

Safe Congregation Book

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Mission Statement of the Safe Congregation Committee

Within our interconnected spiritual community, our aim is to support the physical and emotional safety of all members and friends of this church.



Adult to Child Relationships

Opening statement:

Adults and older youth are in stewardship roles and they play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the entire church community. It is, therefore, especially important that they be well qualified to provide the special care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of interdependence and responsibility.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford is committed to preventing child abuse from occurring. We recognize the existence and the threat of child abuse in our society. We believe that child abuse robs children of their innocence and dignity, and steals from them their rights to healthy emotional and sexual development. It robs them of trust in adults and the larger society, and if child abuse occurs in church, it robs children of their trust in the church community.

Goals

- (1) To provide a safe environment for children
- (2) To support adults and older youth who work with children and youth
- (3) To limit the church's legal risks and liabilities

Code of Ethics

The relationship between young people and adults must be one of mutual respect if positive outcomes are to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of trust, self-worth, and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children suffer damaging effects when adults become sexually involved with them. Therefore, adults and older youth shall refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass nor engage in behavior with youth, which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse

Policies for hiring and working with children

Screening and Hiring Policies

Primary Screening form to be filled out by staff - all paid employees including clergy. To be filled out by all volunteers working with children. Forms are at the end of this section.

Secondary Screening : To be used only with occasional or infrequent volunteers. For example, church members who are filling in for an RE teacher or nursery aide.

Recruiting- Minimum church attendance of one year required for youth group advisors.

National background check for all paid staff and volunteers to be completed before working with children

Interviews - Interviews of all paid staff are to be done by minister. RE director will conduct personal interviews before teacher training of religious education classes. RE director will also interview the candidates for the youth advisor position. The interviews are an opportunity to educate both paid staff and volunteers about our commitment to the physical and emotional safety of all members of this church.

Past Crimes – The minister will consider people with criminal records for work with children and youth on an individual basis. Those with a prior history of child sexual abuse no matter how long ago it occurred may not teach nor attend activities where children are present, such as social hour, game night, meals, and fairs. (Church services and Adult Ed will be permitted.) Other automatic disqualifiers from work with children and youth would include prior record of incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy and the physical abuse of a minor. Some crimes will not be automatic disqualifiers, because they would not necessarily suggest a risk of child abuse or molestation. The people in this category must be screened and work with children and youth at the discretion of the minister.

Access and storage of screening forms – All completed screening forms will be kept in a locked box. Only the RE director and minister will review these forms.

Adult survivors of abuse – May need to meet with the minister before working with children or youth. * This will be included at the discretion of church lawyer. *

Working with children

Six-month policy – All volunteers who work with children and youth need to have a minimum church attendance of 6 months (and a minimum church attendance of 1 year for youth group advisors). This does not require church membership, but does require regular church attendance. The six-month policy includes all volunteers, both regular and infrequent (substitutes).

Two Person Policy -

Always be with another trained adult when with children and youth. For the safety of the children and the care givers, there must be a minimum of two adults working with any child(ren) and youth at any and all times.

Child Abuse

Definition of child abuse

Abusive behaviors include instances of physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Specifically, “child physical abuse” is deliberate bodily harm inflicted by an adult on a child or youth. “Child emotional abuse includes, but is not limited to: verbal assault, emotional cruelty, close confinement, extreme discipline, and allowing illegal drug or alcohol use. “Child sexual abuse” is the use of any child or youth for sexual stimulation by an adult or a sexually mature minor.

Reporting child abuse

As members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford, all volunteers are ethically obligated to report instances of child abuse. Volunteers working with children and youth shall immediately report to the minister and the director of religious education any behaviors witnessed during programmed church religious education activities, which seem abusive or inappropriate.

In the event of a report of suspected child abuse to the minister or the religious education director, the minister and designated member or alternate of the Religious Education Committee will handle the report in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions of child abuse for the State of Massachusetts. In addition, the minister or the Religious Education Director receiving the report will handle the report with the highest ethical regard for the best interests of the child, children or youth involved, as well as for the welfare, dignity and civil rights of the suspected abuser. In the event the charges involve the minister, the next points of contact shall be the board chair, the district executive of the Massachusetts district or the UUA department of ministry.

