

Religious Education Credentialing Committee Complaint Procedure

1. Introduction.

(a) The Unitarian Universalist Association (“UUA”) credentials individuals, who have successfully completed a required course of study and demonstrated the qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics, to qualify to teach and foster Unitarian Universalist (“UU”) faith development as a UU credentialed religious educator (“RE Professional”). The award of an RE Professional credential is a privilege awarded by the UUA’s Religious Education Credentialing Committee (“RECC”). To ensure that the integrity of the religious education credential is protected, the RECC reserves the right to revoke any credential which has been awarded based upon a review of the circumstances.

(b) The purpose of this complaint procedure is to provide a process for receiving and handling complaints of misconduct against an RE Professional that may result in the revocation, of that credential. To the extent that a religious educator is not credentialed by the UUA, these rules and guidelines do not apply.

(c) Consideration of a complaint under these procedures must take into consideration that the UUA provides support to its member congregations, it does not govern them and in most instances does not employ the RE Professional. Under UU congregational polity, each member congregation has the power to ordain, call/hire, supervise and dismiss ministers and other staff, including the RE Professional(s); and to do so independently of the UUA.

d) All people involved in the review and determinations regarding any complaint brought against an RE professional shall approach the work with an open heart and mind, taking into account various relationships, identities, and perspectives while keeping in mind that it is the RECC’s responsibility to ensure that the children and others involved in our faith development programming are safe and protected from religious educators whose conduct is found to be inappropriate.

2. Standard/Guide for Complaint Consideration.

(a) Complaints under this procedure must raise issues or concerns about an RE Professional’s competence, professionalism, unbecoming and/or unethical conduct or other specified cause that is deemed sufficiently serious, that if substantiated, would justify removal of the RE Professional’s credentials.

(b) The Liberal Religious Educators Association (“LREDA”) Code of Professional Practices will be used as the standard/guide for whether there is conduct unbecoming based on the totality of the facts and circumstances. The RECC will use a rigorous, values-aligned lens in reviewing the facts and making its determinations in this process, according to the UUA’s values.

(c) The RECC Executive Team and appropriate staff liaison(s) will review and determine if the behavior involved in the complaint constitutes misconduct or is not credential threatening discomfort, unhappiness or dislike of feedback. It will, in appropriate circumstances and situations refer a complaint for consideration and resolution to the member congregation, LREDA and/or other civil authorities.

3. Filing of Complaint and Intake Review.

(a) A complaint alleging misconduct should be initiated by the individual affected by the alleged misconduct. However, if the situation involves a minor victim and/or other out-of-the-ordinary situation, a third-party may initiate the complaint. The complaint must be in writing and preferably written by a person with first-hand knowledge about the events or circumstances described. It should be filed with the UUA Office of Ethics and Safety.

(b) Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided in the complaint. However, the Complainant should be aware that confidentiality is not guaranteed and that the content of the complaint will be reviewed with the RE Professional, who will be given an opportunity to respond.

(c) The UUA Office of Ethics and Safety Complaint Intake Person will evaluate and determine whether the complaint raises an issue that warrants further consideration by the RECC, based on the standards outlined in this procedure.

(i) If it is determined that the complaint does not raise an issue warranting or appropriate for further consideration by the RECC, the complaint will be closed and the Complainant so advised along with any known available options for further discussion and/or address of the issues raised, such as referral to LREDA's Good Officer's program or to UUA regional staff for support. In this case, the Intake Person will notify the RECC Chair and staff liaison(s) that a complaint was closed.

(ii) If a complaint raises an issue that the Intake Person believes warrants further consideration, or if it is unclear whether it should warrant further consideration, the complaint will be forwarded to the RECC Executive Team and staff liaison(s). In any cases involving or alleging child or elder abuse or neglect, or any serious violation of legal or professional standards, the complaint will be forwarded on for further consideration.

4. Investigation and Review by RECC.

(a) The RECC Executive Team shall oversee the process for investigation and review of potential complaints. The executive team may assign another member or members of the RECC to carry out this responsibility on the RECC's behalf. Any questions of procedure on complaints shall be resolved at the RECC Executive Team's sole discretion. The RECC Executive Team shall work with the staff liaison(s) on all official correspondence related to the complaint. In the event the RECC Executive Team is unable to oversee this process, the RECC Chair will be ultimately responsible.

Initial Determination

(b) The RECC Executive Team will evaluate the complaint and make an initial determination regarding whether further investigation or information is necessary to make a determination.

(i) If it is initially determined that no further information or investigation is warranted, the RECC Executive Team may close the complaint, make a recommendation for the revocation of credentials to the RECC, or to take any otherwise appropriate action. If the RECC Executive Team makes an initial determination to close the case, that decision shall be final and shall inform the RECC. If the RECC Executive Team makes a recommendation for revocation or any other action related to the RE Professional's credential based on their preliminary determination, this action must be reviewed and approved by a majority vote of the full RECC membership.

(ii) If it is initially determined that further information or investigation is necessary, the RECC Executive Team or designee has the discretion to determine the type of investigation and identification of the investigator(s) and may assign one or more members of the RECC to oversee and manage the process with the assistance of the appropriate UUA staff member(s). The RECC Executive Team will inform the RECC of the investigation and its process.

Communication with RE Professional

(c) In all cases, the RE Professional, who is the subject of the complaint, will be advised of the complaint and that confidentiality, non-retaliation, cooperation and any other conditions deemed appropriate by the RECC Executive Team or designee are essential conditions of the RE Professional's credential. In the event that the RE Professional fails to maintain these conditions, the RECC will revoke the RE Professional's credentials without further process.

(d) A summary of the complaint will be provided to the RE Professional for response, which may be solicited by way of an interview and/or in writing, prior to the determination of the RECC Executive Team. If it is determined that further investigation is necessary, then the RE Professional will be offered a Good Officer and the Complainant will be offered a third party for support.

Investigation

(e) If the RECC Executive Team has made an initial determination to proceed with an investigation, any further investigation or information gathering shall be conducted by the assigned RECC member, investigator or appropriate UUA staff member(s). This person or people shall individually or collectively have the discretion to determine the extent of such investigation and make a recommendation to the RECC Executive Team. Anyone with whom the complaint or RE Professional's response is shared must be advised regarding the need to maintain the confidentiality of that information.

(f) Any further investigation shall be conducted as expeditiously as possible and the results provided to the RECC Executive Team, who shall have the discretion to decide to close the complaint, make a recommendation to the RECC that the RE Professional's credentials be revoked or to take whatever other action is appropriate.

(g) Based on the outcome of the investigation and the recommendation of the investigator(s), the RECC chair shall make a recommendation to close a complaint or to revoke or otherwise take appropriate action regarding the credentials of an RE Professional. The RECC shall approve or modify the recommendation of the RECC Executive Team by majority vote. That determination shall be final.

5. Notifications.

(a) The RE Professional and the Complainant shall be advised if the complaint is concluded.

(b) If credentials are revoked, notice thereof should be provided to the RE Professional's employer, LREDA, and all other RE Professionals credentialed by the RECC.