

# Creating Safe and Respectful Environments Operating Procedures

September 2024



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

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The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200  
Toronto, ON Canada M8X 2Y4

1-800-268-3781  
united-church.ca

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Respondent	Responsible Body Receiving the Complaint
Community of faith (COF) lay employee Community of faith member Adherent Licensed lay worship leader Community of faith volunteer	Community of faith Complaints to be received by the Chair of the Board or the Ministry and Personnel Committee Chair, depending on the role of the respondent

**Procedure**

1. The complainant may reach out to share a concern in a variety of ways: to a contact at the community of faith, to [complaintresponse@united-church.ca](mailto:complaintresponse@united-church.ca), or to the anonymous complaint portal [clearviewconnects.com](http://clearviewconnects.com), or they may contact a consultant directly for assistance.
2. The complainant will be asked to forward a detailed written complaint, following the policy and preferably using the Complaint Form. A consultant can assist in writing the complaint.
3. The complaint will be assessed to determine whether it meets the parameters of the policy. If additional details are required in order to process the complaint, more information will be requested.
4. If a complaint does not meet the definitions covered under this policy, the complainant will be informed that it cannot be processed. Other options, such as submitting a complaint under the Code of Ethical Conduct for employees, or the Ethical Standards as defined in *The Manual*, may apply.
5. The complaint can be submitted directly to the responsible body identified above. If the complaint is received through the complaint response e-mail address, the Pastoral Relations Minister will be contacted for their input and support in communicating the complaint to the responsible body.
6. Where there is a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest with the responsible body, the conflict must be identified and the matter referred to the next level of authority. When the issue is being forwarded, a motion must be passed by the community of faith governing body.
7. Safety considerations will be discussed when the complaint is received. If there is reason to believe the complainant or others may be at risk, administrative leave for either the complainant and/or the respondent may be considered. Complaints that may involve criminal acts will be reported to the authorities.
8. Where a complaint is being managed internally, a consultant will be found to support the respondent through the process. The complaint will be forwarded to the respondent by their consultant within 10 days of receipt. It is important that the respondent be made aware that their written response may be provided in full or in part to the complainant. Responses should be written in a respectful and clear manner. A respondent does not have to make a response or accept the services of a consultant.

9. In exceptional circumstances, where safety factors have been identified and cannot reliably be managed using standard anti-retaliation messaging, the name of the complainant and certain identifying facts within the complaint may not be provided to the respondent. This will only be done after consultation with legal counsel, as the rights of the respondent to due process must also be protected as much as possible.
10. The respondent has 10 days to submit a response for consideration. If needed, more time can be requested.
11. There may be situations where the responsible body takes action, such as considering administrative leave or ordering an investigation, before the respondent has completed their response. When this is done, the reason for this decision will be given to the respondent.
12. Pastoral care will be offered to both parties through their consultant, or the responsible body if they are not using a consultant. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) is also available for employees.
13. The responsible body will assess the complaint and response and determine next steps. If there are discrepancies between the reports, an investigator may be assigned. The parameters of the investigation will be identified in the service agreement and the Investigation Plan submitted by the investigator.
14. Ideally, investigations should be completed within three months. Interviews can be conducted in person or electronically. A respondent who is away from work on administrative leave is expected to be available to participate. Even if the complainant or respondent is away on medical leave, it may be possible to get approval for them to participate in the process through their health care provider.
15. The investigator is expected to keep the responsible body that approved the investigation up to date on the status of the work and seek input if questions arise through the process.
16. The investigator will write a report for the responsible body outlining the findings, and where requested, recommendations. The responsible body may choose to meet with the parties if they require further information before making decisions on next steps.
17. The responsible body may accept all, some, or none of the findings or recommendations. The responsible body will also determine what, if any, corrective action may be taken as a result.
18. The responsible body will provide the complainant and the respondent with a written letter with the findings and outcomes that the responsible body has accepted, within one month of making their determinations. For confidentiality and privacy reasons, the parties are not provided with a copy of the investigation report.
19. Part of the work undertaken by the responsible body is to assist in rebuilding relationships and trust between the parties, regardless of the outcome of the process.
20. Costs associated with the process, such as consultant and investigation fees, will be paid for by the responsible body. If an individual involved in the process chooses to access their own legal advice, those costs will be their responsibility.