Responding to the report of child abuse

In the event of a report of abuse, the minister, the board chair and the religious education director, shall

- (a) Collect and review all pertinent facts regarding the incident or charges;
- (b) Review the application and reference forms kept on the person
- (c) Carefully document all meetings, conversations etc. regarding this manner
- (d) Keep all this information as confidential as the circumstances warrant.
- (e) Contact the church attorney
- (f) Contact the church insurance company
- (g) Notify the parents of the child
- (h) Contact the proper civil authorities (Department of Social Services)

Care of the victim

The accused should not be confronted until the safety of the child or youth is secured. The minister, the board chair and the religious education director should reach out to the victim and the victim’s family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. In some situations,

churches have responded in a negative or nonsupportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.

Care of the accused

Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Response to the Press

The church leaders should defer to the counsel of their lawyers as to how to address questions from the press

Response to the church congregation

The minister, the chair of the board and the religious education director should work together to decide how the congregation should be informed of a child abuse occurrence at the church.

Child to Child Relationships

Religious Education Covenant for Children

Right relations are identified and defined in religious education programs across our continent in many different contexts. Whether named religious education guidelines or ministry with children or codes of conduct or classroom covenants, they grew out of efforts to put our faith in action. Our young people learn Unitarian Universalist principles and values when linked with concrete references to their own experiences. The young people and the religious education committee of the Community Church of New York City wrote this religious education covenant:

I have a right to be happy,
and to be treated with kindness.
This means that no one will laugh at me,
ignore me, or hurt my feelings.

I have a right to be myself.
This means that no one will treat
me unfairly because of who I am.

I have a right to hear and be heard.
This means that no one will yell,
scream or shout, and my wishes
will be considered in any plans we make.

I have a right to learn about myself.
This means that I will be free to
express my feelings and opinions.

I have a right to be treated this way
and will treat others the same way.

A chorus of religious educators of all ages reminds us: "It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a whole congregation to raise a Unitarian Universalist child."

Youth Who May Be Abusers

One of the most difficult possible situations is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of inappropriately sexually touching a child in the congregation. The difficulty is that in some cases these children may simply be acting on their sexual feelings impulsively, not quite understanding the importance of boundaries, whereas in other cases, youth and children who engage in sexual activity with younger children may become future adult offenders. If an older child forces sex on a younger child or exposes his or her genitals to a younger child, both of these children will need professional help. If an older child demonstrates inappropriate sexual interest in younger children that doesn't extend to these behaviors, there may or may not be cause for congregational involvement. However, "any child who engages in sex play with a much younger child, or children who coerce or force someone to engage in sex, is beyond normal sexual exploration. If a child is being used in any way to meet the sexual needs of another, then it is sexual abuse." And some children who behave this way are acting out their own history of sexual abuse.

After such an incident comes to the attention of the minister or other staff member, the minister should initiate contact individually with the parents of both children to discuss the allegation and next steps. In both of the congregations that I spoke to where this had happened, the ministers reported that the parents had simply stopped coming to the congregation rather than seeking help for their children and support from the faith community during what is surely a difficult time. The minister should encourage the parents of the child who was touched to seek an evaluation for this child. Some children may seem unchanged by the incident. However, a child who has been sexually abused, according to Stop It Now!, "needs specialized help and attention to heal from this abuse" through treatment with a specialist, "otherwise he or she might be at risk for further abuse or for showing abusing behaviors." However, with treatment and support, the risk of either further abuse or for abusing is dramatically decreased. Contact the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) or the Safer Society Foundation for referrals if you don't have a local list of therapists with expertise in this area.

The parents of the child who initiated the sexual contact need to be engaged more thoroughly in discussions about next steps. Depending on the state law and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to call Child Protective Services. Regardless, before the initiator is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive an extensive assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist with experience with children with sexual behavior problems. It is NOT the responsibility of the minister or the response team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place.

While this review is occurring, it is important that the child's religious education teacher be informed of the allegation and for the parents to agree to closely monitor their child before and after the religious education program. It may make sense to remove the child from religious education during this time. It would certainly be prudent for the child not to be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete.

