

Western District Conference (Mennonite Church USA) Record Retention Policy for Credential Files

Introduction:

The Record Retention Policy for Credential Files identifies the record retention responsibilities of staff and Ministerial Leadership Commission for maintaining and documenting the storage and destruction of the Western District Conference (WDC) documents and records pertaining to credentialed persons and the granting of ministerial credentials. (This policy does not apply to employee records, only to credential files). The WDC staff and Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC) will follow these procedures:

- A. Paper or electronic documents indicated under the terms of retention in the following section will be maintained by the WDC Administrative Assistant in the WDC office until destruction or transfer to the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) as outlined below. All files at the MLA regarding credentialed leaders should be accessed only with WDC permission.
- B. All other electronic documents will be deleted from all individual computers, databases, and networks. WDC will maintain backup storage of employees' electronic documents for seven years.
- C. No paper or electronic documents will be destroyed or deleted if pertinent to any ongoing or anticipated government investigation or proceeding or private litigation, or as required to comply with government or auditing standards.
- D. All documents related to a credentialed leader's misconduct or alleged misconduct will be kept in a separate secure Ministerial Misconduct file.

Record Retention:

WDC maintains three types of credential-related files:

1. Credentialed Leader files containing all information regarding individuals who hold or have held these credentials through WDC:
 - Licensed Toward Ordination
 - Ordained – Active
 - Ordained - Active Without Charge
 - Ordained – Inactive
 - Ordained – Retired
 - Probation
 - Suspended
 - Licensed for Specific Ministry

These files are kept in the WDC office until the credential is transferred, Expired, Terminated, Withdrawn or Deceased, then processed according to the chart below. Credentialed Leader files are housed in locked filing cabinets within the conference office. Only the Administrative Assistant and the Conference Minister have access to these filing cabinets.

- Files for a particular credentialed leader may be viewed by the conference minister-liaison relating to that credentialed leader.

- Documents necessary for Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC) actions may be viewed by the MLC and the conference staff person relating to the MLC.
- Credentialed leaders may view documents which they earlier authored or which were specifically addressed to them.

2. Credential Candidate files for persons who applied for credentialing through WDC but credentials were not granted. These files are kept in the WDC office for 10 years, then processed according to the chart below. Credential Candidate files are housed in locked filing cabinets within the conference office. Only the Administrative Assistant and the Conference Minister have access to these filing cabinets.

- Files for a particular credential candidate may be viewed by the conference minister-liaison relating to that credential candidate.
- Documents necessary for Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC) actions may be viewed by the MLC and the conference staff person relating to the MLC.
- Credential candidates may view documents which they earlier authored, or which were specifically addressed to them.

When Credentialed Leader or Credential Candidate files are removed from the WDC office, documents in the files should be destroyed or taken to the MLA according to the chart below.

Type of document	Destroy	Send to MLA
Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form	✓	
MLI references	✓	
Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC) recommendation		✓
MLC minutes		✓
Credentialed Minister Ethics Signature form	✓	Add note to file going to MLA listing the years ethics form was signed
Licensing questionnaire		✓
Ordination questionnaire		✓
Other information requested by MLC		✓

Letters of call from congregation		✓
Correspondence between conference and credentialed leader		✓
Annual Accountability Plan	✓	
Copies of credential card and letter		✓
Copy of credential certificate (license or ordination)		✓
Note indicating if Ministerial Misconduct file is kept		✓
Memos of Understanding or other agreements with conference		✓
Confidential file existence note	Keep in file until death	

3. Ministerial Misconduct Files containing all relevant documents related to ministerial misconduct proceedings against individuals who hold credentials through WDC. The file will also include a cover letter with the date of the complaint, content of the complaint and action taken. (See *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure* of Mennonite Church USA for details).

A copy of the file will be sent to the Mennonite Church USA Leadership Development office by certified mail, marked confidential and addressed to the Denominational Minister.

A note will be placed in the accused Credentialed Leader's regular file stating that a secure misconduct file for this person exists, and the code for the file. All Ministerial Misconduct files will be coded with the initials of the accused, the date of the accusation, and date the investigation closed. All files related to misconduct proceedings will be kept until the accused's death at which time they will be destroyed via secure shredding.

All documents related to a credentialed leader's misconduct or alleged misconduct will be kept in a separate secure Ministerial Misconduct file, in a locked file in the WDC office. The only persons allowed to view these files are the Administrative Assistant, the Conference Minister, MLC chair, conference staff person relating to the MLC, and WDC legal counsel.

Access to particular documents in the file will be according to the *Protocol and Procedure for Ministerial Misconduct Files* of Mennonite Church USA (see attached).

Resources consulted in creating this policy include:

- *Protocol and Procedure for Ministerial Misconduct Files* – Mennonite Church USA - April 18, 2017
- *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure* – Mennonite Church USA / Mennonite Church Canada - November 2016
- *Record Retention Policy for Credential Files* – Franconia Mennonite Conference - June 1, 2016; revised June 2017
- *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA* – 2017

February 15, 2019 - Approved by Ministerial Leadership Commission