Respondent	Responsible Body Receiving the Complaint
Chair of Ministry and Personnel Committee Council or Board Chair of a community of faith Congregational designated minister Volunteer or any person accountable to a regional council	Executive Minister of the regional council

**Procedure**

1. The complainant may reach out to share a concern in a variety of ways: to a contact at the regional council, to [complaintresponse@united-church.ca](mailto:complaintresponse@united-church.ca), or to the anonymous complaint portal [clearviewconnects.com](http://clearviewconnects.com), or they may contact a consultant directly for assistance.
2. The complainant will provide a detailed written complaint, following the policy and preferably using the Complaint Form. A consultant can assist in writing the complaint.
3. The complaint will be assessed to determine whether it meets the parameters of the policy. If additional details are required in order to process the complaint, more information will be requested.
4. If the complaint is received through the complaint response e-mail address, it will be forwarded to the Executive Minister of that regional council for review and determination of next steps.
5. If a complaint does not meet the definitions covered under this policy, the complainant will be informed that it cannot be processed. Other options, such as submitting a complaint under the Code of Ethical Conduct for employees, or the Ethical Standards as defined in *The Manual*, may apply.
6. Safety considerations will be discussed when the complaint is received. If there is reason to believe the complainant or others may be at risk, administrative leave for either the complainant and/or the respondent may be considered. Complaints that may involve criminal acts will be reported to the authorities.
7. Where a complaint is being managed internally, a consultant will be found to support the respondent through the process. The complaint will be forwarded to the respondent by their consultant within 10 days of receipt. It is important that the respondent be made aware that their written response may be provided in full or in part to the complainant. Responses should be written in a respectful and clear manner. A respondent does not have to make a response or accept the services of a consultant.
8. In exceptional circumstances, where safety factors have been identified and cannot reliably be managed using standard anti-retaliation messaging, the name of the complainant and certain identifying facts within the complaint may not be provided to the respondent. This will only be done after consultation with legal counsel, as the rights of the respondent to due process must also be protected as much as possible.

9. The respondent will have 10 days to submit a response for consideration. If needed, more time can be requested.
10. There may be situations where the responsible body takes action, such as considering administrative leave or ordering an investigation, before the respondent has completed their response. When this is done, the reason for this decision will be given to the respondent.
11. Pastoral care will be offered to both parties through their consultant, or the responsible body if they are not using a consultant. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) is also available for employees.
12. The responsible body will assess the complaint and response and determine next steps. If there are discrepancies between the reports, an investigator will be assigned. The parameters of the investigation will be identified in the service agreement and through the Investigation Plan submitted by the investigator.
13. Ideally, investigations should be completed within three months. Interviews can be conducted in person or electronically. A respondent who is away from work on administrative leave is expected to be available to participate. Even if the complainant or respondent is away on medical leave, it may be possible to get approval for them to participate in the process through their health care provider.
14. The investigator will write a report for the responsible body outlining the findings, and where requested, recommendations. The responsible body may choose to meet with the parties if they require further information before making decisions on next steps.
15. The responsible body may accept all, some, or none of the findings or recommendations. The responsible body will also determine what, if any, corrective action may be taken as a result.
16. The responsible body will provide the complainant and the respondent with a written letter with the findings and outcomes that the responsible body has accepted, within one month of making their determinations. For confidentiality and privacy reasons, the parties are not provided with a copy of the investigation report.
17. Part of the work undertaken by the responsible body is to assist in rebuilding relationships and trust between the parties, regardless of the outcome of the process.
18. Costs associated with the process, such as consultant and investigation fees, will be paid for by the regional council. If an individual involved in the process chooses to access their own legal advice, those costs will be their responsibility.

Respondent	Responsible Body	Unique Aspects
Employee of a regional council Employee of the General Council Office	Director of Human Resources and Payroll (GCO)	For ministry personnel who work for the General Council or a regional council, the complaint will be shared with the Office of Vocation. Depending on the nature of the complaint, HR or OV will act as the lead.  If the complaint involves a situation where a ministry personnel was providing pastoral care, it will be managed by OV using the ministry personnel processes found in the next section.

