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## Resources to Address Situations that May Arise within a Church Court

### A. Introduction

In 2021, the General Assembly decided that the Life and Mission Agency, in consultation with the Clerks of Assembly, should make available resources to be used by the courts, agencies and congregations of the church to resolve disputes related to inclusion.

Seminars and learning modules about conflict management and resolution have been and will continue to be available in the church through the Life and Mission Agency. Additionally, the church has suitable resources that courts, agencies and congregations can use to resolve disputes that may arise. These resources are outlined below, and in the resource entitled *Guidelines for Safer Church Courts and Committees*, available at <https://presbyterian.ca/safer-church-courts>.

### B. Resolving Disputes Related to Inclusion

In most situations, it is hoped that concerns related to this resource can be resolved by speaking together honestly, respectfully and kindly.

We know that there are times when the extra help of a more formal process is needed to determine appropriate steps to address and resolve a situation more formally.

#### **Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church**

In 2019, the General Assembly approved a policy and procedures whereby a church court can rapidly address allegations of harassment within the church. This can apply to conduct that is alleged to take place within church courts, and their committees, in addition to the general life of the church. It gives the court the ability to appoint a small team that will investigate allegations of harassment rapidly and make a finding about whether the alleged behaviour constitutes harassment. If it does, then there is also provision to address the behaviour in practical terms. If the parties to such a case are not satisfied with the outcome, they may initiate a disciplinary case using the procedures contained in the Book of Forms.

A copy of this policy can be found at <https://presbyterian.ca/safety-policies>.

#### **Book of Forms – Judicial Process**

The Book of Forms contains a section within Judicial Process called a disciplinary case. (Sections 345–380). This provides a process whereby allegations of behaviour that is counter to the standards of the church can be adjudicated by a court of the church.

#### **Other resources**

The Clerks of Assembly are always ready and willing to assist with navigating situations within the church and with the use of various policies and resources. They can be reached directly by email or through the national office.

At the request of the 2019 General Assembly, the Clerks have prepared guidelines for the facilitation of calls to LGBTQI persons. These have been studied by the church and a revised version is part of the business for consideration at the 2022 General Assembly. These guidelines touch on how we live and work together within the courts of the church even as there are disagreements and a variety of views. That report can be found within the Clerks of Assembly report to the 2022 General Assembly at <https://assembly.presbyterian.ca/#/search/3001311>.