

II. The DCE Call Process

B. *Calling DCE's from the Field*

1. Review Church Constitution: Read very carefully what the congregational constitution and bylaws say about the process and procedure for calling. Look specifically for the following:
 - a) Procedure for announcing the vacancy; i.e., how, when, where, how often to announce
 - b) Procedure for requesting nominations of candidates from the congregation
 - c) How the call committee is to be constituted
 - d) How to announce a call meeting; i.e., how often, how early, where, when, and how the meeting must be announced
 - e) Voting and calling procedures (CONGREGATION)
2. Vacancy: Notify the District Office of the vacancy due to resignation or retirement; or the creation of a new position. (CONGREGATION)
3. Position Description: Write a position description that defines what will be expected of candidates who may be called to serve fills the vacancy. Please see Appendix C for samples of position descriptions available from the Synod. The call committee or a representative thereof may contact the District Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator for assistance and advice on the writing of a position description. (CONGREGATION)
4. Request Call List: After staff needs have been clearly identified, a call list is compiled. Request a call list from the District Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator. The list may include names of candidates suggested by the congregation and by the Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator. (CONGREGATION)
5. DISTRICT YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY FACILITATOR: Gather official credentials, i. e., a Lutheran Educator's Information Form (LEIF), for each candidate. NOTE: When credentials are requested for candidates whose LEIF forms are not on file in the District Office, the

District Office will request forms from the district of residence. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE FORMS WILL BE AVAILABLE.

6. Candidate Evaluation: Prayer needs to be an integral part of this group's work. Identify in writing the challenges this position would offer as well as the supportive helps available: Process the LEIF forms and gather additional information about candidates. (CONGREGATIONAL CALL COMMITTEE)

a) NOTE that these forms:

(1) Are to be considered confidential information, and are available for the exclusive use of call committees or boards. Under no circumstances should the forms be reproduced for congregational call meetings or for distribution to members. Pertinent information should be summarized into paragraph form as needed for evaluation.

(2) Do not mean the person is applying nor being recommended for the specific position. The name of the educator is being provided merely for possible consideration based on the congregation's request. The decision of whether an educator is truly capable and possesses the proper credentials for a specific ministry is solely that of the group responsible for extending a call or contract.

b) The following are possible ways of gathering additional information:

(1) Telephoning each candidate to ask whether he or she is open to considering a call at this time.

(2) Telephoning the people who are listed as reference

(3) Telephoning person who did evaluation. (See Appendix D)

(4) Telephoning co-workers of candidate.

(5) Telephoning others who may be acquainted with this person's performance.

(6) Telephoning District Education Executive of your District.

(7) Interviewing select candidates. Prepare thoroughly before interviews. (See Appendix E) I suggest that when you interview a candidate you use ideas from the guidelines. A specific question might be, "Is there anything we should know about you that is not included on your LEIF?" The reason for the question is that in some situations there may be "sensitive" information which the person doesn't want in print but is willing to share "unofficially." Accurate notes of each candidate's responses are necessary for later review and comparison.

7. Initial Contact: Contact the candidate(s) to check on their availability for a Call at this time. The most common procedure is to telephone the candidate. The following might be a part of the telephone dialog or, as an alternative, contained in a letter to the candidate.

(CONGREGATIONAL CALL COMMITTEE)

a) I am a member of (blank) Lutheran in (City), (ST). We are currently developing a list of candidates for the position of (blank). Through the normal process of developing a candidate list, your name has been given to us. At this point in time, is there anything that would prohibit you from considering a call? May we leave your name on our call list for further consideration? By leaving your name on our call list, we understand that you are not obligating yourself to anything.

8. Interviewing: How does a congregation set up the interview?

(CONGREGATIONAL CALL COMMITTEE)

a) Telephone the candidate with a specific request for an interview. Be prepared to describe to him/her the details about the interview including time, date, place and whether it is to be a telephone interview or a personal interview. Then, send the

following, with a cover letter, to the prospective candidate(s) to arrive at least 72 hours prior to the interview:

- (1) *Constitution of congregation or association*
- (2) *Brochures for congregational ministries*
- (3) *Position description and related information*
- (4) *Information about your community*
- (5) *If a telephone interview:*
 - (a) Make certain the all details and equipment are in good working order.
 - (b) Sit in such a way that all participants can both hear and speak into the equipment.
- (6) *If a personal interview:*
 - (a) Select a room that is neither too crowded nor excessively large.
 - (b) Arrange tables and chairs in a circle or rectangle.
 - (c) Seat the candidate to be part of the group rather than the target of an inquisition.
 - (d) Place a name tent in front of each person, clearly identifying each person's name.
- (7) *In either case, determine:*
 - (a) Who should lead the interviewing process.
 - (b) Who should take written notes.
 - (c) Who will ask which questions.
- (8) *Follow these general interview suggestions:*
 - (a) Open the interview with a prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Work to establish rapport with the candidate.
 - (c) Make a conscious effort to avoid stress.
 - (d) Listen, remain objective, and avoid biases.
 - (e) Work to maintain consistency for each candidate.
 - (f) Go through prepared questions and any that might be "tag ons" with the candidate.
 - (g) Ask if he or she has any questions to ask of the interviewers.
 - (h) Ask if there is something the group should know about the candidate that has not surfaced to this point.
 - (i) Thank candidate and close with a prayer.

(9) *After the interview:*

- (a) Compare notes.
- (b) Document your observations.
- (c) Compare the candidate's responses to the position description and to the recommendation criteria.

9. Calling a Candidate: Calling is and must remain a Spirit-led process. God has chosen to use His people assembled in a congregation to work His will in the calling process. Each step of the process, then, must include prayer that God's will be done and that the selection process be guided by the Holy Spirit. (CONGREGATION)

a) Follow the calling process described in its constitution and bylaws unless there is provision to waive the rules. NOTE: Calls must be issued by the congregation. Calling responsibility should not be delegated to a board or sub-group of the congregation.

b) When a candidate has been selected to receive the call, current call documents must be prepared accurately and completely, with supporting material assembled, and a cover letter composed on behalf of the congregation. The following items may be shared with candidates:

(1) *A letter which gives sufficient background to your current situation, answering questions which you might anticipate being asked by the candidate. (See Appendix F.)*

(2) *Copies of employment handbooks, church constitution, annual report, brochures on your community, and information concerning housing.*

(3) *Position description*

c) All documents and materials should be sent within a day after the call meeting. The Call document diploma of vocation should be printed on parchment paper, and the rest of the Call documents should always be completed in full electronically (pages should never be omitted). Be sure to download, read and follow the instructions for completing Call documents available from the CPH website.

d) Candidates who are invited to visit should have their expenses paid by the congregation.

e) A letter needs to be sent to the congregation of the person being called at the time of the call to notify them of the call.

f) Desperation type of actions should be avoided, e.g., after several unsuccessful call attempts, don't raise the salary for only that position.

10. On-going Communication: Keep the District Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator informed of call activities. (CONGREGATION)

11. Call Accepted: When the congregation's call has been accepted, the **congregation** and the **candidate** must cooperate to ensure that all forms in the call documents are completely and accurately completed and that all forms are set to the appropriate offices.

12. Installation: Call or write to the DISTRICT PRESIDENT for permission to install a candidate AFTER THE TRANSFER PROCESS IS COMPLETE AND FORMS HAVE BEEN SENT AND RECEIVED (if outside of the district).

(CONGREGATION)

a) Inform the District Office of installation date and installing pastor.

(1) Once informed of the installation date, the District sends appropriate forms (authorization for installation) to the designated officiant, basically to have him verify that the installation occurred on the date specified.

(2) This form is then sent to the department of Rosters and Statistics for inclusion in the Lutheran Annual.

(3) Services for DCE and other Commissioned Minister Installations can be found in The Lutheran Service Book Agenda, which is available from Concordia Publishing House.

13. Issues to note:

a) Often we are not informed if a call is accepted or that the called worker is installed. We ask that congregations keep this in mind and do not assume we hear through other means. The DCE and congregation often assume that the others inform the District of important information. It is the congregation's responsibility to communicate information of this important nature.

b) District office practice is to not do any official paperwork for a candidate's installation until official notification has been received

from the candidate (the pages from the Call document) or congregation.

c) Often calling bodies take liberties in preparing their call documents and omit the final pages that are to be sent to various District Presidents, etc. among other possible changes. This is NOT acceptable practice. We are finding called commissioned ministers who have been in the District for over a year whose Call documents were not correct, thus we were never informed of their arrival. Please take care in preparation of all documents.