**Procedure**

1. The complainant may reach out to share a concern in a variety of ways: to a contact at the General Council Office, a regional council, or the Office of Vocation; to [complaintresponse@united-church.ca](mailto:complaintresponse@united-church.ca); or to the anonymous complaint portal [clearviewconnects.com](http://clearviewconnects.com); or they may contact a consultant directly for assistance.
2. If the complaint is received through the complaint response e-mail address, it will be forwarded to the HR Director.
3. The complainant will provide a detailed written complaint, following the policy and preferably using the Complaint Form. The complainant and respondent will be offered the services of a consultant to help them understand the policy and procedures; however, a United Church of Canada employee may also communicate directly with those involved in order to gather information, communicate next steps, and share outcomes of the process.
4. The complaint will be assessed to determine whether it meets the parameters of the policy. If additional details are required in order to process the complaint, more information will be requested.
5. If a complaint does not meet the definitions covered under this policy, the complainant will be informed that it cannot be processed. Other options, such as submitting a complaint under the Code of Ethical Conduct for employees, or the Ethical Standards as defined in *The Manual*, may apply.
6. The HR Director will consult with the supervisors of the complainant and the respondent and with the Office of Vocation, where applicable, to determine next steps. Depending on the circumstances, legal counsel may also be part of the consultative process. Once the complaint has been reviewed by this group, a complaint lead, either the HR Director or an OV employee, will be assigned.
7. Safety considerations will be discussed when the complaint is received. If there is reason to believe the complainant or others may be at risk, administrative leave for either the complainant and/or the respondent may be considered. Complaints that may involve criminal acts will be reported to the authorities.
8. Where a complaint is being managed internally, a consultant will be found to support the respondent through the process. The complaint will be forwarded to the respondent by their consultant within 10 days of receipt. It is important that the respondent be

- made aware that their written response may be provided in full or in part to the complainant. Responses should be written in a respectful and clear manner. A respondent does not have to make a response or accept the services of a consultant.
9. In exceptional circumstances, where safety factors have been identified and cannot reliably be managed using standard anti-retaliation messaging and follow-up to those involved, the name of the complainant and certain identifying facts within the complaint may not be provided to the respondent. This will only be done after consultation with legal counsel, as the rights of the respondent to due process must also be protected as much as possible.
  10. The respondent will have 10 days to submit a response for consideration. If needed, more time can be requested.
  11. There may be situations where certain actions are taken, such as considering administrative leave or ordering an investigation, before the respondent has completed their response. When this is done, the reason for this decision will be given to the respondent.
  12. Pastoral care will be offered to both parties through their consultant, or the complaint lead if they are not using a consultant. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) is also available for employees.
  13. If a response is received, it will be assessed in order to determine next steps. If there are discrepancies between the complaint and the response, an investigator may be assigned. The parameters of the investigation will be identified in the service agreement and through the Investigation Plan submitted by the investigator. In some cases, the investigation may be conducted internally.
  14. Ideally, investigations should be completed within three months. Interviews can be conducted in person or electronically. A respondent who is away from work on administrative leave is expected to be available to participate. Even if the complainant or respondent is away on medical leave, it may be possible to get approval for them to participate in the process through their health care provider.
  15. The investigator will write a report for the responsible body outlining the findings, and where requested, recommendations. A meeting may be set up with the parties prior to making decisions on next steps.
  16. The responsible body may accept all, some, or none of the findings or recommendations. The responsible body will also determine what, if any, corrective action may be taken as a result.
  17. The complainant and the respondent will be provided with a written letter with the findings and outcomes that have been accepted, within one month of making their determinations. For confidentiality and privacy reasons, the parties are not provided with a copy of the investigation report.
  18. Part of the work undertaken by the responsible body is to assist in rebuilding relationships and trust between the parties, regardless of the outcome of the process.
  19. Costs associated with the process, such as consultant and investigation fees, will be paid for by The United Church of Canada. If an individual involved in the process chooses to access their own legal advice, those costs will be their responsibility.



