



Protocol and Procedure for Ministerial Misconduct Files

The Church Vitality office of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) keeps Ministerial Misconduct Files of formally accused and processed cases of misconduct by credentialed leaders in our denomination. The purpose of the Ministerial Misconduct Files is to help prevent future abuse by credentialed leaders who have been accused and found to have engaged in ministerial misconduct. This protocol and procedure document guides the Church Vitality staff in the use of the Ministerial Misconduct Files, clarifying when the files are accessed, and by whom, as we strive for transparency in our efforts to prevent abuse.

The Ministerial Misconduct Files contain copies of the ministerial misconduct proceedings sent from area conferences to the national office at the conclusion of each formal investigation – no matter the outcome. Area conferences will include documentation from each of the steps outlined in the [Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure](#). The misconduct status of a credentialed leader is indicated in the “Status Notes” section of their file on MennoData, Mennonite Church USA’s national database.

Conference ministers and the national office will consult the misconduct file of any credentialed leader who desires to renew their Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) file, seeks a new ministry position within Mennonite Church USA, or is being vetted for volunteer or employment by an MC USA agency. The purpose of referencing the Ministerial Misconduct Files is to more fully vet credentialed leaders with record of previous misconduct.

Conference ministers will alert any interested search committee in writing of a credentialed leader’s misconduct, including the date and nature of the charge, the resulting judgement, all sanctions and the compliance of the credentialed leader. Additionally, the MLI form itself indicates a candidate’s previous incidents of misconduct.

Though Ministerial Misconduct Files are maintained with professional confidentiality, their existence is not secretive in nature, and the national office encourages their consultation through the appropriate channels for the purpose of abuse prevention. Because credentials are conferred by the Area Conference on behalf of MC USA, MC USA Church Vitality office will consult with the Area Conference before responding to requests for access to Ministerial Misconduct Files. In the event that Area Conference file sharing policies are more restrictive than MC USA standards, the national office will defer to the Area Conference.

Who has access to the content of the Ministerial Misconduct Files and the list of credentialed leaders with records?

- The director of Church Vitality and the denominational staff working with the calling system have access to the full list of names and content of records in the Ministerial Misconduct Files and reserve the right to access the information as they deem appropriate and necessary.

- Conference ministers have access to all the names and files of credentialed leaders within their specific conference as indicated in the “Status Notes” in MennoData, Mennonite Church USA’s national database.
- Other requests connected to formal investigations or the vetting of credentialed leaders for employment or volunteer positions by MC USA agencies will be addressed by the Director of Church Vitality.

In what situations would a conference minister reference the Ministerial Misconduct Files?

- The Church Vitality office provides an orientation for all new area conference ministers which includes a conversation reviewing misconduct cases of any credentialed leader in their conference and the documentation in the Ministerial Misconduct Files.
- When a credentialed leader with a Ministerial Misconduct File is being considered for a ministry position in any area conference of Mennonite Church USA, the area conference minister will access their file and provide any interested search committee in writing of the credentialed leader’s misconduct, including the date and nature of the charge, the resulting judgement, all sanctions and the compliance of the credentialed leader.

In what situations would the national office reference the Ministerial Misconduct Files?

The Church Vitality office will provide access to a Ministerial Misconduct File when:

- There is a request from a conference minister who is dealing with a complaint of misconduct against a credentialed leader in their conference.
- A pastor makes a request to fill out a Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form and is known to have a previous record of misconduct in the Ministerial Misconduct Files.
- The MC USA Leadership Discernment Committee (LDC) and/or agency staff who are vetting a credentialed leader for employment or a volunteer position ask about a credentialed leader.
- When and if required to do so by law.

Who can receive information from a Ministerial Misconduct File?

Requested information will be given to:

- The conference minister and credentialing ministry committee of the conference holding the leader’s credential or considering a credentialed leader for a possible position.
- Authorities conducting a formal or legal investigation will be given copies of the complete file.
- Either the complainant or the accused credentialed leader may request copies of documents which they earlier authored, which were addressed to them, or were public at the time (i.e. public announcements, news stories, etc.). Complainants and accused credentialed leaders are free to use this information as they will.
- The MC USA LDC and/or Agencies that are vetting credentialed leaders for employment or volunteer positions may inquire if said leader has past misconduct. If they have, the agency will be given a report naming the credentialed leader’s misconduct, including the date and nature of the charge, the resulting judgement, all sanctions and the compliance of the credentialed leader. These reports are for agency use only.

Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann, denominational ministers

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Revised 10/27/2020 - Changed “Leadership Development” department name to “Church Vitality.”

Michael Danner, Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality
Revised 3/1/2021 – added provisions for providing information to MC USA agencies for the purpose of vetting credentialed leaders for employment or volunteer roles. Michael Danner, Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality