

Understanding Policy and Training Requirements

Clerks of Session / March 2024

Action at the last General Assembly added new policy and training requirements to the Book of Order that apply to congregations. This page summarizes both the preexisting and new requirements.

Book of Order G-3.0106 – Administration of Mission

...All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months...

Book of Order G-2.0804 Terms of Call

...The call shall include provision for a minimum of twelve weeks paid family medical leave...

Sessions should ensure that:

- the congregation has the following policies:
 - Sexual Misconduct Policy
 - Harassment Policy
 - Child and Youth Protection Policy
 - Antiracism Policy
- that the policies are reviewed annually and that such review is reflected in the minutes (add review to the standing orders for the session)
- elders, deacons, staff, and other key leaders in the congregation are familiar with the policies
- the terms of call for an Installed Pastor are updated to include a minimum of twelve weeks paid family medical leave

Sessions should also ensure that the following trainings are provided and maintain records of compliance:

- Boundary Training, including the topic of sexual misconduct—required at least every 36 months for members of the Session (pastors will complete their training through the presbytery)
- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training—required at least every 36 months; Child and Youth Protection Policy should specify who in the congregation needs to take the training (e.g., staff, officers/leaders, volunteers working with children & youth, etc.)
- New York State Sexual Harassment Training—required annually for *all* employees; offered regularly by Practical Resources for Churches (<https://www.prcli.org/>)

Resources for developing/updating policies and for trainings:

- Presbytery website: <https://presbyteryofli.com/resources-for-developing-policies-in-your-congregation/>
- Your congregation's insurance provider should be consulted and likely will offer both training modules and sample policies
- NYS requirements for employer policies on sexual harassment: <https://www.ny.gov/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace/sexual-harassment-prevention-model-policy-and-training>
- Presbytery Staff: (631) 499-7171
- Presbytery BREAD (Bringing Racial Equity and Diversity) Team: CRE Magalene McClarrin, mcclarrin.m@mpcliny.org

Note: The above should not be construed as legal advice. For legal questions or guidance, consult an attorney.