

**Workshop for Clerks of Session
August 22, 2024
Presbytery of Transylvania**

Bylaws and Manual of Operations

Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council. (G-3.0106)

Possible Contents:

- Parliamentary authority (G-1.0501)
- Special rules for electronic meetings (G-1.0501)
- Annual meetings information and quorum (G-1.0502)
- Minimum notification requirements (G-1.0503)
- Rules for nominating committee process (G-2.0401)
- Terms of ordained officers (G-2.0404) “no more than three years”
- Reelection by congregational rule (G-2.0404)
- Provision for hiring staff, job descriptions, method of review and manner of termination (G-3.0110)
- Committees and organizations of the church (G-3.0109)
- Session meetings and quorum (G-3.0203)
- Election and terms of clerk and treasurer (G-3.0104, G-3.0205)
- Standard financial practices and rule (G-3.0205)

Other Considerations for Sessions and Ordained Officers:

- Corporate status (G-4.0101)
- Mandatory reporting (G-4.0302)
- Worship leadership (W-2.03 *Leadership in Worship and Ordered Ministries*)
- Marriage approvals (W-4.06 *The Covenant of Marriage*)

Sample Templates for Bylaws and Manuals

Link: <https://www.pcusa.org/get/resources/resource/17192/>

****Caution!!** The bylaws document (from 1997) has some basic language that needs to be updated with the current Book of Order. I can help with the sections that need to be updated. I’m also willing to review any draft documents and make suggestions. Another good resource is the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, and its chapter on drafting bylaws.

Required Policies

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 sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty- six months. (G-3.0106)**

Resources

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/legal-resources/creating-safe-ministries/create-policies/>

(this link provides rationale for and resources in crafting policies and offers links to other pages)

Three Phases to be Addressed in a Session Policy on Sexual Misconduct

Phase I Training and Education

E.g.

Definitions and terms
Incidence and prevalence
Code of ethics, values, standards
Rationale

Phase II Prevention of Misconduct and Abuse

E.g.

Background checks
References
Dissemination

Phase III Response to an Allegation or a Violation

E.g.

Reporting
Sequence of steps

Questions to Consider

- What are our goals and purposes in each phase?
- To whom does this phase apply/not apply?
- What types of situations are we trying to address? Are there ones we do not address?
- What are our rationales, and do they reflect our convictions?
- How do we communicate our rationales and convictions in a policy and procedures document?
- How would people in certain roles react to our policy and procedures document: a volunteer? member of a youth group? paid staff? a victim? a parent? a person who is accused? the church's lawyer? the church's insurance carrier? an elder from the Session? a Trustee of the church? the liaison to the church from Presbytery's Committee on Ministry and from the Trustees?

What should go into a policy?

There are many areas that should be covered including but not exclusive of the following:

Prologue

- A Scriptural foundation
- Purpose

Prohibited behavior

- Definitions
- Standards of conduct

Prevention

- Leadership screening and training
- Minimizing the risk

Reporting

- Who, what, when and where

Response to allegations

Aftercare/Healing

Sample Policies

Presbytery of Transylvania Policy on Sexual Misconduct Awareness and Prevention:

<https://transypby.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2024/05/2023updateSexual-Misconduct-Awareness-and-Prevention-Policy-Transylvania-Presbytery-final-draft-August-17-2023.pdf>

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/static/assets/Child-Youth-Vulnerable-Adult-Protection-Policy-May-2021.pdf

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church Anti-Harassment Policy

<https://www.bmpc.org/session-notes/703-anti-harassment-policy>

Churchwide Antiracism Policy

https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/facing_racism/resources/facing-racism-policy.pdf

Other Resources

Google a particular policy. Many presbyteries and churches have posted their policies and can be reviewed. Part of raising awareness is making policies available so that folks know the procedures for reporting and etc. Tailor policy to particular congregation/context.

Insurance companies are a great resource and many of them have policy templates. The link for creating policies (page 2) has further links to Church Mutual Insurance Company, Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company, GuideOne Insurance Company, and Stop-It-Now! (Safety Planning with Faith Communities).

The Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly work in partnership with the Insurance Board and Praesidium to provide councils with additional information on how to create policies. The Insurance Board provides a resource which is free to all PC(USA) councils on its website, a policy template. [link](#).

The Insurance Board provides access to training and videos. The site offers a suggested three-year training cycle for pastors and church leaders. Watching these videos either as part of a training retreat or over the course of several meetings would satisfy the requirement to train ordained officers at least every 36 months. Link: www.insuranceboard.org.