc.

<sup>5</sup>Most of the support seminars in the International Volunteer Service (IFD) are supplied by external providers.

<sup>6</sup>Seminar hostels that satisfy the requirements are given preference in the booking procedure. However, if such hostels are not available on the dates required, other hostels are booked on a case-by-case basis so that the *FaFDi* can fulfil its obligation to provide the volunteers with training as legally prescribed.

<sup>7</sup>»Exchange volunteers« refers to young people from dioceses to which we also send volunteers, who receive support as part of a special programme.

## Group rooms

- The group room is not locked and the volunteers are allowed to meet there.
- If possible, additional suitable rooms in the seminar hostels are made available to the volunteers where they can meet up and spend their free time together and in the evenings.

## Seminar leadership team

- As a rule, the seminar leadership team comprises equal numbers of men and women.
- The IPP recommends regular rotation among the seminar teams. This topic is discussed when training weeks/seminars are evaluated.
- The volunteers may approach the seminar leaders at any time during the seminar. The volunteers are informed about who they can contact during free periods and at night.

## Units »closeness and distance« and »sexualised violence«

- The first training week/foundation seminar begins with a unit on the topic of »Closeness and distance«. It is intended to raise awareness of one's own boundaries and those of other people, the basic principle that participating in exercises is voluntary, and the development of group rules. The *FaFDi* provides a collection of methods that can be used for running the unit.
- The first training week/foundation seminar contains a half-day course on »Recognising sexualised and other violence and taking action«, which is conducted by an external expert. The seminar leaders are present throughout the course. It is also held for exchange volunteers from other countries and for volunteers in the German voluntary service [Bundesfreiwilligendienst] BFD 27+ programme, as a separate, one-day course. The course for exchange volunteers is also open to other volunteers with little knowledge of German.

## Alcohol consumption

- As the consumption of alcohol reduces inhibitions and thus makes it more likely that people's personal space will be invaded, the volunteers are expected to take a responsible approach to alcohol consumption. Excessive or inappropriate consumption will have disciplinary consequences.
- Strong alcoholic drinks are forbidden during the course, in the evenings and at night.
- Alcohol is not allowed in volunteers' rooms.
- Volunteers are not allowed to consume alcohol until after the last work unit and after the evening meal.

# Code of conduct

The job profiles for employees/freelancers state the following:

›The employees and freelancers who support volunteers regard them as individuals, take them seriously and accept their personal boundaries. They always understand leadership in the sense of support and are companions who are attentive, observant and make an effort to be aware of as many aspects as possible. Furthermore, they maintain appropriate closeness and distance to the volunteers. Everyone who works for the *FafDi* to support the volunteers needs the ability and the willingness to engage in self-reflection.«

A code of conduct has been drawn up to explain this position in more detail in relation to especially sensitive areas. It is binding on all our employees and freelancers:

## Maintaining closeness and distance

- The closeness or distance that volunteers need depends on the individual and on the situation. Employees/freelancers take these differences seriously and respect them.
- Nobody is forced to participate in exercises – they are always voluntary. It is also possible to leave during an exercise. Participants who do not want to join in a particular exercise are offered alternatives if possible (e.g. as observers). The seminar leaders will act to counter any group/peer pressure.
- The volunteers are not compelled to give answers. They reveal only what they wish to.
- During leisure time, the seminar leaders strike the right balance between presence and absence. They adjust this balance to meet the needs of the group, not to meet their own needs.
- The seminar leaders do not encourage the volunteers to consume alcohol and therefore do not participate in activities such as drinking games.

## One-to-one talks with volunteers

- One-to-one talks with volunteers take place only in rooms suitable for this purpose. Such rooms must be accessible from the outside at all times. Examples of suitable rooms would be the group room or semi-open rooms or seating areas that are open to view. The talks do not take place in volunteers' rooms or in seminar leaders' rooms.

## Appropriate physical contact

- Physical contact occurs sometimes during the courses, e.g. during experience-based educational situations and other exercises/methods. These situations are approached in a particularly sensitive manner, with appropriate introduction and instruction, and the educational rationale is explained to the volunteers.



- If it is necessary for seminar leaders to touch volunteers while explaining an exercise or method, we recommend asking the volunteers for permission to touch them and accepting the answer if it is »no«.
- When greeting and saying farewell to volunteers (e.g. hugging), staff must respect their own personal boundaries and those of the volunteers.

