SAFE CONFERENCE POLICY

HAWAII CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

(ADOPTED FEBRUARY 7, 2009)
Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ
“Safe Conference” Policy

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ (“HCUCC”) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which employees, volunteers and persons served by HCUCC can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

All persons associated with HCUCC should be aware that HCUCC is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment and physical or verbal abuse, and that such behavior is prohibited by HCUCC policy. It is the intention and responsibility of HCUCC 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.

Conduct of Employees and Volunteers

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all employees, including Authorized Ministers, and volunteers are engaged in the ministry of HCUCC.

It is important that every employee and volunteer be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and understand ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others.

It is the policy of HCUCC to encourage its employees and volunteers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment, or physical or verbal abuse of or by anyone engaged in the ministry of HCUCC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated by the HCUCC, and may be cause for immediate termination of employment or volunteer service with HCUCC.

Workplace harassment, including procedures for handling complaints, is covered in the HCUCC/Hawaii Conference Foundation Employee Handbook.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

• Before beginning their duties, all employees and volunteers will submit a Disclosure Form.
• Before beginning their duties, all employees and volunteers will be personally interviewed by an assigned immediate supervisor to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
• For compensated HCUCC staff, following a conditional offer of employment and prior to commencement of employment, HCUCC will conduct a criminal background check and employment reference check, including, but not limited to a registered sex offender review
by name search on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov and the Hawai‘i
Criminal Justice Data Center at www.Hawaii.gov/ag/hcjdc. The registered sex offender
review will be repeated on an annual basis for all employees.

- For volunteers, prior to commencement of ministry, HCUCC will conduct a registered sex
offender review by name search on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov
and the Hawai‘i Criminal Justice Data Center at www.Hawaii.gov/ag/hcjdc. The registered
sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all volunteers who return to or
continue in their ministries. Reference checks may also be conducted for volunteers.

Additional Requirements of Child and Youth Ministry

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

In order to promote this, the following requirements apply in addition to those listed above.

- All prospective employees and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth
will complete and submit a Disclosure Form or a document in a form substantially
similar to the Disclosure Form.

- For compensated HCUCC staff, following a conditional offer of employment and
prior to commencement of employment, the HCUCC will conduct a comprehensive
background check, including, but not limited to, a criminal records check, as well as
driving and motor vehicles records check if position includes transporting children
and youth. The scope of the check will include the counties of residence and counties
of work over the past ten years. HCUCC will withdraw the conditional offer of
employment if the prospective employee has a conviction record that bears a rational
relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the position.

- For volunteers, following an invitation to serve and prior to commencement of
ministry (whether Authorized Minister or layperson), a comprehensive background
check will be completed, including, but not limited to, a criminal records check, as
well as driving and motor vehicles records check if position includes transporting
children and youth, will be completed. The scope of the check will include the
counties of residence and counties of work over the past ten years. HCUCC will
withdraw the invitation to serve if the volunteer has a conviction record that bears a
rational relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the position.

- All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth will receive
orientation to the overall policy and must attend HUCCC-approved boundary
training.

- The use of drugs (except prescription and over-the-counter medicine), alcohol,
tobacco, firearms and fireworks is not permitted during children’s and youth
activities.

The following requirements shall apply to all HCUCCC-sponsored children’s or youth
programming.
Adequate supervision and safeguards will be provided for all activities. In any situation where participants are not readily visible to others, there will not be fewer than two unrelated adults present with children or youth. Youth over the age of 16 may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, this assistance does not change the requirement that at least two unrelated adults must be present.

The ratio of minors to adults for supervision of overnight and off-site activities will be no more than six to one. If groups include both male and female participants, there must be both male and female adult supervisors.

In situations of overnight housing, if adults are housed in the same room as youth, at least two preferably unrelated adults must be assigned to the room. When housing is in hotels or college dormitory rooms, it is recommended that youth and adults be housed in separate rooms.

Signed written consent of one custodial parent or guardian of a minor (including transportation consent if appropriate) will be required for all activities off the property of the HCUCC or a UCC-affiliated conference or any overnight activity.

A valid health form is required for all children and youth attending an event taking place away from parental supervision.