The minister will need to decide if the situation warrants the involvement of the entire Response Team and at what point. If the evaluation finds that this was simply a case of inappropriate boundaries or impulsive behavior, and with the recommendation of the therapist that the child can safely attend church functions with other children, the minister and the parents can meet with the child to discuss the importance of never repeating the behavior, the harm it can do to other children, and the consequences should such a situation occur again.

On the other hand, if the treatment provider reports that the child has a sexual behavior problem that is likely to be repetitive, the minister, the Religious Educator, the response team, and the parents need to meet to decide how and if the child can safely be involved with the Religious Education or Youth Group program. A modified Limited Access Agreement should be developed and signed by both the child and the parents. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the young person continued involvement with other children until treatment is completed and to consider alternative ways to provide religious education, such as through individual sessions with a Religious Educator or home schooling.

In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for sexual offenses back into the congregation after treatment is completed. In such cases, the steps for involving an adult offender can be followed, including a Limited Access Agreement signed by both the youth and their parents.

In any of these cases, pastoral care and support for the families involved is crucial. This will be very difficult for the parents involved, and they will need the support of their church community, especially the minister and the Religious Educator. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential, as is the ongoing offer of ministry.

Adult to Adult Relationships

Each adult is encouraged to read and abide by the following UU principles and sexual ethics:

Unitarian Universalist Principles & Sexual Ethics

One of the Leader Resources in Creating Safe Congregations restates our Principles in terms of sexual ethics, and appears in every age level of Sexuality and Our Faith, the companion volume to Our Whole Lives.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Every person's sexuality is sacred and is worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated.

Justice, equity and compassion in human relationships

We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation is wrong.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth

Accepting each other as we are means not taking advantage of what we have or don't have*physically, psychologically and spiritually.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is important as is the responsibility for it.

The right to conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations

As a community and as an institution, we have the responsibility to create a secure and safe environment.

The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all

We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty and justice in human sexuality, and we can become a model for the rest of society.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence.

Minister to Adult Relationships

The minister is bound by the following Code of Professional Practice.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

As Revised at the UUMA Annual Meetings

1987, 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, give full assent to this code of professional life as a statement of our serious intent, and as an expression of the lines and directions that bind us in a life of common concern, shared hopes and firm loyalties.

1. SELF

Because the religious life is a growing life, I will respect and protect my own needs for spiritual growth, ethical integrity, and continuing education in order to deepen and strengthen myself and my ministry.

I commit myself to honest work, believing that the honor of my profession begins with the honest use of my own mind and skills.

I will sustain a respect for the ministry. Because my private life is woven into my practice of the ministry, I will refrain from private as well as public words or actions degrading to the ministry or destructive of congregational life.

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a person in the congregation, with interns, or any other such exploitative relationship.

Because the demands of others upon me will be many and unceasing, I will try to keep especially aware of the rights and needs of my family and my relation to them as spouse, parent and friend.

2. COLLEAGUES

I will stand in a supportive relation to my colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

Should I know that a colleague is engaged in practices that are damaging, as defined in our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to her/him and endeavor to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the UUMA Executive Committee.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

The nurture of the relationship between a congregation and its called minister is of utmost importance to the strength of the movement and to the integrity of our ministry. For this reason, consultation among colleagues practicing the diverse forms of our ministry within the same geographic area is essential to promote healthy congregational life. The purpose of such consultation is to reach mutually acceptable understandings about the appropriate roles that

ministers in the same geographic area should play. Irreconcilable disputes should be referred to the Chapter Good Offices Person for mediation.

I will defer accepting any requests for any ministerial services whatsoever from members of any congregation I am not now serving until I have consulted with the incumbent minister. In order to maintain my colleague's free choice in this matter, I will inform the person requesting my services of the necessity to consult our professional Guidelines. If my colleague asks me to refrain from performing the service, I will comply. Should emergency circumstances make such a consultation impossible, I shall render only limited services and consult with my colleague at the earliest possible opportunity.

