



Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

These guidelines were developed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with legal, psychological, pastoral and financial advisors. They have been adopted by the Indiana Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Although these guidelines were developed for use in evaluating candidates for ministry, they are appropriate for clergy in all stages of ministry as together we live out our covenant to be accountable to our churches and one another.

In using these guidelines, the Board assumes that candidates for commissioning and ordination will be familiar with these guidelines and adhere to them. When a candidate presents behaviors that do not adhere to these guidelines, the Board will be supportive and pastoral in helping the candidate to seek care.

Physical Health

Standard:

The candidate is of sound physical health sufficient to perform the essential duties of the office, has no current or recurrent disqualifying impairment, and demonstrates no obvious physical health concerns.

Rationale:

Neglect of physical health is known to impair function in pervasive ways. Responsible preventive health care maximizes the functional abilities of the individual and minimizes the health care costs to the annual conference.

Recommendations:

Candidates should be able to articulate their plans for physical health care. Candidates with non-disqualifying medical problems should demonstrate medical consultation and cooperation with treatment plans.

Management of Personal Finances

Standard:

The candidate is not in debt so as to embarrass the church.

Rationale:

While this may not, on the surface, seem to be a behavioral health issue, personal financial management has to do with general maturity, including the ability to set priorities, maintain discipline and delay gratification. Difficulties in this area raise concerns about judgment and impulse control. However, we do recognize that all debt is not bad debt. Since all candidates for ordained ministry are required to have completed an undergraduate degree program, as well as a seminary master's degree, some educational debt load is expected. We will keep this fact in mind as we evaluate each candidate's financial health.

Recommendations:

If the candidate has a history of having been reported to the credit bureau, then three years of a good credit history is recommended. If the candidate has a history of a

personal bankruptcy, then five years of good credit is recommended. If the candidate has a history of money judgments, then it is recommended that the judgments be satisfied prior to continuance.

Mental Illness

Standard:

The candidate has no current or recurring disqualifying psychological impairment.

Recommendations:

The more severe the psychiatric impairment, the more important the need for direct consultation with the treating mental health practitioners. The Board may wish to bring in its own mental health consultants in order to evaluate the candidate's situation.

The candidate has a history of remission from any moderately-to-severely impairing conditions for not less than five years without necessity for psychiatric hospitalizations, though treatment may continue.

The candidate has a history of responsible management of any mildly-to-moderately impairing conditions for not less than five years, and has an effective treatment program in place.

Alcohol Abuse/Dependency

Standard:

The candidate demonstrates no present abuse or dependence upon alcohol.

Rationale:

Alcohol abuse (short-term intoxication) and/or *alcohol dependence* (repeated intoxication and/or alcoholism) are mental disorders known to impair functioning in pervasive ways. Candidates who suffer from these disorders will have greatly limited effectiveness and are at risk for professional misconduct.

Recommendations:

Consider requiring a minimum of one year's sobriety prior to certification for candidacy.

If *any* of the critical behaviors are recent (within five years), then consider requiring a formal "substance abuse evaluation" by a certified chemical dependency treatment specialist.

If there is clear evidence of alcohol dependence *at any time*, then consider requiring participation in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or equivalent program and continued involvement in such a program for not less than five years prior to certification for candidacy.

Chemical Abuse/Dependency

Standard:

The candidate demonstrates no present abuse or dependence upon either non-prescribed pharmacologic agents or prescribed medications.

Rationale:

Chemical abuse and/or dependence are mental disorders known to impair functioning in pervasive ways. Candidates who suffer from these disorders will have greatly limited effectiveness and are at much greater risk for professional misconduct.

Recommendations:

If the history reveals occasional and/or experimental use limited to an *adolescent* period, then consider requiring not less than five years of sobriety prior to certification for candidacy.

If the history reveals any adult use of illegal substances, or any misuse of a prescribed pharmacological agent, then consider requiring a formal chemical dependency assessment from a credentialed chemical dependency treatment specialist. A period of not less than five years of sobriety prior to certification for candidacy would also be appropriate.

Legal

Standard:

The candidate shall be respectful of the law and evidence legal responsibility in personal habits.

Rationale:

This may not, on the surface, appear to be a behavioral health issue, but similar issues around maturity, discipline, and judgment come into play. In addition, one's approach toward the law often is a barometer of one's respect for authority generally, and unresolved authority issues may significantly hamper clergy effectiveness.

Recommendations:

Candidates may have no more than three moving violations (traffic) within the preceding three years.

A history of arrest for any misdemeanor or felony requires investigation of the circumstances of the arrest including review of the offense (police) report. Results of the investigation may require an appropriate period without history of difficulty or further arrest prior to certification for candidacy or continuance.

A history of conviction for any felony is, under most circumstances, permanently disqualifying.

Family Violence

Standard:

The candidate has a history of resolving family conflict in a nonviolent manner.

Recommendations:

The candidate shall ordinarily have not less than three years without reports as described.

The presence of any critical behaviors requires an investigation into the facts and circumstances, and an appropriate period may be required prior to certification for

candidacy or continuance. The candidate shall acknowledge his/her behaviors and may have entered into family counseling or other appropriate treatment.

Divorce or Infidelity

Standard:

If the candidate has been divorced, or if there is evidence of infidelity, the candidate must have done sufficient exploratory and reparative work to demonstrate and/or articulate the impact of the health of married life on quality of ministry.