## Protection of privacy

- Before entering a dormitory, seminar leaders must knock, and enter only if requested to do so.
- There must be a sound pedagogical justification for any exceptions in which seminar leaders knock but enter without waiting to be requested to do so (e.g. a suspected serious breach of the rules). In such cases, seminar leaders must announce their intention to enter and should do so in pairs wherever possible.
- If a person is clearly in imminent danger, seminar leaders may also enter the room without knocking and being requested to enter.

## Private contacts

- Family relationships and private relationships between employees/freelancers and volunteers must be disclosed. In these cases the volunteers will be assigned to other courses.
- Private contacts between employees/freelancers and volunteers which extend beyond the course activities are discouraged and should be avoided.
- The professional contact between freelancers and volunteers terminates when the project for the *FaFDi* has been completed. If a volunteer initiates contact which is pedagogically justified, the freelancer may pursue it only after consultation with the Director or another designated person at the *FaFDi*.
- If seminar leaders are friends or partners, private and professional activities must be kept separate during seminars.

## Approach to and use of social media and networks

- Electronic communication channels may be used for professional purposes where this is justified.
- Employees/freelancers are not members of volunteers' informal groups. If necessary, a second group may be set up (alongside informal groups) for official communication/forwarding information.
- It is recommended that employees/freelancers do not allow their status messages to be seen by volunteers. Conversely, volunteers should not allow their status messages to be seen by employees/freelancers, and the volunteers' attention is drawn to this in the »Closeness and distance« unit.
- During volunteer assignments, employees/freelancers must not have any private contacts with the volunteers via social networks (see also »Private contacts« above) and must refuse social media contact requests from volunteers.

## Language, choice of words, clothing

- Employees and freelancers must not use sexualised or suggestive language or gestures in any type of interaction or communication (e.g. sexually suggestive nicknames or remarks, sexist jokes), or any condescending remarks or disclosures. Neither do they tolerate them from the volunteers.
- Employees and freelancers act as role models and must dress in a manner appropriate to the situation. They must take the ideas/views of other cultures into consideration and respect them, without having to adopt them.

## Gifts and privileges

- Employees/freelancers are discouraged from making gifts to individual volunteers. In the case of birthday presents and gifts marking other special occasions, it must be clear that these gifts are from the *FaFDi*. If exceptions are made, freelancers must consult with their responsible education officer [Referent\*in], and employees must consult with the Director.
- Employees/freelancers are not allowed to accept gifts from volunteers. The only exceptions are gifts from the group as a whole as farewell/thank you presents, if they are appropriate in size/scope to the professional relationship, and have a material value of less than EUR 5 or only a symbolic value.

## Disciplinary measures

- The seminar leaders are aware of the disciplinary measures that may be applied if the rules are breached. They range from a verbal notice to a written warning and all the way to expulsion from the course, depending on the type and severity of the breach. Two warnings for the same reason will result in termination of the volunteer assignment.
- A volunteer assignment within the voluntary social year [Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr] programme can be terminated only by the Director of *FaFDi* or his/her deputy; a volunteer assignment within the German voluntary service [Bundesfreiwilligendienst] can be terminated only by the Federal Office of Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions [Bundesamt für zivilgesellschaftliche Aufgaben - BAFZA] at the request of the *FaFDi* Director or his/her deputy.

## Handling violations of the code of conduct

- Employees/freelancers must report their own violations of the code of conduct or those of colleagues to the seminar team. The *FaFDi* Director must be informed if necessary. This serves to protect the employees/freelancers, as the Director is better placed to assess the complaints submitted to the *FaFDi* in context.