I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in the church he or she serves, and I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in his or her community, which might bear upon congregational issues or policies. In a multi-staff situation I will see that all colleagues serving that church are informed. If approached by a member of any colleague's congregation for advice on matters affecting my colleague's ministry, I will consider carefully the circumstances of the request. If the advice sought indicates a possible violation of the Code of Professional Practice, I will listen carefully and explore appropriate ways of addressing the issue within the context of our Code and *Guidelines*. If the advice requested is not of this nature, I will inform the person of my professional obligations under this Code, and carefully consider whether it is appropriate for me to respond in any way. When in doubt I will err on the side of deference to the prerogatives of my colleagues call.

If I am to share the ministry of a congregation with (an) other minister(s), I will earnestly seek clear delineation of responsibility, accountability, and channels of communication before responsibilities are assumed. I will thereafter work in cooperation and consultation with them, taking care that changing roles and relations are re-negotiated with clarity, respect and honesty.

If I am a member of or a participant in a congregation served by a colleague, I will in all ways honor the priority of his or her call to the ministry of that congregation, and I will avoid influence which other members may tend to yield to me in the light of my experience, status and prestige. If I serve a congregation of which another minister is a member, I will be generous toward my colleague in word and spirit. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

If I am a member of a congregation which I previously served, I will be welcoming to the settled minister, and seek to be useful in ways my successor may request. If I serve a congregation of which the retired minister is a member, I will recognize the continuing value of her or his presence in the congregation. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

I will share and support the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, especially as reflected in these *Guidelines*.

I will keep my collegial relationships alive by attending UUMA Chapter meetings whenever possible and by thoughtfully considering matters of mutual professional interest.

3. CONGREGATION

I will uphold the practices of congregational polity including both those of local self-government and those of counsel and cooperation within our Association. I will only serve regularly a congregation(s) issuing a call in the manner prescribed by the Bylaws of the congregation(s) or under a program instituted by the UUA or its member groups. Throughout my ministry I will teach the history, meaning and methods of congregational polity, recognizing informed and faithful adherence to these practices as the bond preserving and reforming our free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation, enriching and improving these in consultation with the members.

I will hold to a single standard of respect and help for all members of the congregational community of whatever age or position.

I will respect absolutely the confidentiality of private communications of members.

I will remember that a congregation places special trust in its professional leadership and that the members of the congregation allow a minister to become a part of their lives on the basis of that trust. I will not abuse or exploit that trust for my own gratification.

I will not invade the private and intimate bonds of others' lives, nor will I trespass on those bonds for my own advantage or need when they are disturbed. In any relationship of intimate confidentiality, I will not exploit the needs of another person for my own.

I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of the congregation who is not my spouse or partner, if I am married or in a committed relationship. If I am single, before becoming sexually involved with a person in the congregation, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality, and the nature of such activity and its consequence for myself, the other person, and the congregation.

I will exercise a responsible freedom of the pulpit with respect for all persons, including those who may disagree with me.

I will encourage by my example an inclusive, loyal, generous, and critical spiritual leadership.

I will take responsibility for encouraging clear delineation of responsibility, accountability and channels of communication for the minister(s) and other staff.

I will take responsibility for encouraging adequate and sensible standards of financial and other support for minister and staff.

Prior to sabbatical or other leave, I will clearly negotiate a minimum amount of time to serve as minister to the congregation upon my return before making myself available as a candidate for another pulpit.

I will inform the Board of the congregation immediately when I have accepted a call to another position.

4. MOVEMENT AND ASSOCIATION

I will encourage the growth of our congregations and the spread of the ideals of the Unitarian Universalist tradition and fellowship.

I will participate and encourage lay participation in meetings and activities of our Association.

I will encourage financial support of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its associated programs.

I will inform myself of the established candidating procedures of the Unitarian Universalist Association and I will strictly observe them.

I will make myself a candidate for a pulpit only with serious intent.

Because respect for the worth and dignity of every person is fundamental to our Unitarian Universalist ministry, I will work to confront attitudes and practices of unjust discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, disability, or ethnicity, within myself and in individuals, congregations, and groups I serve.

5. COMMUNITY

In word and deed I will live and speak in ways representing the best Unitarian Universalist tradition and leadership in the larger community.

I will maintain a prophetic pulpit, offering to the community religious and ethical leadership.

I will encourage members' participation in efforts to solve community problems.

I will offer sympathetic support to neighboring ministers of other religious bodies.

