

Interagency Sexual Ethics Task Force of The United Methodist Church

The Sexual Ethics Task Force of The United Methodist Church is coordinated by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The SETF includes representatives from seven annual conferences, the Council of Bishops, and eight general agencies of the UMC.

Mandate

The mandate for a denominational Sexual Task Force is found in the 2012 *Book of Resolutions*, No. 2044: "Sexual Misconduct Within Ministerial Relationships," p. 139:

Therefore be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church renews its stand in opposition to the sin of sexual misconduct within the Church worldwide. It further recommits all United Methodists to the eradication of sexual misconduct in all ministerial relationships, and calls for:

1. the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women to continue to convene and coordinate a cooperative interagency group to address the areas of prevention, education, intervention, and healing including a representative of the Council of Bishops, the General Boards of Discipleship, Higher Education and Ministry, Global Ministries, Church and Society, the General Council on Finance and Administration, the Division on Ministries with Young People, and representatives of annual conference Response/Crisis Teams and Safe Sanctuary Teams (each agency member responsible for his or her own expenses and a share of the expenses of the annual conference representatives); ...
3. the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, through the interagency group, to ensure that resources for laity and clergy in ministerial roles are identified and promoted for use in conferences, districts or clusters, and local congregations; ...

History

The United Methodist Interagency Sexual Ethics Task Force traces its beginnings to the collaboration of annual conference and general agency leaders working to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and misconduct in the mid-1990s. GCSRW worked with GBHEM, GBGM, GBCS, and other agencies to promote education and training regarding sexual harassment and abuse, while annual conference leaders established a loose network for sharing and developing resources. In 2000, General Conference resolved that GCSRW should "convene and coordinate a cooperative work team to address the areas of prevention, education, intervention, and healing with regard to lay and clergy misconduct of a sexual nature."

This "cooperative work team," a hybrid of interagency cooperation and annual conference representatives, evolved into the current Sexual Ethics Task Force. Annual conference leaders established the Response Team Network Steering Committee in 2001 as a result of a Response Team training event in Colorado Springs that year, which drew 140 participants from 40 annual conferences and was jointly sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference and GCSRW. The Response Team Resource Network also initiated an e-newsletter which eventually took the form of a website, Sexual Ethics Task Force (cont.)

www.umsexualethics.org, resourced by GCSRW. Meanwhile, the Sexual Ethics Work Team, comprised of general agency staff, had already been meeting together for several years under GCSRW's leadership. In July 2002 at the Alma Mathews House in New York, these two groups met together for the first time to collaborate on "a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated approach to prevention and response."

Today, GCSRW continues to convene the Inter-agency Sexual Ethics Task Force as an unfunded mandate by General Conference. Currently, the task force includes leaders from several annual conferences, the Council of Bishops, GBOD, GBGM, GBHEM, GBCS, GCORR, GCUMM, UMPACT, and GCFA.

The Task Force worked collaboratively to host a national sexual ethics summit "Do No Harm ... Do All the Good You Can" in July 2006 for United Methodist Response Team and Safe Sanctuaries leaders, drawing 238 participants from 48 annual conferences. The second "Do No Harm" event, held January 26 – 29, 2011 in Houston, Texas, was designed for judicatory leaders, Response Teams, Safe Sanctuaries coordinators. This event drew 261 participants (plus an additional 42 persons in leadership) from 58 annual conferences, including Germany and the Congo, as well as ecumenical partners from the Presbyterian Church (USA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and World Council of Churches.

Sources:

BOR 1996 "Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within The United Methodist Church," pp. 131-2.

BOR 2000 "Sexual ethics within ministerial relationships," pp. 139-40.

BOR 2004 "Sexual abuse within ministerial relationships," pp. 153-4.

BOR 2008 "Sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships," pp. 138-9.

"UMC continues effort against clergy sexual misconduct," *The Flyer*, summer 2002, GCSRW, pp. 1 and 5.

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