

From the WDC Policy Manual
Section IV. Ministerial Leadership Policies – April 2026

C. Record Retention for Credential Files

1. 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, deletion 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. 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.
- c. All documents related to a credentialed leader's misconduct or alleged misconduct will be kept in a separate secure Ministerial Misconduct file.

2. Record Retention:

WDC maintains three types of credential-related files:

- a. Credentialed Leader files containing all information regarding individuals who hold or have held these credentials through WDC:
 - i. Licensed Toward Ordination
 - ii. Ordained – Active
 - iii. Ordained - Active Without Charge
 - iv. Ordained – Inactive
 - v. Ordained – Retired
 - vi. Probation
 - vii. Suspended
 - viii. Licensed for Specific Ministry

These paper files are kept in the WDC office until the credential is transferred, Expired, Terminated, Withdrawn or Deceased, then processed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 also 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.

Electronic records related to these files are considered working documents, and are maintained no more than two years, after which they are fully deleted.

- b. Candidate files for persons who are applying for ministry assignments and/or applying for credentialing:

These paper 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.

Paper files for candidates who apply for credentialing through WDC but whose credentials are not granted are kept in the WDC office for 10 years, then processed according to the chart below.

Otherwise, paper files for candidates are kept in the WDC office for no more than two years, or until the MLC approves credentialing or a ministry assignment is confirmed.

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

Electronic records related to these files are considered working documents, and are maintained no more than two years, after which they are fully deleted.

When Credentialed Leader or Credential Candidate files are removed from the WDC office, documents in the files should be destroyed (or fully deleted in the case of electronic files) 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		✓

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

Prevention and Accountability, Part 2 Accountability, Section 6 Abuse or Misconduct Response Process, states that in an Abuse/Misconduct Response Process, “The Response Team is responsible for saving records of all correspondence, relevant forms, and documents related to the misconduct complaint, to be stored in the National Office of MC USA - a copy may also be stored in the area conference that holds the respondent's credential at the time of the complaint.”

WDC will store a copy of misconduct files for which WDC held the respondent's credential at the time of the complaint.

A note will be placed in the accused Credentialed Leader's regular file stating that a secure misconduct file for this person exists. 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, WDC legal counsel, and the Denominational Minister for Church Safety.

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

All files related to misconduct processes will be kept until the accused's death, at which time they will be sent to the Mennonite Church USA Denominational Minister for Church Safety. Mennonite Church USA will retain all misconduct files.

Electronic records related to these files are considered working documents, and are maintained no more than two years, after which they are fully deleted.

Resources consulted in creating this policy include:

- Mennonite Church USA *Prevention and Accountability Resource* (Prevention & Accountability Resource [English](#) | [Español](#))

- Mennonite Church USA *Protocol and Procedure for Ministerial Misconduct Files* – Mennonite Church USA - April 18, 2017, Revised 10/27/20, Revised 3/1/21. (Ministerial Misconduct File Protocol Policy [English](#) | [Español](#))
 - *Record Retention Policy for Credential Files* of the former 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
- Pastor File Retention Policy* – Mennonite Church USA (August 2020)