

# **Complaint Guideline for CPE Students**

## **(304.3)**

The Pastoral Care Department shall have a guideline for handling complaints that is in accordance with the Standards of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. See 2005 ACPE Standards 304.3.

The Pastoral Care Department and ACPE encourage persons to work out concerns or grievances informally, face-to-face, and in a spirit of collegiality and mutual respect. However, the Pastoral Care Department recognizes that concerns or grievances can arise which may not be resolved through such an informal discussion and pastoral communications do not resolve differences and the complainant or group of complainants desires to register a complaint.

The ACPE "Guideline for Complaints" is found in the ACPE standards and is included in each student syllabus.

A complaint is defined as a grievance, presented in writing and signed, involving an alleged violation of the ethical, professional, and/or educational criteria established by the ACPE Standards.

### **Procedures**

1. The following principles will be adhered to in processing complaints:
  1. Complaints should be resolved as close as possible to the context in which the difficulty arises.
  2. A complaint shall be in writing and all those involved shall receive a copy of the complaint.
  3. Confidentiality shall be respected in registering, processing, and resolving a complaint.
  4. When a complaint is reviewed, all those involved shall be notified and be given an opportunity to present information.
  5. Those who mediate, review, or hear a complaint shall obtain all relevant information concerning the situation.
  6. If the complaint cannot be resolved at the level of the Pastoral Care Department, the student shall have access to the necessary succeeding steps outlined in the ACPE Standards.
  7. The complaint will be processed within 35 days of the Pastoral Care Department, through the Chair of the Pastoral Care Advisory Committee, receiving the complaint.
2. Any student(s) desiring consideration of his or her (their) concern or grievance may file a written complaint and submit it to the Chair of the Pastoral Care Advisory Committee within six (6) months of the occasion of the cause of the complaint, or, if applicable within (6) months of the conclusion of the unit of training. In the instance of sexual exploitation, the complaint may be filed within ten (10) years of the event.
3. The Chair of the Pastoral Care Advisory Committee acknowledges in writing the receipt of the complaint within seven (7) calendar days and outlines the procedures for responding to the complaint.
4. The complaint will be directed to a review committee comprised of three members, two of, which will be members of the PCAC. The Director of CPE will be the third member unless personally involved in the complaint and then the Vice President for Pastoral Services will sit on the review committee. If both the Director of CPE and VP of Pastoral Services are personally involved in the complaint, a third member of the PCAC will sit on the review committee. A member of the PCAC will chair this committee.
5. The review committee will thoroughly review the complaint within 21 calendar days of receiving the complaint. The committee will meet with the student and the person against whom the complaint is directed. The intent of this process is to allow time for dialogue and resolution, and a sense of reconciliation.
6. The review committee will make a recommendation and all parties involved will be notified in writing within seven (7) calendar days of the meeting. The recommendation will fall under one of the following:

- a. Valid. The complaint shall be addressed with an accompanying proposed resolution.
- b. Referral. The complaint is beyond the jurisdiction of the Pastoral Care Department and Methodist Health System.
- c. Without Merit. The complaint does not address any ethical violations.

7. If the complainant(s) is not satisfied with the recommendation of the review committee, he or she (they) may file for a continuation of the complaint within the procedures of the ACPE "Procedures for Complaints." This means the complaint must be registered with the Regional Director of the Southwest Region of ACPE within 30 days following the recommendation of the review committee.

8. At this point, the procedures outlined in the ACPE Standards are followed. See ACPE Standard 200.

9. Names and addresses of those who might be involved in processing a formal complaint are:

- a. Chair  
Pastoral Care Advisory Committee  
Methodist Health System  
XXXX XXXX  
XCXX Dept Methodist Dallas  
214-XXX-XXXX
- b. Regional Director  
Southwest Region  
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education  
Deborah Whisnand  
The Methodist Hospital  
Spiritual Care & Education  
6565 Fannin, M.S. D102  
Houston, TX 77030  
713.441.2381 \* 713.441.7725 (FAX)  
[dwhisnand@tmh.tmc.edu](mailto:dwhisnand@tmh.tmc.edu)
- c. Regional Representative  
Professional Ethics Commission  
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education  
XXXXXX XXXX  
Department of Pastoral Care  
Methodist Health System  
P.O. Box 655999, Dallas, TX 75265-5999  
214.XXX.XXXX - 214.XXX.XXXX (FAX)
- d. Chair  
Professional Ethics Commission  
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education  
XXXXXX XXXXXXX  
XXXXXX Health Sciences Center  
Pastoral Care Department  
XXXX.XXXX  
XXXXXX, XX  
XXX.XXX.XXXX\* XXX.XXX.XXXX FAX
- e. Teresa Snorton, Executive Director  
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education  
1549 Clairmont Rd., Suite 103  
Decatur, GA 30033  
404.320.1472, ext. 11  
404.320.0849 (FAX)  
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