In the event youth are used as volunteers with children, every attempt will be made to ensure that they are at least 21 years of age, or that youth are teamed with, preferably, an unrelated adult. At least five years separation between adults in supervision and the children/youth they supervise is the recommended rule.

**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 employees and volunteers.

**Ministry:** Any officially-sponsored activity, event, meeting or program that involves the service of ministers and people served by the ministry.

**Authorized Minister:** A person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Conference of Christ or region of the Christian Conference (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

**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 a Ministerial Relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served 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.

Child Abuse or Neglect: The acts or omissions of any person who, or legal entity which, is in any manner or degree related to the child, is residing with the child, or is otherwise responsible for the child’s care, that have resulted in the physical or psychological health or welfare of the child, who is under the age of eighteen, to be
harmed, or to be subject to any reasonably foreseeable, substantial risk of being harmed. Hawai‘i State law requires all Employees and volunteers, employees and volunteers to report:

(1) When the child exhibits evidence of: (a) substantial or multiple skin bruising or any other internal bleeding; (b) any injury to skin causing substantial bleeding; (c) malnutrition; (d) failure to thrive; (e) burn or burns; (f) poisoning; (g) fracture of any bone; (h) subdural hematoma; (i) soft tissue swelling; (j) extreme pain; (k) extreme mental distress; (l) gross degradation; (m) death; and such injury is not justifiably explained, or when the history given concerning such condition or death is at variance with the degree or type of such condition or death, or circumstances indicate that such condition or death may not be the product of an accidental occurrence; or

(2) When the child has been the victim of sexual contact or conduct, including, but not limited to, sexual assault as defined in the Hawai‘i Penal Code, molestation, sexual fondling, incest, or prostitution; obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depiction; or other similar forms of sexual exploitation; or

(3) When there exists injury to the psychological capacity of a child as is evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child’s ability to function; or

(4) When the child is not provided in a timely manner with adequate food, clothing, shelter, psychological care, physical care, medical care, or supervision; or

(5) When the child is provided with dangerous, harmful, or detrimental drugs.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Abuse, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment

Anyone who feels that he or she has been subjected to, or is aware of, conduct that is prohibited by this Policy should immediately report the matter to the designated supervisor, director, chairperson, or an Authorized Minister of HCUCC staff.

The Conference Minister or his/her designee will conduct a prompt investigation of all allegations of prohibited harassment or abuse in as confidential a manner as possible. HCUCC is committed to providing work, worship, or Conference related programs free of unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation but can only do so if concerns or questions are brought to its attention.

If HCUCC determines that prohibited abuse or harassment has occurred, it will take corrective action reasonably calculated to end the prohibited harassment, including appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination or exclusion from HCUCC programs.

Alleged incidents involving HCUCC employees will be addressed as outlined in the HCUCC Employee Handbook.

Procedures for Cases, or Suspected Cases, of Child Abuse

Any employee or volunteer who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that Child Abuse or
Neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that Child Abuse or Neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the designated supervisor, director, chairperson or an Authorized Minister of HCUCC staff so that HCUCC may take appropriate action in a timely manner.

HCUCC will make a report to appropriate authorities including but not limited to Child Protective Services (CPS) 24-hour reporting line: Oahu, 808-832-5300; toll free, 1-800-494-3991; toll free fax: 1-800-399-1614.

In an emergency situation where a child’s life or welfare is immediately threatened or endangered, individuals are encouraged to call 911 or to make a report directly to CPS.

Procedures for Clergy Misconduct

Apart from any disposition of the matter by a calling body, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will be promptly forwarded to the Conference and Ministry Committee of the Association of the United Conference of Christ in which standing is held, by contacting the Conference Minister or any of the Associate Conference Ministers of the HCUCC.

Confidentiality

All application and disclosure information provided by volunteers and employees shall be kept in a confidential file. When investigating an allegation, those involved shall maintain complete confidentiality with respect to names and events. The guiding rule of confidentiality is to share information only with those who need to know and only what they need to know when that information enables them to make informed decisions that they are duly authorized to make. This rule of confidentiality shall be followed by all involved.