



The policy of the Regional Synod of Mid-America (RSMA) is grounded in Jesus' words: "You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 23:37-39).

Additionally, the only behaviors acceptable are encapsulated in the model from 1st Thessalonians 2:10-12: "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

Any behavior or attitude that is less than these mandates or models, is a denial of the Scriptures. The RSMA will work to provide a setting for graceful interaction among all people, and a proper recourse for all who have been wronged or perceive they have been sexually harassed by any staff, officer, related committees, or ministry under the direct supervision of the RSMA.

The RSMA will not tolerate nor condone a breach of trust or a misuse of power by its lay or clergy members under any circumstances, but especially those occasions when sexual favor or gain is the end product sought or solicited. Any person found guilty of sexual harassment will be dealt with in terms of pastoral concern and church discipline as prescribed by the Book of Church Order (BCO) of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the General Provisions stated below:

#### **GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

1. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual's sex when: such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, even if the individual making the complaint is not the intended target of the sexual harassment.
  1. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient's job performance.
  2. Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment.

2. Any employee, volunteer, or person working within the bounds and under the supervision of the RSMA who feels harassed should complain to the RSMA President so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.
3. Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises or not during work hours.
4. Any clergy person, elder, or lay person under the supervision and/or employment of the RSMA who breaches the trust of his/her office and/or who deliberately engages in these types of behaviors is committing sexual harassment.
5. Any individual who witnesses this behavior or is offended by such behavior, even if this individual is not the intended target of the harassment, may issue a complaint.

## **PREVENTION AND REPORTING**

1. Preventing sexual harassment is everyone's responsibility. The RSMA cannot prevent or remedy sexual harassment unless it is made known. Any person who feels that she/he has been, or is being subjected to sexual harassment or intimidation is encouraged to report such behavior to a member of the RSMA Executive Team. Additionally, anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to the RSMA President.
2. When a complaint is made to the RSMA or any of its members, investigation of accusations of sexual harassment will be done with appropriate confidentiality by the Executive Team or another appropriate body assigned by the Synod Assembly. The RSMA will insure both confidentiality and support to the victim and guarantee due process to the alleged victimizer.
3. Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by the RSMA but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law. Aside from the internal process at the RSMA, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities at any time.
4. Confirmed or proven involvement in sexual harassment, will result in corrective disciplinary action as outlined in the BCO of the RCA. False statements, inferences, and/or accusations may also be subject to corrective disciplinary action.
5. In cases of confirmed or proven sexual harassment, the RSMA will proactively move to be the agent of healing for the victim(s) through its many venues of pastoral compassion and care. The RSMA will also seek to be the encourager of renewal and perhaps restoration for the victimizer, through the process of discipline and its aftermath.
6. The RSMA, when appropriate, will notify ecclesiastical and/or civil authorities of guilt established and action taken.