# Channels for complaints and advice

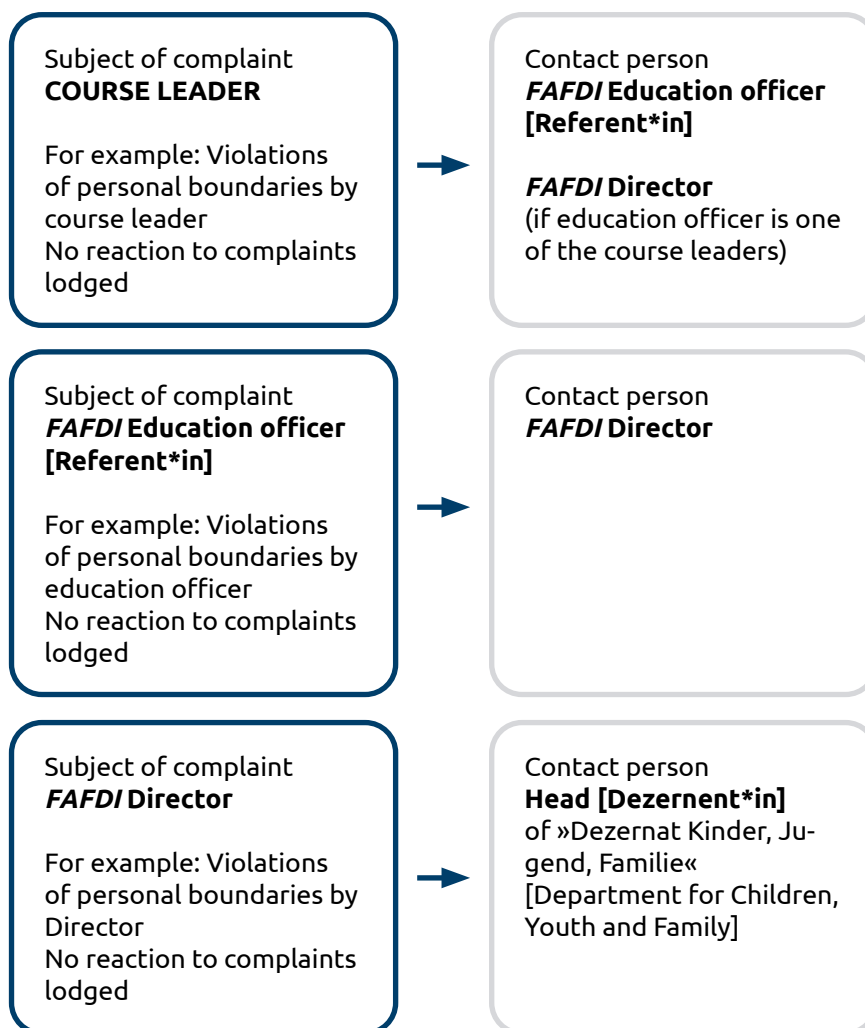
We in the *FaFDi* see a transparent complaints-management system as an important part of prevention work. It ensures that violations of personal boundaries are recognised and reported at an early stage. We also regard criticism from the volunteers as an important indicator for quality assurance in our educational work.

## Complaints procedures

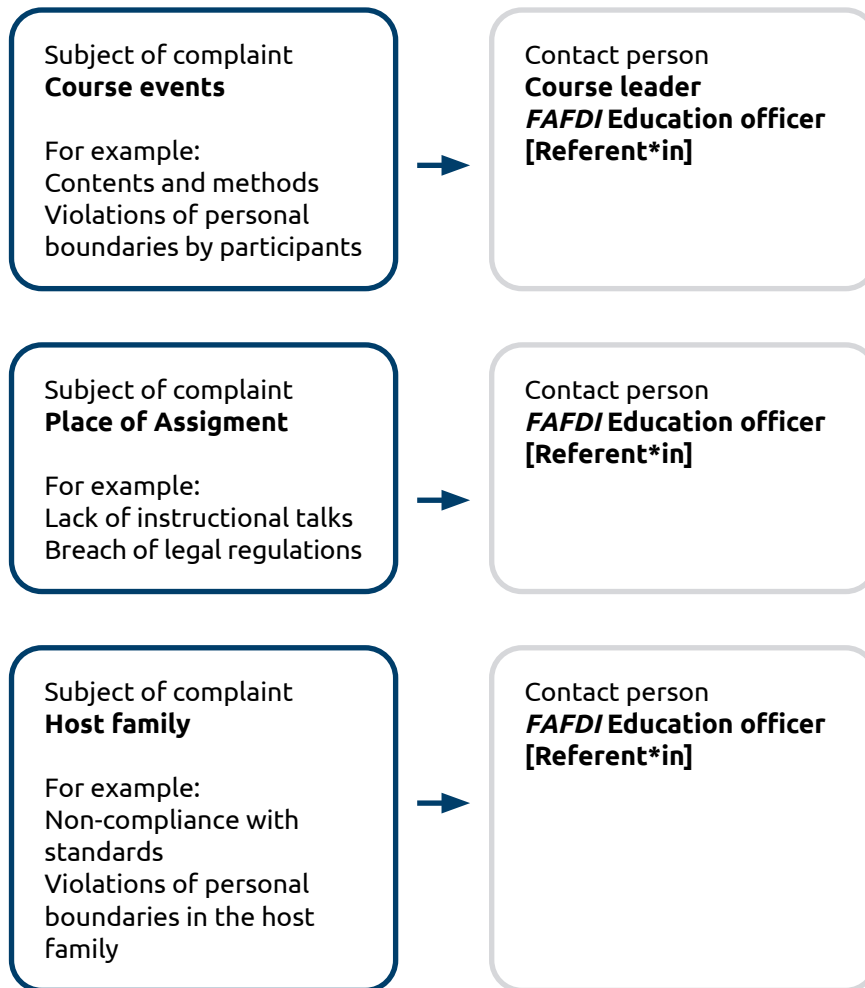
Various people are available for the volunteers to contact, depending on who the subject of the complaint is and the topic involved:

