

SEXUAL ETHICS AND CONDUCT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ICARE Team members are available to offer guidance and support.

You may contact the co-chairs

- The Rev. DR. Brunilda Martínez
- The Rev. Susan L. Worrell, MS, CADC, LPC

Through the confidential email address:

icare4epa@gmail.com

While the ICARE Team works within a Covenant of Confidentiality, it is important to note that all ICARE Team members are Mandated Reporters. That is, if a Team member receives a report involving someone under the age of 18, there is NO discretion. It MUST be reported within 24 hours.

In addition, it is important to note that within the Covenant of Confidentiality, should a report be received describing a situation so egregious as to put the reporting individual, another individual, and/or the congregation at risk, the ICARE Team member will disclose:

- to whom it needs to be disclosed (Normally Bishop and/or District Superintendent);
- to the level it needs to be disclosed;
- when it needs to be disclosed.

When the worst occurs

When a signed complaint is received, at the invitation of the Bishop, the District Superintendent and Pastor/Congregation, the ICARE Team provides pastoral care for the complainant and family, for the accused and her or her family, and for the congregation, agency or institution through the following operating guidelines and functions:

- Insure the safety of the complainant/alleged victim.
- Presume the innocence of the accused.
- Observe confidentiality.
- Be in contact with the District Superintendent as appropriate.
- Serve to resource therapy, civil and church procedures, and supportive secular agencies for all involved: complainant/victim.

Sexual Misconduct Response Guidelines

The following guidelines are the steps to be followed in cases of Sexual Misconduct. Any person who has credible reason to believe a violation of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference's Policy on Sexual Misconduct Involving Adults (June 2016) has occurred should bring the matter to the attention of church authorities. (For reporting abuse of children or youth, see [Eastern PA Safe Sanctuaries Policy](#).)

These are the usual procedures for handling cases for reported sexual misconduct involving United Methodist churches, their pastoral and lay staff, and laity.

Possible Points of Entry

There are several possible ways to initiate the process in cases of alleged sexual misconduct.

- Contact the Bishop's office

- Contact the District Superintendent
- Contact your Pastor (if a lay person is involved)
- Contact your Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair (if a clergy person is involved)
- Contact ICARE Chairperson through confidential email address: icare4epa@gmail.com

In any case, once contact is made, there is an opportunity to explain the circumstances of the alleged misconduct. In addition, the intervention process is explained. This is a time of listening and sharing information.

The Bishop's representatives, District Superintendents and ICARE Team members are trained to listen and help the person reporting the alleged misconduct to decide what her/his next step will be.

- The ICARE Team may be asked to assist in making a formal complaint, which must be in writing. Refer to the *Book of Discipline* 2016, paragraph 362, for specific procedures for filing and handling a complaint.
- When a formal complaint is written, it is filed with the appropriate District Superintendent, who then notifies the Bishop.
- If a formal (written) complaint is not filed, there can be no further administrative or judicial action.

If a Complaint is Filed

Once a complaint is filed, the Bishop and the District Superintendent will meet to confer in prayer and concern. This marks the beginning of the formal intervention process. It is at this point that the person making the complaint and the person accused of alleged misconduct will each be offered the support of an ICARE Team member.

- If the offer of support is accepted, each party will receive a different support person from the ICARE Team.
- The Bishop, in consultation with the District Superintendent and the ICARE Team Chairpersons, will determine which ICARE Team Member(s) will be assigned.
- Family members may, if desired, also receive ICARE Team support.

As a complaint is investigated, it may be helpful to the District Superintendent and the congregation to assign support persons for the congregation. If so, the Bishop, in consultation with the District Superintendent and the ICARE Team Chairpersons, will assign a Congregational ICARE Support Team. These persons provide care and support for members of the congregation as they seek to cope with the alleged misconduct. In the case where a pastor is to be suspended, a Congregational ICARE Support Team will be provided.

Cases involving legal charges beyond the local church often hold requirements that affect how ICARE can work.

* Eastern PA Conference Policy on Sexual Misconduct Involving Adults can be found at: <https://www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-Involving-Adults.pdf>

** Eastern PA Safe Sanctuaries Policy can be found at: <https://www.epaumc.org/resources/safe-sanctuaries/>

Strict confidentiality is maintained in all cases, except in matters concerning minors, in which case the laws of Pennsylvania govern disclosure.

Our primary goal is to avoid the worst!

The challenges and demands of the world deplete us. Sadly, more times than not, the worst occurs when we allow ourselves to become depleted. The best prevention is a program of self-care; a program that is focused on wholeness of body, mind, spirit.

For additional information refer to the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women:
<http://www.umsexualethics.com/> and
<http://www.gcsr.org/>