Staff Member to Staff Member Relationships

The staff members are bound by the following Code of Ethics

Preamble

We, the members of the Liberal Religious Educators Association, do affirm this Code of Professional Practices as our standard of commitment to the practice of religious education. This Code will be followed by all LREDA members who are or have been engaged as professional religious educators. It is supported by all who, by joining LREDA, indicate that they honor the importance of religious growth and learning in the congregations or communities they serve.

I. Self

As a professional religious educator, or as a supporter of religious education within the Unitarian Universalist Association or the Canadian Unitarian Council, I commit myself to honor the ideals of liberal religious education, and to actively explore and articulate the underlying values and principles that those ideals express.

I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am called to be faithful both morally and legally to my professional relationships. I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. (Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors).

I pledge that I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to have read and understood this Code, and to live in accordance with its contents. I expect that my colleagues will do likewise.

I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to a LREDA Good Officer. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

The recognition of the importance of religious education by my congregation or employer requires acknowledgment of my worth as a professional religious educator. Understanding that other religious educational professionals will follow after me, I will work with the appropriately designated group within my congregation or place of employment to help establish up-to-date standards of fair compensation and working conditions that support professional religious education.

Because the role and the demands on the religious educator require continual updating of professional perspectives, I will seek and maintain outside collegial contacts and continuing education opportunities to provide such professional growth.

SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

There are likely to be people in the congregation who themselves were abused sexually as children. According to national statistics, as many as one quarter of adult women and one in seven adult men experienced at least one incident of inappropriate sexual touching as a child. And for a significant minority this has had lifelong ramifications. As Rev. Pat Hoertdoerfer, Director for Children, Family and Intergenerational Programs for the UUA, has written, “I remind myself and our colleagues often that in every congregation there are people of all ages who have experienced the pain of abuse, people who have caused others the pain of abuse, and others who remain silent and are complicit in the harm of abuse. We need to find the courage to call ourselves and one another to justice as we heal ourselves, our congregants, and our Association.”

Congregations can offer support groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. There can be healing services for survivors. Religious professionals and other pastoral care providers can obtain special training in providing counseling to people who have been abused. It is important to have referrals for people who need more intense therapy around past sexual abuse issues. A referral agreement/relationship with the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in the area is also critical.

For more information, go to www.uua.org/cde/ethics or contact the District Staff serving your congregation or the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA.

Behavior Management and Discipline

Many skills are used to create a positive environment for learning. Children learn and behave best in an environment that has consistent behavior management practices. As children are always learning, providing an opportunity to learn and practice prosocial interpersonal and self management skills will increase positive skills for now and into the future. Clear rules and expectations in regard to appropriate behaviors should be set ahead of time. Rules and expectations can be discussed with children and posted in the room during the term. A covenant of behavior is helpful to make at the beginning of the teaching term. The covenant can be revisited with the children when necessary.

If children are not adhering to the behavior expectations or the covenant, it is very important that they be told as soon as possible. In this way, they will receive feedback on their behavior and given an opportunity to change it. In the same light, children who are adhering to the behavior expectations and the covenant need to be verbally recognized. Often when a child is praised for following the rules, another child who is not following the rules will change his or her behavior for the positive. Children who are following the covenant should be rewarded verbally. Both tangible and non tangible rewards can be given to an individual or a group for following behavior covenants. These can include stickers or special treats for tangible rewards and time to play outside, free play time, dancing to music or special errands for non tangible rewards.

Individual children will have their own strengths and weaknesses. All children do not follow the rules and expectations equally. All children do not learn in the same manner or learn at the same rate. Allow for differences in learning styles. Be sure to provide alternative activities for children to engage in if they are finished with the lesson or if they are not interested in the activity or the lesson. Blocks, small toys and paper and markers can be available in a box in all classrooms for children to use if desired.

Children with special needs or at risk children will require additional attention. Speak to parents ahead of time and ask how their child learns best. Try to implement that learning environment.

Teachers should consult with the DRE if a child repeatedly breaks rules or injures another person or himself. Parents should be spoken to if their child continues to violate the rules or expectations. The parent may be asked to attend a lesson with the child. If a child continues to break rules or injure others, he or she may be asked to refrain from attending RE for one or more weeks. A behavior plan including expectations and consequences for the child may be worked out and the child asked to return to class.