- the course leader,
- the responsible education officer [Referent\*in] at the *FaFDi*,
- the Director of the *FaFDi*,
- the head [Dezernent\*in] of the Dezernat »Kinder, Jugend & Familie« [Department for Children, Youth and Family].

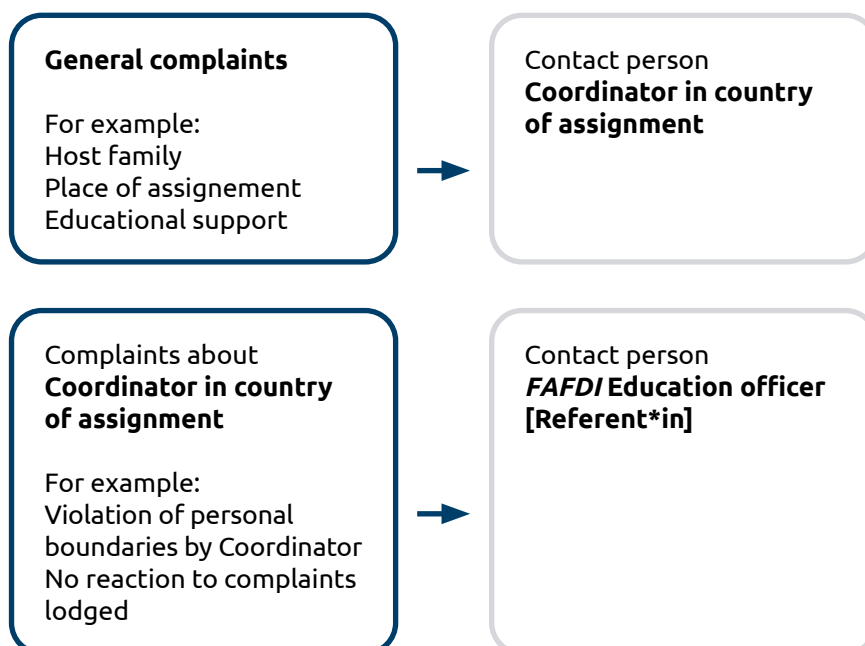
## Complaints relating to a person



## Complaints relating to an issue



## Complaints in the International Volunteer Service (IFD)



## COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

The person to whom the complaint is made is responsible for the subsequent steps, the appropriate documentation of the procedure, and communication with the complainant. The complainant is kept informed about the action taken and is given support. In the case of complaints about violations of personal boundaries or sexualised violence, the Guidelines for Action of the Diocese apply (see annex). These Guidelines distinguish between violations of personal boundaries among participants and the reporting and supposition of sexualised violence. If, during the training course »Sexualisierte und andere Gewalt erkennen und handeln« [»Recognising sexualised and other violence and taking action«], acute examples of sexualised violence/complaints about incidents at the place of assignment are mentioned, these issues will be followed up. The education officer [Referent\*in] responsible decides on further action in consultation with the volunteer.

## CULTURE OF FEEDBACK

A culture of feedback is practised in the courses. The volunteers are encouraged to express criticism. Regular reflection sessions (»Is-there-anything sessions«) and a detailed course review on the last day of the seminar are integral parts of our educational work. In the optional seminars, where as a rule none of the course leaders is a full-time employee, feedback is also collected via an evaluation sheet, which includes space for criticism/complaints.

## IPP COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Complaints relating to compliance with the IPP, or providing suggestions on the topic of prevention of sexualised violence in the volunteer services, can be submitted to the *FaFDi* via a dedicated email address ([fafdi.isk@bistumlimburg.de](mailto:fafdi.isk@bistumlimburg.de)).

