

Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution Policy: Approved by the Board, August 21, 2007. Amended, April 6, 2008, Amended April 4, 2012. Amended April 23, 2013. Amended April 26, 2016.

Purpose: This policy seeks to address the following in accordance with UU Principles and Purposes and the VUU Behavioral Covenant:

1. Behavior that disrupts VUU services or activities.
2. Harm to the physical or emotional well-being of any VUU member or associated person or the congregation at large.
3. Interpersonal behavior that interferes with a person's ability to participate fully in the VUU community OR diminishes the appeal of the congregation to its potential and existing membership.

1) Immediate action

- a. If dangerous, threatening, or disruptive behavior requires an immediate intervention/response, it will be undertaken by the Minister(s) if available, and or the person or persons leading the activity. They shall:
 - Ask the offending person(s) to leave and/or
 - Suspend the meeting or activity until such time that it can be safely resumed, and/or
 - Request the police, child protective services or adult protective services as required, and
 - Once the immediate incident is diffused, write a follow-up letter detailing the offense and actions taken because of the offense to the Board President and the Senior Minister.

2) Disruptive Behavior Initial Process

- a. Any time a VUU member of associated person is involved in a situation described in Purpose above, they should report it to the Senior Minister or Board President.
- b. The Senior Minister or designee will assess the situation to determine if the full CMCR process is required, or a less formal approach is likely to be effective. If it would then a written agreement will be drawn up with the offending person(s) . This agreement will be designed by the Senior Minister with input from the Board of Trustees (using UU Principles and Purposes and the VUU Behavioral Covenant as a guide).
- c. If such a process identified in 2b above is ineffective or inappropriate the situation may be referred as a CMCR Case as set forth below.

3) Submitting a Case

- a) The Senior Minister or their designee may refer a Case in writing to the Board President for behaviors identified in the section above, which situation or

behavior has not been or cannot be resolved satisfactorily in accordance with 2b, as above.

b) After a CR team is appointed, the case is considered solely by them.

4) Cases not requiring an immediate response shall be referred to an *ad hoc* Conflict Resolution (CR) Team:

a. Composition

i. A three member CR Team will be formed whenever there is a case to be considered. The team shall be comprised of one person appointed by the President of the Board, one person appointed by the Senior Minister, and one person selected by the first two appointees.

b. Term: CR Team members shall serve for the duration of the case.

c. General Principles

i. The CR Team will exercise its own independent judgment with each referral, as guided by the UU Principles and Purposes, the VUU Behavioral Covenant and this policy.

ii. The CR Team shall recommend additional policies and procedures, as necessary.

iii. The CR Team and VUU will comply with and be sensitive to court orders or directives from other government officials or agencies.

iv. It is not the role of the CR Team to define acceptable behavior in advance.

v. The CR Team will keep necessary and/or requested confidentiality, but may request that some aspects of confidentiality be waived in order to conduct a complete investigation and to communicate appropriately.

vi. The CR Team may consult with outside experts, as needed.

vii. The CR Team will communicate with the Board of Trustees, Senior Minister, Pastoral Care Ministry and congregation as appropriate throughout the process. The CR Team also will document the case by preparing a final written account, including their decision and reasons for it, and submit it to the Board of Trustees for permanent archival.

The documented account will include dates and the process followed, and will not include any names or other individually-identifiable personal information.

5) Investigation of the Case

a. The persons who are referred to the CR Team will be provided with written notice.

b. The CR Team will collect all necessary information, which may include holding interviews with relevant persons.

c. The persons who are referred to the CR Team will be given the opportunity to respond but will not be required to do so.

d. Throughout the process, all relevant persons, including the CR Team members, will be treated with respect and compassion consistent with UU

Principles and Purposes and the VUU Behavioral Covenant. Pastoral care and other services will be offered as needed or requested during the investigation.

6) Developing a Plan for Resolution

The CR Team will develop a Plan that addresses the referred case and how resolution and reconciliation can occur. Such plan will take into consideration:

- a. Dangerousness (Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?)
- b. Disruptiveness (How much interference is there with congregational functions/activities?)
- c. Offensiveness (Is the behavior outside of our UUV Behavioral Covenant?)
- d. Causes:
 - i. Why is the disruption occurring?
 - ii. Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the congregation?
 - iii. Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition or mental illness?
- e. History:
 - i. Is this a pattern of behavior?
 - ii. What is the frequency and degree of past disruptions?
- f. Probability of Change: How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish or cease in the future?
- g. How best to address harm that was done, and enable healing and reconciliation whenever possible.

7) The Plan may specify the following range of responses::

- a. No Action
- b. The committee shall inform the Minister(s) of the problem and either the Minister(s) or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending person or persons to communicate the concern.
- c. Recommended Behavioral Changes mutually agreed upon in writing by the persons involved and the CMCR team.
- d. Exclusion From Specific Activities Within the Congregation
- e. Suspension or Termination of Membership

8) Suspension/Termination of membership shall be recommended to the Board of Trustees as a last resort only if necessary:

- a. To prevent continuing harm to the physical or emotional well-being of VUU members, guests, children, or staff.
- b. To prevent consistent damage to the mission of the congregation
- c. The behavior must meet the "intractably disruptive to the congregation" standard laid out in Article II section 4 paragraph 3 of the Bylaws.
- d. Suspension/Termination of members shall be conducted in accordance with VUU Bylaws and Board Policy.