Remember to keep a positive attitude and be sure to give positive feedback to both child and parent on what the child did well during the lesson.

Staff and Teacher Training

At a minimum, every person, whether employee or volunteer, who works or comes in contact with children and youth, will attend an annual training on child sexual abuse prevention and reporting requirements. This training will include:

- Definition of child abuse
- Sexual and physical abuse symptoms
- Basics of child sexual development and expected behaviors by age
- What constitutes inappropriate touch and behaviors
- Congregation's safe policies and ethics policy
- Rationale behind screening procedures
- Reporting procedures for observed or suspect child abuse and child sexual abuse
- Review of the congregation's Code of Ethics for Adults Working with Children and Youth

Training

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford's expectation of teachers, youth advisors, religious education committee members and other people who work with the children and youth of the church is that they will provide safe care for all children and youth of the church. The religious education director will supervise teachers and volunteers working with children and youth.

All volunteers and staff, shall

- Be trained by the religious education Director or a religious education committee member.
- Be familiar with the policies and procedures of Safe Congregation.
- Have necessary paper clearance screening process, updated annually.
- Agreement to Teach, Code of Ethics, and Background Check
- Always be with another trained adult when with children/youth.
- Follow through on all incidences of suspected abuse.

New Members Classes- As part of the introduction to all new church members, the mission statement of the safe congregations and all safe congregation policies will be reviewed and discussed during new member classes.

Personal Interviews – personal interviews will take place before teacher training by the religious education director. All policies of safe congregations will be reviewed and discussed.

Identification of child abuse including symptoms of child abuse

- Neglectful treatment or maltreatment of a child (birth to 18) by any person, which indicates the child's health, welfare and safety are harmed.

- Non-accidental injury
- Exploitation
- Sexual abuse (touching and non touching)

(continued)

What to do if told about abuse:

- **Listen carefully**, believe their story, affirm their courage,
- Be in an appropriate setting (move if necessary) with two adults present.
- Tell religious education director or minister

What to do if abuse is suspected

- Determine if the child is safe to leave with care giver
- Tell religious education director or minister

What constitutes appropriate conduct

- Use common sense.
- Can touch on head and arms, Can hug.
- What is the child comfortable with?
- What are you comfortable with?
- Always have two adults present when working with children and youth.

Additional information to be discussed at teacher training

- The rationale behind screening procedures
- The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct
- Reporting policy - religious education director, Minister are the mandated reporters
- Training video (appendix 7, Church and Law) should be used on a yearly basis to train all volunteers working with children and youth

Prevention Programs for the Church Congregation (appendix 6 Church and Law)

- Safeguarding our Children
- Stopping the Thief of Childhood

Guidelines for health and safety

1. Universal precautions: Rubber gloves must be worn before coming in contact with any blood or bodily fluids
2. Injury

Injury report form to be filled out by teacher if a child is in need of any first aid treatment (including bandaid and ice). The parent and the DRE should sign the injury report. A copy is to be filed with the DRE and a copy is to go home with the parent.

In the case of a serious injury, the teacher will notify parent immediately and the DRE will call an ambulance if necessary.
3. First Aid kits

First aid kits are available in the hallway of the Osgood House and in the Church kitchen.
4. Fire and Building Safety Procedures

The goal is safety at all times. Floor plans and evacuation routes are to be posted in all classrooms. Fire extinguishers are to be placed on each level. In the event of a fire or building emergency, everyone is to leave the building immediately. The DRE will call the fire department if necessary. From the Osgood House, line up along the opposite side of Powderhouse Road until the determination that it is safe to re enter the Osgood House. From the Sanctuary or other Church rooms, line up along the opposite side of Powderhouse Road or along High St. until the determination that it is safe to re enter the building. If children are evacuated from Osgood House during the church service, an adult will notify the minister and parents will be asked to come and attend to their children until it is safe to re enter the Osgood House.
5. Field Trip permission

Permission slip for field trips must be filled out and signed by parent or guardian before a child may leave the church. Form is included at the end of this booklet.
6. Smoking policies

There is no smoking in any of the UU Church of Medford buildings or on the grounds immediately outside. There is no outside smoking at any youth events.

