

Outside Grievances Raised for UUA Staff

The UUA is committed to a relational and compassionate approach to its mission. Anyone who is not a UUA staff member who feels they have been harmed by a UUA staff person, either harmed in the course of that staff person carrying out their job duties or harmed in personal ways which inhibit the ability of the individual to relate professionally to that staff person or the UUA, may raise that concern through a formal grievance. Grievances raised for UUA staff should be submitted to the Director of Human Resources (humanresources@uua.org). Once submitted, the grievance might be shared with the staff person and their supervisor. Responses to the grievance may include the following:

1. A direct response from the staff person and/or their supervisor to try to resolve the grievance.
2. Invitation to participate in a restorative justice process. Such a process may provide a venue for the complainant to share their concerns with the staff person, to include the perspectives of other related individuals or parties, and to decide on a mutual path forward that addresses the harm and concerns. The purpose of a restorative process would be to repair the relationship between the UUA and the individual, congregation or group raising the grievance.
3. Investigation by the UUA, or by an external party retained by the UUA, into the grievance. Outcomes of the investigation could include dismissal of the grievance, disciplinary action for the staff person, referral to another process or venue for resolution, or other remedies deemed relevant by the UUA to addressing the concerns raised in the grievance. The person who submits the grievance may be asked to provide additional information through such an investigation, and will be notified of any relevant outcomes once the investigation is concluded. The purpose of an investigation would be to determine what took place, especially when this is disputed, how that impacts the ability of the staff person to fulfill their job responsibilities, and what actions the UUA may need to take.

The UUA recognizes that its staff are required to exercise judgement and discretion in service of its mission, and that those who are impacted by decisions and actions of UUA staff may not always agree with those decisions. The UUA supports its staff in defining clear and reasonable expectations for performance, providing feedback and opportunities to improve, following appropriate process in receiving grievances, and protecting staff from harassment in the form of spurious complaints.

The purpose of the grievance process is to address harm caused by UUA staff members in a holistic manner that allows the UUA to best fulfill its mission and responsibilities, for the complainant to feel heard and that their concerns have been valued, and for harm to be repaired and relationships restored to the extent possible. The UUA is especially attuned to harm that occurs within the work to counter oppression and create fully inclusive communities.

Grievances and possible resolutions may also be considered within the context of system dynamics and processes which contributed to harmful situations.

Recognizing that there are disagreements within any community which do not necessarily rise to the level of harm, and in the spirit of transparency, the UUA encourages concerns about UUA staff activity to be raised directly with the appropriate staff people before grievances are filed. Disagreement with valid judgements made by UUA staff in the course of their job does not constitute “harm” under this policy, per se.

This avenue for staff grievances is part of a system of receiving and addressing concerns within the Association. This system includes:

- *Office of Ethics and Safety* – receives complaints related to UU congregations, leaders and communities which are not under direction of UUA staff, but which UUA staff may help resolve
- *Professional Credentialing* – addresses complaints of misconduct for ministers and credentialed religious educators, either initiated by appropriate credentialing review bodies or received through the Office of Ethics and Safety
- *Independent Professional Organizations* – professional organizations such as the Liberal Religious Educators Association or the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association may have their own processes for receiving and addressing unethical or inappropriate behavior by their members
- *Whistleblower Reporting System* – confidential system to receive concerns of ethical or legal violations of UUA volunteers, staff members or trustees
- *Internal staff complaints* – disputes or concerns between UUA staff members are addressed through internal process as outlined in the Employee Handbook