



Gathering Together, Nurturing Innovation, Strengthening Communities
Reuniéndonos Juntos, Animando Innovación, Fortaleciendo Comunidades
다같이 모이기 - 공동체를 강화하기 - 혁신을 키워나가기

Synod of the Northeast Sexual Harassment & Misconduct Policy

Adopted by the Synod Mission & Ministries Commission
September 17, 2016

In determining its own witness to the world and its service to humanity, the Church of Jesus Christ is bound by the Gospel mandate to "announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Thus, it sounds the note of liberation, reconciliation, and healing, and calls all persons to the more abundant life of Christ. All persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, must be afforded equal respect under the gospel. Therefore, it is the policy of the Synod to provide all Synod staff and volunteers a sexual and gender-based harassment-free environment.

Sexual harassment/misconduct is defined as unwelcome behavior that ridicules, demeans, insults, and/or impedes a person's employment performance or volunteer service because of the person's gender and/or sexual orientation. Behavior which violates this policy includes but is not limited to:

- Punishing or threatening to punish a person for rejecting sexual attention, requests, and/or demands
- Coercing or attempting to coerce a person into a sexual and/or dating relationship
- Using spiritual or appointed authority to coerce or attempt to coerce, persuade, or mislead a person to enter into sexual behavior
- Basing or influencing employment decisions or volunteer service on a person's rejection or acceptance of sexual behavior
- Making unwelcome sexual jokes, comments, suggestions, or innuendoes
- Unwelcome touching, standing close to, or blocking of path
- Unwelcome prolonged or suggestive staring
- Displaying sexual visuals, visuals that insult, degrade, and/or exploit the sexuality of men or women
- Creating a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work/volunteer environment

Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment are forms of sexual discrimination and a violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as amended in 1972, and state fair employment laws. It is a violation of Synod and denominational AA/EEO policies.

Responsibilities of the Synod as Employer and Provider of spaces for volunteer work within the Synod are:

- To encourage employees and volunteers to set a personal example of avoiding sexual or gender-based harassment
- To monitor the workplace and all Synod gatherings to ensure sexual and gender-based harassment are not occurring
- To explain to all employees at the time they are hired that sexual or gender-based harassment will not be tolerated
- To take actions to stop all sexual and gender-based harassment, i.e. tell the staff person or volunteer doing sexual and/or gender-based harassment to stop, contact the Synod Leader for assistance

Preliminary Complaint Procedure

Encourage reporting of all situations to the Synod Leader. If the alleged person involved in the misconduct is the Synod Leader, then the staff person or volunteer is encouraged to go to the Stated Clerk no matter the degree of seriousness.

Follow-up with a staff person or volunteer who received sexual and/or gender-based harassment/misconduct to ensure that this behavior has stopped and that she/he did not receive any retaliation or reprisal.

Provide several options for complaint procedure including, but not limited to the informal and formal complaint procedures described above.

All inquiries will be handled with discretion and with response within two weeks. Steps will be taken to protect the alleged recipient from reprisal actions.

It is expected that most complaints can be satisfactorily resolved through this informal process.

If sexual harassment is alleged, the Synod Leader shall inform the Synod's legal counsel as soon as possible.

Formal Complaint Process

If informal efforts to resolve a complaint have failed or if the nature of the alleged act warrants, a formal complaint may be pursued by employees as outlined in the provisions for "formal grievance" provided in the Personnel Policies & Guidelines section under "Grievance Policy."

Volunteers who cannot avail themselves of the Personnel Practices grievance process may file a disciplinary complaint as outlined in the Book of Order Rules of Discipline. In cases in which the alleged perpetrator is a teaching elder, such a complaint is filed with the stated clerk of the presbytery of which the teaching elder is a member. In all other cases, the complaint is filed with the clerk of session of the congregation of which the alleged perpetrator is a member.

Training and Compliance with the Policy

The Synod will provide boundaries training to employees and volunteers once every three years. On an annual basis all employees and volunteers will read this policy and sign a form which acknowledges the policy and states that the signer is in compliance.