Youth Event Rules and Guidelines

Respect is key

Youth and youth leaders should create a covenant of rules and guidelines before an event. In creating this covenant, keep the following in mind:

As part of the interdependent web of all existence, we as a community must have respect for the entire web. A strong, healthy community requires that we take care of ourselves. This includes having consideration and respect for the physical and emotional well-being of ourselves, each other, the community, and our hosts. In addition, we must have respect for the well-being of the place of gathering and the earth and its resources.

Some rules must be included:

1. State and Local Laws
 - No Alcohol. No Illegal Drugs. No Smoking
2. Rules that Protect Participants' Safety
3. Rules that Protect and Respect the Sites of Conferences and Other Events
 - No fires except in fire circles.
4. Rules that respect and protect the community*
 - Respect yourself and others.
 - No sex or sexual harassment.
 - No walk-ins or leaving the site.

*These rules are sometimes harder to spell out. It helps to keep in mind that in order to create a healthy community it is usually necessary to have rules that allow everyone to feel comfortable in the community. In most states, sexual intercourse is an illegal act for minors. Furthermore, sex is exclusive and makes others feel uncomfortable.

No matter what process you use for deciding which specific rules will be included, it is important that all sides have input.

Forms

1. Primary Screening Form
2. Secondary Screening Form
3. Limited Access Agreement (in the case of an accusation of abuse that involves a person at church)
4. Reference Interview Questions
5. Code of Ethics for adults and older youth working with children and youth
6. Field Trip permission form
7. Injury report form

Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford
Primary Screening Form
Confidential

Name _____ Date _____

Identity must be confirmed with a state drivers license or other photographic identification
(Form of identification used) _____

Present Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____

1) How long have you regularly attended this congregation? _____

2) Please indicate the type of youth or children's work you prefer

3) Please indicate the date you are available to begin _____

4) What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

5) Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? ___yes ___no

If yes, please

explain: _____

(Please attach a separate page, if necessary)

6) Do you have a current driver's license? ___yes ___no

7) License number _____

Prior Church history and Youth Work

1) Names of churches of which you are a member: (List name and address of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years.)

2) List all previous church work involving youth (each church name, address, type of work and all work performed).

3) List all previous non-church work involving youth (each organizations name and address, type of work, and dates).

4) List any goals, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children or you the work.

Personal References (Not former employers or relatives)

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford
Secondary Screening Form
Confidential

The disturbing and traumatic incidence of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect the commitment of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford to provide protective care of all children youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities.

1. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. All adult volunteers working with youth or children are required to attend the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford for a minimum of six months or be members of the church.
3. Adult volunteers should observe the two adult rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without another adult present.
4. Adult volunteers should immediately report any behaviors that seem abusive or inappropriate to the religious education director.

Please answer each question. Your response will be kept fully confidential.

1. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with youth or children?
_____ Yes
_____ No

2. Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime?
_____ Yes (If yes, please describe on the back of this paper.)
_____ No

I have read the above policy and agree to observe the safeguards listed.

Signature Date

Please print name

Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford
LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT
CONFIDENTIAL

Introductory Paragraph in cases of allegation:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Religious Education Director and Minister. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the children and youth in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Minister, the Religious Educator and the members of the Response Team (or other appropriate congregational entity.). It will be kept in a locked file in the office

Introductory Paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.

If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.

Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

You understand that you will not be allowed to volunteer or chaperone events for children and adolescents, including children's religious education classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people.

The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your participation.

Worship services No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Coffee Hour: No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir: No () Yes ()

Adult meetings without children in building: No () Yes ()

Have a key to the building: No () Yes ()

Intergenerational church activities No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Please go to page 2

Limited Access Agreement, page 2

Intergenerational group outings such as ice skating, baseball games, etc:

No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Alone in building with minister or other staff: No () Yes ()

Access to church computer: No () Yes ()

Social activities in other member's homes with children present:

No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Other:

_____ : No () Yes ()

_____ : No () Yes ()

_____ : No () Yes ()

*A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where children and youth may be present.