## COMMUNICATION OF COMPLAINTS

The following media/events inform the volunteers about the complaints procedures and options for submitting feedback:

- the obligatory induction event,
- the *FaFDi* website.

## PUBLICISING ADVICE CENTRES

The leaders of each course receive an emergency folder containing emergency call numbers and the contact details of specialised advice centres for sexualised violence, psychological crises, risk of suicide, addiction and drugs, eating disorders, migration advice and debt counselling. The contact details are made available to volunteers who experience such problems. During the training course »Sexualisierte und andere Gewalt erkennen und handeln« [»Recognising sexualised and other violence and taking action«], the volunteers receive the prevention unit's emergency card »Ruf an und lass dich beraten« [»Call and get advice«] and a list of advice centres for victims of sexualised violence.

# Procedures

The *FaFDi* is part of the Diocese of Limburg and as such it is governed by the Diocese’s intervention regulations [Interventionsordnung]. The regulations come into play as soon as an incident is reported to the Prevention Officer and/or the designated contact person.

If large-scale violations of personal space/sexualised violence or the suspicion thereof are reported via the complaint channels, certain defined reporting channels apply for a report to reach the Prevention Officer. In the case of reports involving minors, the parents/guardians are involved in the process. The following procedures apply:

## Sexualised violence among volunteers

Report is submitted	
Person to whom the report is made informs the <i>FaFDi</i> Director	
Director assesses the suspicion in consultation with those involved, course leaders and, if necessary, an expert with relevant experience	
Suspicion is substantiated	Suspicion is not confirmed
Director informs Dezerent*in	Director and/or education officer [Referent*in] responsible hold a meeting with the volunteers concerned
Director reports suspicion to Prevention Officer	Director forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer
Director forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer	Prevention Officer decides what additional measures are necessary
Further procedure pursuant to the Diocese’s Intervention Plan	

## Sexualised violence when the accused person is a freelancer/employee

Report is submitted	
Person to whom the report is made informs the <i>FaFDi</i> Director (if the Director is accused, the report goes directly to the Dezerment*in)	
Director (or Dezerment*in) assesses the suspicion, if necessary with an expert with relevant experience	
Director informs Dezerment*in (does not apply if the Director is being accused)	
Suspicion is substantiated	Suspicion is not confirmed
Director (or Dezerment*in) reports suspicion to Prevention Officer	Director (or Dezerment*in) holds a mee- ting with those involved (alleged victim, accused person, and possibly the person who reported the suspicion)
Director (or Dezerment*in) forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer	Director (or Dezerment*in) forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer
Further procedure pursuant to the Diocese's Intervention Plan	Prevention Officer decides what additional measures are necessary

## Sexualised violence at the place of assignment

Report is submitted
Person to whom the report is made informs the <i>FaFDi</i> Director
Volunteer/education officer [Referent*in] responsible or Director informs the on-site manager or, if available, the contact person for sexualised violence in the facility
Further procedure pursuant to the guidelines of the place of assignment
<i>FaFDi</i> Director forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer
Prevention Officer decides what additional measures are necessary

## Sexualised violence when the host family in Germany is accused

Report is submitted	
Person to whom the report is made informs the <i>FaFDi</i> Director	
In cases of immediate danger: volunteer is removed from the host family	
Director assesses the suspicion, if necessary with an expert with relevant experience	
Director informs Dezerent*in	
Suspicion is substantiated	Suspicion is not confirmed
Volunteer is removed from the host family (if this has not happened already)	Director holds a meeting with those involved (alleged victim, accused person, and possibly the person who reported the suspicion)
Director reports suspicion to Prevention Officer	Director forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer
Director forwards anonymised documentation to Prevention Officer	Prevention Officer decides what additional measures are necessary
Further procedure pursuant to the Diocese's Intervention Plan	

## Reporting channels in the international volunteer service

Reports concerning the International Volunteer Service (IFD) are forwarded to the responsible local coordinator and the education officer [Referent\*in] responsible at the *FaFDi*. In acute emergencies, the volunteers can call the fid emergency number, which is given to them at the beginning of their assignment. The further procedure is determined by the local intervention plan.



