

Understanding Title IV

“Title IV” of the Episcopal Church Canons details the grounds and process for ecclesiastical discipline. It is a church-wide structure to address claims that Bishops, Priests, or Deacons may have engaged in conduct constituting an offense under the Canons. It encourages accountability, justice, reconciliation, restoration and pastoral responses.

A Theological Foundation

Title IV disciplinary processes have moved first from a secular trial model, then to a system similar to the code of military justice, and finally to a process rooted in a theological foundation. As stated in Title IV Canon 1, it aims to promote healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life, and reconciliation.

Title IV Canon 1 states *“by virtue of Baptism,”* all members of the church are accountable to one another. The laity are not disciplined under Title IV. Only clergy can be Respondents to a Title IV complaint. However, both the laity and clergy can participate in a Title IV procedure as Complainants, members of the Disciplinary Board, attorneys, conciliators, Advisors, witnesses, and pastoral care providers.

The members of the clergy are deacons, priests, and bishops. The term “cleric” is another term for “clergyperson” or “Member of the Clergy.” In addition to their baptismal vows, the vows of ordination set clerics apart to follow a higher standard of accountability as defined in Title IV. Canon 1 continues, *“This Title applies to Members of the Clergy, who have by their vows at ordination accepted additional responsibilities and accountabilities for doctrine, discipline, worship, and obedience.”*

Anyone with information about a possible Offense by an accountable person can make a complaint. Accountable persons are the clergy, i.e., deacons, priests, and bishops.

The Complainant does not have to be a person who feels he or she has been the victim of an offense. Under Title IV any person can proceed with a complaint based on possessing knowledge of a potential offense committed by a member of the clergy.

The complaint can be delivered in writing, by phone, via email, or in person to any deacon, priest, bishop, or Intake Officer. Any of those people are canonically required to take action upon receipt of the complaint. Deacons, priests, and bishops are required to convey the complaint to the Intake Officer.

Contacting the Intake Officer

Jo Ann Hardy – Canon to the Ordinary: jhardy@edomi.org or 313.833.4422

The primary responsibility of the Intake Officer is to obtain as much information as possible about the alleged misconduct, short of a full investigation. That information includes the identity of the clergy person allegedly responsible for the misconduct, a full narrative description of the incident or acts of misconduct alleged, the identity of all other witnesses, and the identity of any others who may have been victimized by the misconduct. The Intake Officer will also determine whether or not there is any tangible or electronic material related to the alleged misconduct.

The key goal of the Intake Officer is to decide whether or not the facts presented, if any were true, would constitute an “Offense” under the Canons. ([Title IV.6.5](#)). This determination expressly excludes any determination as to the actual truth of the allegations.

While working with the people providing this information, the Intake Officer advises each person about the procedures the Church follows to consider and respond to allegations of misconduct, including the rights of the Complainant.

Please note: Members of the clergy are required to report to the intake officer anything that may constitute an offense and to cooperate with the clergy disciplinary process.

You can also find more information on the [Title IV website for The Episcopal Church](#).

An Overview of the Process

All matters are reported to an intake officer. Matters might then be resolved through pastoral care, mediation, an agreement with the bishop, a pastoral directive (Canon IV.7.1), an investigation or any combination of these. An investigation may result in formal mediation, and, if necessary, a hearing.

The process now allows for resolution through whatever means will move those affected toward justice, restitution, amendment of life, repentance, healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. This can include a variety of interventions for all involved and, if necessary, the suspension or removal of the cleric from ordained ministry.

The Title IV canons are available in the [Constitution & Canons for The Episcopal Church](#). (The Title IV Canons begin on page 135 of the PDF)

You can also find more information on the [Title IV website for The Episcopal Church](#).