

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy

Purpose

The United Church of Canada is committed to providing safe environments for work, worship, and study, free from harassment and violence.

The church will not tolerate any behaviour by any person—including but not limited to its members, adherents, lay employees and ministry personnel, and elected members or volunteers—that constitutes harassment, or is violent or threatens violence.

Harassment and violence in the workplace are prohibited by federal and provincial law and the laws of the church.

Policy

All complaints of harassment or violence toward anyone within the church—including lay employees or ministry personnel, and elected members or volunteers—will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice.

Harassment is defined as any unwanted physical, sexual, or verbal conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwanted, and is a form of **discrimination**. Harassment may involve a wide range of behaviour, from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to overt demands and physical abuse, and it includes psychological harassment.

Sexual harassment is defined as any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship, to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention, or to punish a refusal to comply.

Violence is defined as the exercise of physical force or attempt to cause physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause injury. It also includes statements or behaviours that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in the workplace, that could cause physical injury.

It is everyone's responsibility to raise concerns about harassment, violence, and discrimination within the workplace. It is also everyone's responsibility to take steps to address harassment, violence, and discrimination in the workplace.

Procedures

1. All complaints of harassment or violence will be taken seriously and will be investigated.
2. If the person complaining (the complainant) is able to do so, they should communicate directly with the person who is behaving inappropriately, to tell them that their behaviour is unacceptable and is being experienced as unacceptable by the complainant.
3. If the behaviour does not stop or the complainant is unable to speak to the respondent (the person behaving inappropriately), then a complaint should be provided in writing with detail as to the date of the incident(s), location, any witnesses, and a description of the incident(s).

4. The complaint should be sent to the appropriate Conference executive secretary/speaker where the incident occurred.
5. The Conference executive secretary/speaker will assess the complaint and the applicability of this policy to respond to the complaint. If there are other processes available to address the complaint, those may be recommended by the executive secretary or speaker. Such other options could include mediation, a facilitated conversation, or other forms of dispute resolution.
6. The complaint will be provided to the respondent at the earliest possible opportunity by the Conference executive secretary/speaker or appointee.
7. If the complaint is being made about the Conference executive secretary/speaker, the complaint will be made to the Ministry and Employment Unit, General Council Office (pursuant to Human Resources policy 3.4).
8. The Conference executive secretary/speaker will inform the Executive or Sub-Executive of the Conference that a complaint has been received. The Conference executive secretary/speaker will also inform the pastoral charge or faith community and the court of accountability for that court of the church that a complaint has been made, and of the process to be used to address the complaint.
9. Pastoral care will be offered to the parties.
10. The Conference executive secretary/speaker will assign an investigator to the complaint in consultation with the appropriate staff person in the Ministry and Employment Unit, General Council Office.
11. The investigator will meet with the parties to the complaint in person; if there are any witnesses, conversations with the witnesses may be conducted in person or over the phone.
12. The investigator will prepare a report with recommendations to resolve the complaint, and the report will be provided to the Conference executive secretary/speaker, who will communicate the resolution and recommendations, as appropriate, to the parties and to the pastoral charge or faith community and court of accountability.
13. The parties will be provided with information about the outcome as appropriate in the circumstances. Personal information will not be provided about any party, and all information will be held in as much confidence as is possible while still ensuring fair process.