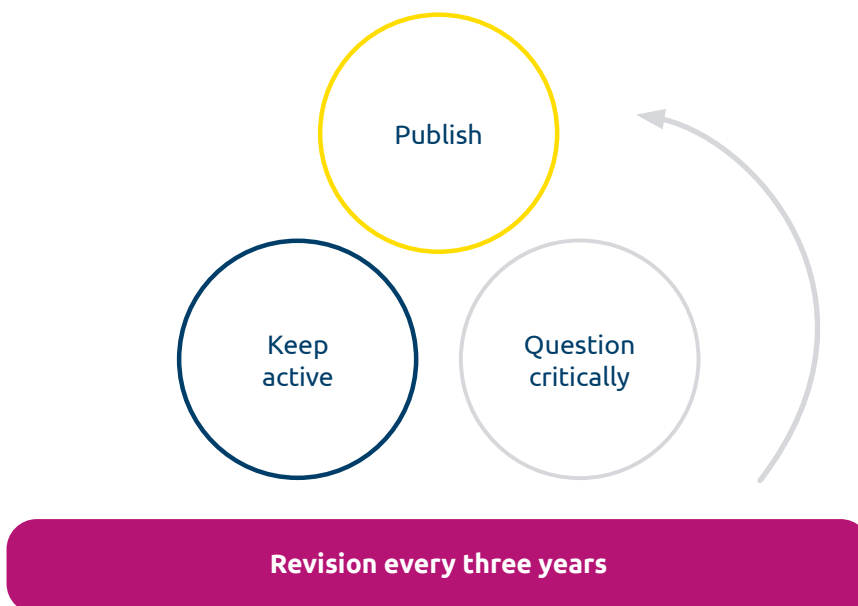
# Quality assurance

Our educational work at the *FaFDi* is based on the legal framework conditions, the quality standards of the Catholic institutions, and on the life situations of the volunteers. The basic educational concept is therefore updated regularly. Furthermore, there is always a certain amount of staff fluctuation among the freelancers and employees. To maintain active implementation of the IPP and to secure its ongoing development, the following requirements apply:

## Responsibility/accountability

The Director is responsible for quality assurance of the IPP. He/she may delegate the implementation to an employee. This comprises:

- After initial publication of the IPP, it is presented to *FaFDi* employees and freelancers in a suitable setting. In the International Voluntary Service (IFD), the partners in other countries receive the Plan in either English or German. Any future revisions of the Plan will be communicated.
- The IPP is published in two languages (German and English) on the *FaFDi* website. («Publish»)
- IPP content and issues are addressed and explained in the team discussions/freelancers' meetings. («Keep active»)
- Complaints/feedback reports that are relevant to the ongoing development of the IPP are documented and bundled so they can feed into the revision process. («Question critically»)



## Revision of the IPP

The IPP will be revised every three years. This involves adjusting the Plan, in consideration of any complaints/reports submitted, in order to keep it up-to-date and effective. The revised version will then be published.

# Guidelines for Action

## Violation of personal boundaries among participants

What to do if participants violate verbal or physical sexual boundaries?



**Take action while keeping calm!**

»Interven« and stop boundary violations.  
Clearly name and stop boundary violations and attacks.

**Clarify the situation.**

**Take an active stand** against discriminatory, violent or sexist behaviour.

**Raise the incident with the team of persons responsible.**

Weigh up whether it is appropriate to deal with the issue in the whole group or in a sub-group.  
Discuss the consequences for those who have violated the boundaries of others.

**Inform parents** in the event of serious boundary violations.

In order to prepare for a possible meeting with the parents, **contact a specialised counselling service or the Koordinationsstelle Prävention [Prevention Coordination Unit].**

