

Some Key Considerations for Developing a District Comprehensive Plan for Responding to Clergy Misconduct

225.5 To develop and annually review a written, comprehensive plan that is in harmony with *Manual* directives to guide its efforts in providing a timely, compassionate, and informed response to members of the clergy involved in conduct unbecoming a minister, to their families, and to any congregation involved. ([538.20](#), [539–539.13](#), [540-540.12](#))

1. Get acquainted with the Manual provisions (especially [540-540.12](#)) and the *Clergy Restoration Implementation Guide for District Leaders*.

NOTE: The *Guide* is provided as a resource to district leaders. Use of the *Guide* is purely voluntary, and the information and suggestions are not intended as legal advice.

2. The *Clergy Restoration Implementation Guide for District Leaders* can serve as a major strategic element of the plan, but the *Guide* is not the district plan itself. **A district plan specifies what the district will actually do and how it will do it.**

EXAMPLE

The *Guide* encourages districts to create a “resource pool” and a “recovery team pool” (see Appendix B of the *Guide*). Here’s how this might be incorporated into a district plan:

A SAMPLE PROVISION OF A DISTRICT PLAN

- A. The district superintendent will convene at least annually a Restoration Committee to implement, monitor compliance to, and improve the District Plan. The Restoration Committee, appointed annually by the District Superintendent, serves in an advisory capacity to the superintendent. The committee will be comprised of one or more members of the District Advisory Board and of the District Board of Ministry along with any others especially suited to this important work. When possible, at least one layperson shall be appointed to this committee.
 - 1) This committee will advise the district superintendent regarding selections to the Resource Pool and Recovery Team Pool, and any agreements related to those selected to these Pools. Such Agreements may include policy regarding expenses incurred by Recovery Team members, processes for vetting persons or organizations included in the Resource Pool and any related financial arrangements, and specify the scope of professional services.
 - 2) This committee will also advise the district superintendent regarding training and evaluation of those selected to the Recovery Team Pool and the resourcing of the Teams (e.g. printed materials, forms and information required to engage a vetted resource, orientation to the situation involving misconduct).
3. If the district determines it will pursue developing a Resource Pool, it would be wise for the District Plan to include a current listing of district-vetted counselors. Part of the annual review of the plan would be to consider whether these resources functioned as intended, if new resources should be added, or if some resources on the list should be removed and the agreements concluded or cancelled.

NOTE: The actual per session rate would likely *not* be part of the district plan since this may change from counselor to counselor, and there may be several in various locations to make accessibility more feasible. The plan *should* specify who is empowered to negotiate working agreements (rates, number of sessions). If the district determines to offset the cost for a limited number of sessions with a counselor selected by the clergyperson or spouse/family, this would need to be specified in the plan as well.

Including these specifics in the District plan is essential so that Recovery Team members can be very clear in communicating to the clergyperson and spouse/family.

4. With respect to developing a Recovery Team Pool, the district plan would specify actual plans for the development of such a pool. This would include a plan that fits the district. For example, a geographically compact district has different options than a district that is geographically expansive. The latter district may wish to train and develop several teams with the geographic considerations in mind since timeliness of response is so critical in these situations. Developing teams with bilingual capacities should also be considered.
5. A good District Plan includes actionable specifics in a way that keeps the Plan appropriately flexible from year to year. For example, the plan might specify that
 - “The District Plan will be reviewed by the District Advisory Board within the first 3 months of each new church year.” This is a better approach than including specific calendar dates in the Plan document itself.
 - “The District will calendar a review of the status of the Recovery Team Pool and training of Teams within the first six months of the each new church year.” A status review is important since some persons initially selected and trained may have moved off-district or their relationship with the district may have changed in some other way.
 - “The annual review shall include a review of the status of the Recovery Team pool.” This is important since some persons initially selected and trained may have moved off-district or their relationship with the district may have changed in some other way.
6. Some existing district policies or practices may become part of the District Plan. To the extent this is true, these policies can be restated or referenced in the District Plan.
7. The District Plan should include other specifics such as
 - a. Plans for how it will attend to the various time-frames specified in the Manual provisions
 - b. How the district will maintain appropriate documentation regarding instances of clergy misconduct and recovery efforts (who collects and secures such documents, etc.)
 - c. What kinds of documents will be collected. For example,
 - i. Documents that record the essence of the clergy misconduct
 - ii. Details on the district response to the situation of clergy misconduct
 - iii. Details on the care extended to affected spouse, family, congregation, and community
 - iv. Status of the credential (including any re-engagement allowed, see Manual
 - v. Documenting assignment of a Recovery Team
 - vi. Reports of the Recovery Team
 - d. How the district will appointment a Reinstatement Committee (normally a portion of the District Board of Ministry)