

The Conflict Engagement Process

RRT offers conflict engagement services to individual members. Sometimes a member needs a sounding board and coaching as to how to bring their better self to a situation. Sometimes, when a smaller group of the congregation is feeling stuck in a situation, the RRT can hold the container in the form of listening circles to help them hear each other more effectively. By providing these opportunities, RRT can set expectations of communicating openly and honestly and help the congregation to do just that.

Parties finding themselves in conflict should take responsibility upon themselves to resolve the conflict either directly or supported by the RRT, use the conflict to mend relationships and provide healing, and use conflict as an opportunity for transformation and spiritual growth. These interaction guidelines can be helpful:

We resolve conflicts directly, using openness and compassion, and we:

- *make every effort to settle differences directly and openly,*
- *stay engaged with each other through difficult conversations,*
- *hold ourselves responsible for hearing all sides.*

We listen with respect and attention and speak with care.

The conflict transformation process consists of three levels. At any level, conversations regarding conflict should be in-person or on zoom if needed, and confidential. Email and public forums are not appropriate venues.

To initiate support from the RRT, please submit a confidential *Request for RRT Assistance* to the RRT email (RRT@uucnr.org) or the minister. The request form is available on the website, by emailing RRT@uucnr.org and on the table in both entrances.

Level 1 – Individuals or groups work it out.

The expectation is that the vast majority of conflicts will be resolved at this level directly by the people involved using the UUC Covenant as a guideline, without external intervention. People who experience a conflict are encouraged to engage in self-reflection and empathy. By spending time reflecting on the situation, people can explore what their role is in the conflict, and what factors could be causing the behavior that led to the conflict. Try to look at the situation from the other person's (or people's) perspective. [Self-reflection suggestions.](#)

The RRT website has a variety of resources available to support these resolution processes. Congregants can ask for an RRT member to be a sounding board or coach as they engage in personal reflection and/or preparation to talk with the person with whom they are experiencing conflict.

Level 2 – Individuals or groups need help. Assistance from the RRT may be requested.

1. The RRT will review the request and determine if it is within the scope of this policy. If the request does not fall within the RRT policy, the requestor will be notified. If the RRT is the appropriate resource, two team members will be assigned to the request and will meet with the requestor within ten days. When appropriate, they can conduct preliminary fact gathering.
2. At least two members of the RRT are involved with any process.
3. The RRT will recommend one of the following steps.
 - Coaching – One or both parties may benefit from the help of a person experienced with conflict transformation to help them gain additional skills or techniques to resolve the situation themselves.
 - Facilitation – In some instances, parties may simply wish to have a third party lead a conversation for the purpose of assisting parties in understanding each other and the issues, and potentially reaching resolution.
 - Mediation – Mediation seeks to focus on parties' willingness to solve the problem rather than finding out if someone is guilty or at fault. Since it is a collaborative effort between the parties in dispute, the mediation process helps the parties clarify misunderstandings and improve communication. The parties themselves determine the resolution.

Level 3 – Process leading to a recommendation. Either party may initiate a request to the RRT for a process leading to a recommendation. Either Level 1 or 2 process should have been attempted, ideally both. Both involved parties must agree in writing before the RRT proceeds. At this point in the process, the RRT will:

1. Send a written notice to request participation from all parties involved in the conflict.
2. With the consent of all parties, conduct outside information gathering, which may include interviews, meetings, discussions and review of relevant documents.
3. Prepare a written plan as to what the RRT believes should be done and submit it to all parties involved for consideration. The RRT will also meet with the parties and provide them with an opportunity to discuss the written plan.
4. If the above steps do not produce a satisfactory solution, the issue will be sent to the UUC Board for a final resolution and recommendation.

Confidentiality

Without the express approval of all the parties, the RRT shall not disclose the content or substance of matters brought to it unless disclosure is reasonably believed to be necessary to avoid physical or substantial financial harm, or is required by law (such as legally-required reporting of suspected abuse or neglect of a child or elder adult). At the conclusion of a matter, the RRT is responsible for destroying referrals, notes, written reports, notes taken and any other documentation produced or received during the conflict resolution process, unless there is the possibility of legal matters, retention is expressly requested by all parties, or required by law. The RRT members and the minister work as a team, so they routinely share information with each other as part of their work.

A report is made annually to the Board with a general statement of the work that has been accomplished. This report will indicate the number of requests and dispositions by Level only - no names or identifying information will be included.