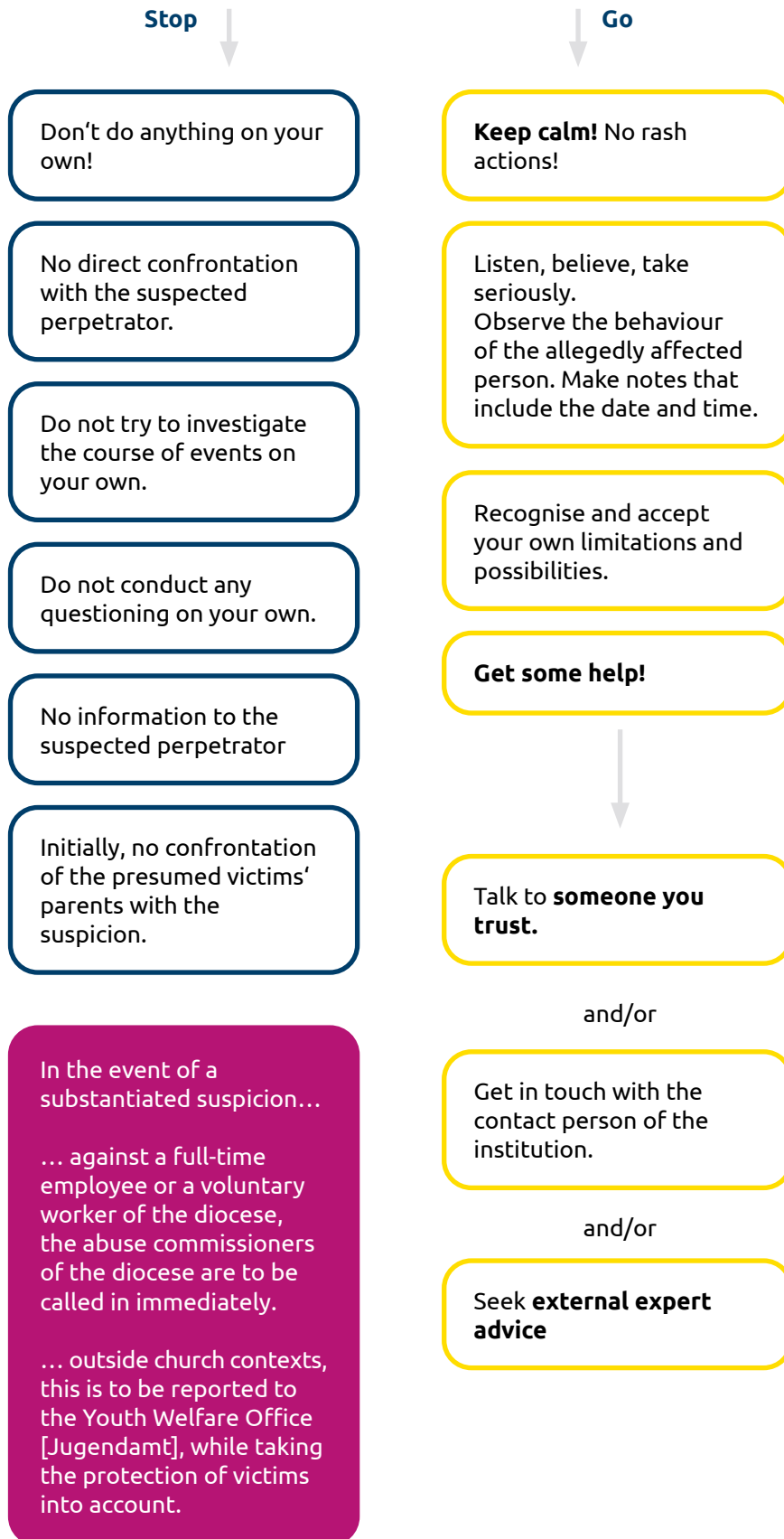


Continue working with the group  
**Review and (further) develop basic rules of conduct.**  
**Strengthen prevention work.**

If necessary, obtain support from the Koordinationsstelle Prävention [Prevention Coordination Unit] (tel.: 06431 295-315)

## In cases of suspected sexual violence

What to do if you suspect that a child, adolescent or adult participant is a victim of sexual violence?



## In the event of reports by alleged victims (suspicion)

What to do if a child, adolescent or adult participant **tells you about sexual violence?**

**Stop**



**Do not push.** No interrogation. No hasty action.

Do not ask »why« something happened - this can easily trigger feelings of guilt.

Do not demand logical explanations.

Do not exert pressure, not even pressure for a solution.

Do not promise or commit to something that is impossible. Be honest!

### After the conversation

**Do not give any information to the suspected perpetrator.**

Take no decisions or further steps without **age-appropriate involvement of the young person.**

Do not bring up the possibility of criminal charges in the initial conversation.

Involve the authorities directly only in cases of imminent danger.

**Go**



**Keep calm!** No hasty action.

Listen, believe, take seriously. Also take reports of minor boundary violations seriously. Children in particular initially only tell parts of what has happened to them.

Respect the young person's boundaries, resistance and ambivalent feelings.

**Take sides with the young person unequivocally.** »You are not to blame for what happened.«

Reassure the person that the conversation will be kept confidential and that nothing will be done without consultation, but also that advice and help will be sought.

### After the conversation

Document the facts.

**Contact the appropriate person at the institution and obtain professional advice!**

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