Recommendations:

If there is a recent divorce (within 2-3 years), then the candidate should be able to articulate any dysfunctional patterns in intimate relationship and have taken steps to safeguard current or future marriage covenants.

If there is insufficient evidence that sufficient exploratory or reparative work has been done, the Board may wish to recommend or require a course of psychotherapy and/or other conditions, such as a delay of one year.

Sexual Misconduct

Standard:

The candidate has no history, or complaints, of sexual misconduct or charges of sexual harassment having been brought against him/her.

Rationale:

Candidates must model in their personal life and behavior a healthy and sacred view of sexuality so as not to misuse the clerical office.

Recommendations:

Consider further assessment.

The Board of Ministry should explore in an interview with the committee the steps the candidate has taken to identify and understand and deal with the psychological vulnerabilities that contributed to the behavior, and what safeguards the candidate has put into place to guard against the possibility of similar behavior in the future.

The candidate should have no evidence of sexual misconduct for a minimum of three years.

A candidate must articulate a plan to insure that such behavior is unlikely to recur. This plan may include intensive psychotherapy and/or ongoing supervision, or other conditions required by the Board.

Sex Related Crimes

Standard:

The candidate shall have no history that poses risk of sexual harassment, sexual assault to adults or children, nor history of any sex-related offense.

Recommendations:

If the candidate has committed a sex-related crime, he or she should be permanently disqualified.

Certainly the candidate is entitled to be considered innocent until proven guilty, so a written accusation or arrest alone is not sufficient for disqualification, but either one would raise significant questions which the Board would need to explore in depth.

The recommendation for permanent disqualification reflects the massive legal exposure an Annual Conference were to take on were it to place in ministry a known sex offender. Beyond that reality, however, is the awareness that current available treatments for such offense are of limited utility, with high rates of recidivism.

Definitions of Inappropriate Sexual Conduct:

Sexual Harassment:

Includes solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct consisting of a single intense or severe act, or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts, by a candidate toward another individual, that are sexual in nature and occur whether in connection with the candidate's clerical activities or personal life, and that are unwelcome, offensive, or create a hostile environment for the affected individual.

Sexual Impropriety:

Sexual impropriety is deliberate, repeated and/or unwelcome comments, gestures or physical acts of a sexual nature that include, but are not limited to:

- Behavior, gestures, or expressions which may reasonably be interpreted as inappropriately seductive or sexually demeaning.
- Making inappropriate comments about an individual's body.
- Making sexually demeaning comments to an individual.
- Making comments about an individual's potential sexual performance.
- In a counseling relationship, requesting details of a person's sexual history when not clinically indicated for the type of consultation.
- Requesting a date.
- Initiating conversation regarding the sexual problems, preferences or fantasies of either party.
- Kissing of a sexual nature.
- Sharing or displaying pornographic material with another person.

Deviant Sexual Behaviors:

Deviant sexual behaviors include, but are not limited to, behaviors such as pedophilia, exhibitionism, or use of sexual paraphernalia, and preoccupation with pornographic materials for sexual stimulation and gratification.

Pornography. There is general concern about the problem of clergy who are addicted to pornography and its result on the clergy, his/her family and the church. Conversations resulting from this concern include our desire that our care of clergy be pastoral and grace-filled, while maintaining a high level of professional accountability.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) has guidelines that have been approved by the South Indiana Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. They were developed by a consortium of clergy, laity, pastoral counselors, addiction

specialists and legal experts. Counselors of various denominations all recommend removal of clergy from the church (for both substance abuse and sexual deviancy) for a minimum of three years. The GBHEM recommends, as do other denominations, that the 3 year minimum includes three years prior to commissioning. In accord with these guidelines, the following recommendations are made for clergy addicted to pornography:

1. Clergy would begin counseling after acknowledging that recovery is an ongoing, lifelong process
2. Steps to be followed include:
 - a. Minimum 3 year Leave of absence
 - b. Ongoing counseling with certified addictions counselor for minimum of 3 years
 - c. Active participation in pornography specific 12 step program
 - d. Maintain covenant with clergy peers (see number 5)
 - e. Daily devotional reading on the theology/spirituality of addictive behavior
 - f. Daily personal moral inventory
3. For clergy to be returned to appointment:
 - a. Regular attendance with pornography specific 12 step group
 - b. Sponsor relationship
 - c. Daily devotional reading
 - d. Daily personal moral inventory
 - e. Meetings with sexual misconduct team (see number 5)
 - f. Psychological assessment
4. Career-long requirements
 - a. Annual accountability to BOOM
 - b. BOOM to make annual recommendation to Cabinet, with report to remain in clergy official file
 - c. Periodic psychological testing, with reports to remain in clergy official file
5. Develop a sexual misconduct team to deal with addicted clergy
 - a. Three trained clergy and three trained laypersons, with a professional consultant
 - i. Training is yearly
 - ii. Work in teams of two, one clergy and one layperson
 - b. Individual team members demonstrate professionalism, confidentiality, covenant understanding
 - c. Intervention team to meet with addicted clergy
 - i. Monthly meetings to support clergy in healing
 - ii. Meetings with clergy after return to ministry
 - d. Meet each year with new clergy, possibly as part of RIM curriculum
 - e. Remove evaluative piece from cabinet to sexual misconduct team

(END)