Respondent	Responsible Body Receiving the Complaint
Ministry personnel	Office of Vocation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response Committee</li> <li>• Remedial Committee</li> </ul>

**Procedure**

1. The complainant may reach out to share a concern in a variety of ways: to a contact in the Office of Vocation, to [complaintresponse@united-church.ca](mailto:complaintresponse@united-church.ca), or to the anonymous complaint portal [clearviewconnects.com](http://clearviewconnects.com), or they may contact a consultant directly for assistance.
2. If the complaint is received through the complaint response e-mail address, it will be forwarded to the Program Coordinator – Pastoral Relations and Remedial Processes for review.
3. The complainant will provide a detailed written complaint, following the policy and preferably using the Complaint Form. A consultant can be assigned to assist with the process.
4. The complaint will be assessed to determine whether it meets the parameters of the policy. Part of the review process will include consultation with appropriate parties, including the applicable Pastoral Relations Minister and Vocational Minister, the Director of Policies and Programs for Ministry Personnel, and legal counsel, as required. If additional details are required in order to process the complaint, more information will be requested.
5. If a complaint does not meet the definitions covered under this policy, the complainant will be informed that it cannot be processed. Other options, such as submitting a complaint under the Code of Ethical Conduct for employees or the Ethical Standards as defined in *The Manual*, may apply.
6. The complaint will be forwarded to the Response Committee for review and decisions on next steps. If the matter is urgent, a meeting of the committee will be scheduled outside of the monthly calendar.
7. Safety considerations will be discussed at this time. If there is reason to believe the complainant or others may be at risk, administrative leave for either the complainant and/or the respondent may be considered. Complaints that may involve criminal acts will be reported to the authorities.
8. Where a complaint is being managed internally, a consultant will be found to support the respondent through the process. The complaint will be forwarded to the respondent by their consultant within 10 days of receipt. It is important that the respondent be made aware that their written response may be provided in full or in part to the complainant. Responses should be written in a respectful and clear manner. A respondent does not have to make a response or accept the services of a consultant.
9. In exceptional circumstances, where safety factors have been identified and cannot reliably be managed using standard anti-retaliation messaging, the name of the complainant and certain identifying facts within the complaint may not be provided to

- the respondent. This will only be done after consultation with legal counsel, as the rights of the respondent to due process must also be protected as much as possible.
10. The respondent will have 10 days to submit a response for consideration. If needed, more time can be requested.
  11. There may be situations where the Response Committee takes action, such as considering administrative leave or ordering an investigation, before the respondent has completed their response. When this is done, the reason for this decision will be given to the respondent.
  12. Pastoral care will be offered to both parties through their consultant. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) is also available for employees.
  13. The Response Committee will assess the complaint and any response received and determine next steps. If there are discrepancies between the complaint and the response, an investigator will be assigned. The parameters of the investigation will be identified in the service agreement and through the Investigation Plan submitted by the investigator.
  14. Depending on the situation, additional supports may need to be considered for the ministry personnel involved, the complainant, and the community of faith if the respondent is in active ministry. How this is managed is the responsibility of the Pastoral Relations Minister, Vocational Minister, Executive Minister, and other staff members within the Office of Vocation. Communication, follow-up, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures put in place are critical to managing the impact of a complaint made against a ministry personnel in active ministry.
  15. Ideally, investigations should be completed within three months. Interviews can be conducted in person or electronically. A respondent who is away from work on administrative leave is expected to be available to participate. Even if the complainant or respondent is away on medical leave, it may be possible to get approval for them to participate in the process through their health care provider.
  16. The investigator will write a report for the responsible body outlining the findings, and where requested, recommendations. This report will be forwarded to the Remedial Committee for review. The Remedial Committee will provide the ministry personnel with a written summary of the investigation findings and provide the ministry personnel with the opportunity to make submissions to the committee.
  17. After considering the submissions of the ministry personnel, the Remedial Committee will (a) accept some or all of the findings and/or the opinion of the reviewer/investigator; (b) reject some or all of the findings and/or the opinion of the reviewer/investigator; (c) remit the matter back to the reviewer/investigator with questions that may require that the reviewer/investigator engage in a further inquiry and provide a supplemental report; or (d) take an alternate course of action as warranted in the circumstances, whichever the Remedial Committee deems appropriate. If the Remedial Committee finds that the ministry personnel has engaged in misconduct under the Policy this will engage section 41 to 61 of Appendix A. (For full details about the procedure for ministry personnel, please see [Office of Vocation Structure and Responsibilities](#), Appendix A.)

