

# ***Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ “Safe Conference” Policy***

## **Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment**

As a community of Christian faith, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference is committed to creating and maintaining a community, programs and facilities in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with Pennsylvania Southeast Conference (hereafter identified as ‘the Conference’) should be aware that the Conference is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by Conference policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the Conference to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

## **Ministerial Conduct**

Conference staff and all employee(s), elected and appointed lay leaders, and all volunteer(s) are all Ministers of the Conference. As such, each is responsible for understanding the ways in which their words or actions may affect others.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment, of parishioners or others, by anyone engaged in the ministry of Pennsylvania Southeast Conference is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this Conference.

All Ministers of the Conference (as defined below) may sometimes deal with individuals who are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way. It is also important that every Minister of the Conference be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others and to understand the ways in which their actions may impact those who may be vulnerable to their use or misuse of power.

It is the policy of Pennsylvania Southeast Conference to encourage its Ministers and Authorized Ministers, to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit an application and disclosure document.

## **Child and Youth Protection Policy**

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God’s love.

In order to ensure this, we have established the following guidelines.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of their local congregation for at least six months, or if not members, regularly and frequently associated with that congregation for at least a year.

- It is the policy of this Conference to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for all youth activities. In any situations where participants are not readily visible to other adults, there will be no less than two unrelated adults present with children, in a ratio of 1 adult to every 8 children. Youth over the age of 18 may assist an unrelated adult; however, this assistance does not change the requirement that at least two unrelated adults must be present.
- All volunteers who work with children and youth will complete and submit the Conference disclosure document.
- All volunteers and employees who work with children and youth will receive boundary training and certification to work with youth.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian will be required for all activities involving minors.

### **Requirements for ministry**

- Before an offer of employment is made to any individual (whether ordained, commissioned, licensed or other lay person), a comprehensive background check, including a criminal records check, will be completed. The scope of the check will include the counties of residence and counties of work over the past seven years.
- All Ministers of the Conference will complete an application/disclosure form before beginning their duties.
- Conference staff will conduct a review of the registered sex offender registry at [www.npsor.gov](http://www.npsor.gov) for each new Authorized Minister. In addition, the registered sex offender registry will be reviewed on a quarterly basis for all Ministers, Authorized Ministers, and staff working with youth.
- Authorized Ministers on the Conference Staff will attend all boundary workshops suggested or required by the Association in which they hold standing or will attend at least one workshop each three years, whichever is more frequent.

### **Definitions**

**Minister:** a person engaged by the Conference to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the Conference, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

**Authorized Minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Conference (Disciples of Christ).

**Ministerial Relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the Conference and the one being served by that ministry.

**Sexual Exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the Conference takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

**Sexual Harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any Conference activity; Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or Conference-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in Conference activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or Conference environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, Conference leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the Conference. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

# Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ Disclosure Form

Employment/Authorized Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form

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Last First Middle

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Address

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City State Zip Code

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Phone Email Address

Position you are applying for \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about this position? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all experience (paid or volunteer): (Attach additional page[s] as necessary.)

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Employer Name

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Address

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City State Zip Code

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Contact Person Phone

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Dates of Service Rate of Pay

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Reason for Leaving

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Employer Name

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Address

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City

State

Zip Code

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Contact Person

Phone

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Dates of Service

Rate of Pay

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Reason for Leaving

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Employer Name

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Address

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City

State

Zip Code

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Contact Person

Phone

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Dates of Service

Rate of Pay

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Reason for Leaving

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? (Conviction will not necessarily preclude you from employment.)

Yes  No

If yes, please give a short explanation of the felony. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident; where the felony was filed; and the precise disposition of the felony.)

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I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual, physical and/or child abuse.

Yes  No

If no, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s).)

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Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes  No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

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The covenants between persons seeking employment or sanctioned volunteer positions in the Conference require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the Conference. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this Disclosure Form and/or during interview(s) may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill, regardless of when the misrepresentation or omission is discovered. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees or volunteers and the Conference they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Pennsylvania Southeast Conference and/or its agents to make inquiries

regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background and character.

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference's hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize the Conference and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that the Conference will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

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(Signature)

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(Date)