9) Notification

Once a decision is reached, the CR Team Chairperson and the Senior Minister will meet with the individual(s) involved. They will communicate the Plan and offer support, compassion, and pastoral care as needed.

10) Archival and Accessibility of the Plan

The CR Team is responsible for archiving and determining accessibility to referrals, notes, and any other documentation involved in researching and creating the Plan.

11) Appealing the Plan to the Board of Trustees:

An appeal may be made in writing to the Board President. If there is new information or considerations of a substantial nature that may affect the conclusions of the Plan, the matter may be referred back to the original CR Team to refine the Plan, or another CR Team may be selected to prepare another Plan. Otherwise, the Plan shall be carried out in its original form.

12) Allegations of Impropriety Regarding the Minister

- a. Referrals involving the Senior Minister shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees.
- b. If the referral regarding the Senior Minister contains allegations of serious impropriety or misconduct the CR Team / Board will then expand its the CR Team membership to include the President of the Board of Trustees and the chair of one other appropriate ministry or committee.

13) Allegations of Impropriety Regarding a Member or Members of the Board of Trustees and/or Pastoral Care Ministry.

Referrals involving a member of the Board of Trustees and/or Pastoral Care Ministry shall be handled in accordance with this policy with one exception: such member of the Board of Trustees and/or Pastoral Care Ministry shall not be allowed a vote concerning the CR Team composition or recommendations.

Conflict Resolution Team Member Job Description

Title/Position: member, Conflict Resolution Team

Goal of Position: To implement the Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution policy when needed. (See policy for further information)

Sample Activities: Evaluating situations that fall under the definition of the Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution policy and developing solutions that support the UU Principles and Purposes and the VUU Behavioral Covenant. This includes interviewing individuals, seeking outside help or advice as needed, making decisions regarding action/recommendations to be taken and communicating those decisions to the board, the individuals involved and the congregation.

Timeframe: varies according to circumstance.

Length of Commitment: varies according to circumstances.

Estimated total hours: dependent on the case.

Qualifications Sought:

- Commitment to the congregation's mission above all else
- Able to keep sensitive or personal information confidential
- Able to be caring while honest and straightforward
- Able to actively listen to many points of view
- Able to communicate issues and actions clearly and positively
- Willing to make decisions in the best interests of the congregation as a whole
- Special training or life experience concerning the matter under adjudication (e.g. Crisis Management, mediation, due process, victim rights, sex abuse victims, counseling, anger management, mental health, forgiveness/healing processes, etc.).

Benefits:

Service with this team gives the satisfaction of resolving serious and challenging interpersonal problems confronting the congregation.

Report to:

VUU Board of Trustees

Revisions History

8/21/07: Release revised policy

4/6/08: Release amended policy as revised by the appointed CM/SE team members.
Revisions include.

1. a) i): composition was 1 board member and up to 4 members from the congregation
1. c) vii): add “The documented account will include dates, the process followed, and will not include any names or other individually-identifiable personal information.”
5. c): language revision: replace “alleged”
6. a): was: “the actions the offending person needs to take to make amends (if any), and how reconciliation of victim, offender, and the congregation at large (if appropriate) can occur. Victim(s) and offender(s) shall be consulted about the plan whenever possible”
6. b): was: “ranging from apology to exclusion from services and activities and to withdrawal of membership. Additionally, to address healing, the CM/SE Team may recommend such activities as a reconciliation conference, a congregational healing ceremony, or other special services or activities.”
6. c): was: “The level of response will depend on the seriousness of the incident or referred behavior. The CM/SE Team may also take into account the causes of the referred behavior and its history.
- 7.: new section
8. was 7: title was: Reconsideration of the Plan. Content was: “A request for reconsideration may be made only if the plan involves exclusion or rescinding of membership. The request must be made in writing to the CM/SE Team.”
9. was 8. content was: “This policy is owned by the VUU Board of Trustees and the CM/SE Team. All amendments to this policy shall be approved by the Board of Trustees and the CM/SE Team.”
- 10 was 9. Title was: Complaints Regarding the Minister. Content was: “The complainant shall make a confidential statement, in writing, to the Crisis Management / Self Environment Team. The CM/SE Team will then expand its membership to include the President of the Board of Trustees and the Chair of the Committee on the Team. If the complaint alleges serious ministerial misconduct of any kind that is sufficiently documented, the CM/SE Team will notify the minister and then immediately refer the case to the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee in Boston, Massachusetts. In less serious cases, the expanded CM/SE will handle the case.”

4/4/2012

Name was changed to “crisis management / safe environment”

VUU Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution Policy

Process to constitute the team was changed so that a team is appointed when there is a case to be referred to it.

April 23, 2013

Name changed to “VUU Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution Policy.”

Definitions of Conflict Management and Crisis Management added, along with treatment of such cases.

Conflict Resolution Team members reduced to three, each separately appointed (one by Board of Trustees, one by Senior Minister, and the third by the other two appointees).

Appeals sections expanded to address situations where new information is uncovered.

Section added dealing with allegations of impropriety involving members of the Board of Trustees and/or Pastoral Care Ministry.

Various improvements included to make terminology and language consistent throughout.

April 2016:

Major re-write to incorporate ideas from UUCP and UUA disruptive behavior policies, and to incorporate lessons learned from the last few years.