Agreement:

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care:

Minister, Director of Religious Education, Chair of the Board

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property. I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature Date

Minister Date

Director of Religious Education Date

Board Chair Date

Reference Interview Questions

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR PERSONS UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR POSITIONS IN MINISTRY, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, CHURCH MUSIC, CHURCH ADMINISTRATION, AND CONTACT WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Adapt, as appropriate, if talking with a *personal* reference versus an *employment* reference.

Hello. My name is _____. I'm a member of (name of congregation). (Name of candidate) has applied for the position of (name of position) within our congregation. I have the responsibility to contact individuals who know (him / her) to better understand if (he / she) is a good match for the job.

May I ask you some questions?

1. What is your relationship with (name of candidate)? _____
2. How long have you known him/her? _____
3. Describe the work for which he/she was responsible? _____
4. On a scale of 10 with 10 being the highest, how well did he/she perform in the job? _____
Please elaborate, sharing his/her strongest attributes and areas in which he/she could have performed better.

5. What was/is his/her reason for leaving your employ? _____
6. Would you consider rehiring (name of candidate), if the occasion arose? _____ If no, please explain why? _____
7. To your knowledge, has he/she ever been accused of any behaviors that would be considered unethical, inappropriate, illegal? _____ Please explain: _____
8. (Name of candidate) will be working with children. Is there any reason to believe that children would not be safe with him/her? _____ If yes, please explain:

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS FOR NON-MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES:

How would you describe the applicant's relationship with others? (If talking with a former employer, you might ask specifically about relationships with coworkers, subordinates (if applicable), and with supervisor.

Does the candidate have a positive or a negative attitude? Please elaborate:

The position for which he/she is being considered is (elaborate). How well would you expect him/her to perform in this role?

Are there any other comments you wish to make about this candidate?

ADDITIONAL *RECOMMENDED* QUESTIONS FOR *MINISTERIAL* CANDIDATES

(adapted from the *Ministerial Settlement Resources Guide* of the UUA. [See full text.](#))

1. As far as you know does _____ have clear personal and professional boundaries? i.e. can they say no when too many demands are put upon her/his personal time?
2. Does _____ tend to have a strong support system?
3. Does _____ have strong family ties?
4. Is _____ warm and available to her/his congregants?
5. Is _____ a strong leader?
6. Does _____ implement the vision of the congregation with clarity?
7. Is _____ strong on pastoral care? Describe please.
8. Have you known of a personal life crisis that _____ has had and how did he/she handle it?
9. Have you experienced or do you have a perception of how _____ would handle a difference of opinion issues with a congregant?
10. Have you experienced or do you have a perception of how _____ would handle a difficult pastoral care issue?
11. What is the most significant contribution that _____ has made to the UU ministry?

12. What has been the greatest challenge presented to _____?
13. Is there anything in his/her personal and professional life that we should know?
14. Would you want _____ as your minister?
15. At this point ask the Reference to add whatever they wish to the reference.

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations, and actions.

Date

Name Printed

Name Signed

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford
Field Trip Permission Form**

I, the parent / guardian of _____,

give my permission for him/her to participate in _____.

I understand that transportation may be provided by

_____ private car

_____ bus

_____ walking

_____ public transportation

_____ other

Date

Signature of Parent/guardian

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford
Injury Report**

Date _____

Name of injured person _____

Time of accident _____

Injury _____

Cause of injury _____

Treatment (check if applicable) or fill in: Ice ____ Bandaid ____
Other _____

Parent notified: Yes ____ No ____

Teacher Signature _____

Director of RE Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

**One copy of this form for Director of RE, one copy to go to parent
National Background Checks**

The following agencies provide extensive information on their services on line, including the ability to order services on line:

- o Oxford Document Management Company, Inc.
655 West Highway 10
Anoka, MN 55303-1623
(800) 801-9114
www.oxforddoc.com

Note: The UUA has contracted with this agency to conduct background checks at a reduced cost.

- o Church Mutual Insurance Company's Screen Now program, with services provided by ChoicePoint
3000 Schuster Lane
P.O. Box 357
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
(800) 554-2642
www.churchmutual.com

CORI check—Criminal Offender Record Information (Massachusetts only)

www.eec.state.ma.us/oo_licensing.aspx