18. The Remedial Committee will provide the complainant and the respondent with a written letter with the findings and outcomes that the responsible body has accepted, within one month of making their determinations. For confidentiality and privacy reasons, the parties are not provided with a copy of the investigation report.
19. Part of the work undertaken by the Remedial Committee is to assist in rebuilding relationships and trust between the parties, regardless of the outcome of the process.
20. Costs associated with the process, such as consultant and investigation fees, will be paid for by The United Church of Canada. If an individual involved in the process chooses to access their own legal advice, those costs will be their responsibility.

Respondent	Responsible Body	Unique Aspects
Director	Executive Officer to whom they report	An outside investigator would be contracted as applicable
Executive Minister	General Secretary	
Moderator	General Secretary	An outside investigator would be contracted as applicable
General Secretary	General Secretary Supervision Committee	An outside investigator would be contracted as applicable

### Procedure

1. The complainant may reach out to share a concern in a variety of ways: to a contact at the General Council Office, to [complaintresponse@united-church.ca](mailto:complaintresponse@united-church.ca), or to the anonymous complaint portal [clearviewconnects.com](http://clearviewconnects.com), or they may contact a consultant directly for assistance.
2. The complainant will provide a detailed written complaint, following the policy and preferably using the Complaint Form. The complainant may be offered the services of a consultant where it is deemed beneficial.
3. The complaint can be submitted directly to the General Secretary (or General Secretary Supervision Committee) or to the complaint response e-mail address. If the complaint is received through e-mail, it will be forwarded to the appropriate responsible body.
4. If a complaint does not meet the definitions covered under this policy, the complainant will be informed that it cannot be processed. Other options, such as submitting a complaint under the *Code of Ethical Conduct* for employees, or the *Ethical Standards* as defined in *The Manual*, may apply.
5. When a complaint meets the standards of the policy, a Complaint Response Team will be formed, with membership dependent on the position of the respondent. The Complaint Response Team will determine the plan to address the complaint and may request additional information as needed. Preliminary inquiries may be made by the team to determine whether a formal investigation is necessary or other actions may be taken. An investigation will be conducted by an external investigator.
6. Safety considerations will be discussed when the complaint is received. If there is reason to believe the complainant or others may be at risk, the option for administrative leave for either the complainant and/or the respondent may be considered. Complaints that may involve criminal acts will be reported to the authorities.
7. The complaint will be provided to the respondent within 10 days of receipt. It is important that the respondent be made aware that their written response may be provided in full or in part to the complainant. Responses should be written in a respectful and clear manner.
8. In exceptional circumstances, where safety factors have been identified and cannot reliably be managed using standard anti-retaliation messaging, the name of the complainant and certain identifying facts within the complaint may not be provided to

the respondent. This will only be done after consultation with legal counsel, as the rights of the respondent to due process must also be protected as much as possible.

9. The respondent will have 10 days to submit a response for consideration. If needed, more time can be requested.
10. There may be situations where the responsible body takes action, such as considering administrative leave or ordering an investigation, before the respondent has completed their response. When this is done, the reason for this decision will be given to the respondent.
11. Pastoral care will be offered to both parties. The [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) is also available for employees.
12. The responsible body will assess the complaint and response and determine next steps. If there are discrepancies between the reports, an investigator will be assigned. The parameters of the investigation will be identified in the service agreement and through the Investigation Plan submitted by the investigator.
13. Ideally, investigations should be completed within three months. Interviews can be conducted in person or electronically. A respondent who is away from work on administrative leave is expected to be available to participate. Even if the complainant or respondent is away on medical leave, it may be possible to get approval for them to participate in the process through their health care provider.
14. The investigator will write a report for the responsible body outlining the findings, and where requested, recommendations. The responsible body may choose to meet with the parties if they require further information before making decisions on next steps.
15. The responsible body may accept all, some, or none of the findings or recommendations. The responsible body will also determine what, if any, corrective action may be taken as a result.
16. The responsible body will provide the complainant and the respondent with a written letter with the findings and outcomes that the responsible body has accepted, within one month of making their determinations. For confidentiality and privacy reasons, the parties are not provided with a copy of the investigation report.
17. Part of the work undertaken by the responsible body is to assist in rebuilding relationships and trust between the parties, regardless of the outcome of the process.
18. Costs associated with the process, such as consultant and investigation fees, will be paid for by The United Church of Canada. If an individual involved in the processes chooses to access their own legal advice, those costs will be their responsibility.