

POLICY FOR COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The Accreditation Commission (Commission) is committed to fair and impartial administration of the Education Standards (300's) (Standards) of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). The Commission follows these Standards in its established accreditation practices, on-site reviews, and administrative functions.

Allegations that the Commission or its representatives have failed to follow its processes or misapplied the Standards will receive prompt, unbiased attention. No source making a good-faith complaint will be retaliated against, harassed, or jeopardized in accreditation decisions on the basis of having filed a complaint.

This complaint process does not apply to charges relating to adverse accreditation action or citations for non-compliance. Those must follow the *Appeal of Adverse Accreditation Decision(s) ACPE Standard 320* process set forth in *Appendix 17* of the *ACPE Accreditation Manual Revised 2005*.

Complaint Review Process For Allegations of Commission Violations

I. General Information

A. A **complaint** is a **grievance** presented in writing and signed, involving an alleged violation by the Commission or its representatives of the *ACPE Accreditation Standards (300's)* or Commission processes enumerated in the *ACPE Accreditation Manual Revised 2005*. The complaint must identify the specific standard(s) or process alleged violated and state specifically how it was violated. Complaints may be registered by those who consider themselves harmed by an alleged violation or by any person(s) having substantive knowledge of a violation.

B. The complaint must name the Commission, its representative(s) or staff. The person filing the complaint consents to this complaint process and gives permission for the disclosure to the Commission, its representatives, and the respondent of all information necessary to process the complaint.

II. Inquiries and Filing of Complaints

A. Complaints, or inquiries about filing them, are directed to the Chair of the Accreditation Commission [Chair] at: *ACPE*

*1549 Clairmont Road, Suite 103
Decatur, GA 30033*

If the complaint is against the Chair, it should be sent to the same address in care of the Accreditation Staff (Staff). The complainant will be supplied a copy of the *Education Complaint Response Form*, the *ACPE Accreditation Standards (300)* and the *Accreditation Commission Manual for Processing Allegations of ACPE Education Standards Violations* or the web address for each within a week of receipt of the inquiry.

B. When the Chair or Staff receives a complaint it is sent to the respondent named in the complaint who will also be sent a copy of the *Accreditation Commission Manual for Processing Allegations of ACPE Education Standards Violations and Education Complaint Response Form*. The respondent has thirty (30) calendar days from the time of receiving the material to complete the response form and return it to the Chair or Staff.

III. Initial Review

A. Within a reasonable time of receiving the complaint and the respondent's response, the Chair (or Staff) will determine whether or not the Commission has jurisdiction over the person/entity named and allegations. Jurisdiction requires:

1. the complaint alleges a violation which if it occurred would violate the education standards or Commission process;
2. the alleged violations occurred in a context and during a time the person/entity was subject to the Commission's processes or Standards, and
3. the alleged violation falls within three months of the date of *filing* the complaint with the Chair (Staff), or two Commission members if either of the preceding is named and ineligible to participate. In unusual circumstances, at the discretion of the Chair with the Accreditation Staff, these limits may be extended.

B. If jurisdiction is established, the Chair or Staff determines the direction the complaint will move. More than one option may be chosen:

1. Dismiss the complaint without prejudice if it appears the situation is one that could be reasonably addressed by the parties and insufficient attempt has been made to seek resolution. The Chair (Staff) may suggest approaches to resolution.
2. Offer a mediation opportunity if appropriate.
3. Refer the complaint for investigation and review.
4. The Chair (Staff) may implicate additional violations of standards or process not named by the complainant. The respondent will be informed of those additions at the time of the investigation in order to respond.

C. Notification: As soon as reasonably possible the Chair (Staff) will send notification by certified mail to the complainant and respondent of the action to be taken. If there will be an investigation, the notification will include the specific allegations, the standards or process alleged violated and the name, address and phone number of the investigator(s).

IV. The Investigative Phase: When an investigation is warranted, the Chair (Staff) will appoint an investigator. The investigator must have training in processing complaints and

be a former Commission member. The investigator will conduct the investigation according to the processes set forth in the *Accreditation Commission Manual for Processing Allegations of ACPE Education Standards Violations* as adapted therein to the Commission.

V. The Case Review

A. Three former members of the Commission who have been trained in reviewing complaints and have had no involvement in the investigation will be appointed by the Chair (Staff) as the designated case review body (Review). They receive the investigative report and take follow-up action as necessary recommending any enforcement action. The Accreditation Commission receives the Review's recommendations and takes final action. If the Accreditation Commission is itself the respondent, three former members of the Commission not involved in the case will receive the recommendations and take final action.

B. The Review will follow the procedures set forth and adapted to the Commission in the *Accreditation Commission Manual for Processing Allegations of ACPE Education Standards Violations*.

C. After reviewing the evidence and deliberating, the Review body shall reach one of two decisions:

1) No violation of Standards or process occurred.

2) A violation of Standards or process did occur and the Commission will take follow-up action as necessary to rectify the violation and guard against future violations.

D. When Review finds a violation did occur, it may recommend enforcement actions to the Commission which will follow-up, enact as appropriate. These may include further training of personnel and/or modification of practices to comply with the Commission's established accreditation procedures. The Commission will perform the notification and record-keeping functions designated in the *ACPE Accreditation Manual, 2005 edition*.

D. The complainant, respondent and any other parties will be notified in writing of the decision and outcome.

E. The decision is final and binding on the Commission and the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.