


## Child and Youth Safety Policy (2019.03.27)

	<b>Policy of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio</b>	
	Location: Chapter: II. Congregational Responsibilities	Effective Date: 11/19/2014
	Original Source: Safety Policy Task Force, including Scott Schricker (Chair), Lane Campbell (Director of Religious Education), Fujio Hayashi, and Dan Rothert	Date of Origin: 11/19/2014
	Last Reviewed by: Coordinating Team	Date of Review: 03/23/2019
	Last Approved by: Coordinating Team	Date of Approval: 11/19/2014

### A. Purpose and Background

#### 1. Preamble

- I. We, the members of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, as a faith community, recognize the importance of creating an environment where everyone, especially our children and Youth, are safe. Safety is one of our highest priorities particularly with regard to those vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit and the strong reliance and need for volunteers, especially in children and Youth programs.
- II. We recognize the importance of those very factors of trust, welcome and volunteer commitment, and the necessity to adopt procedures to guard against incidents of abuse. We further realize that institutions operating in the best manner possible with all due concern still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free environment.
- III. As a people of faith, we look to our Unitarian Universalist Principles to guide our policy-making. We apply our affirmation of the worth and dignity of all people and our search for justice to these procedures, which support our being together in community.
- IV. We recognize that to adequately address the need for safe environments, it will mean making changes, continually monitoring and updating policies and sacrificing some convenience, yet we know our responsibility to respond to the reality of our situation and to our children and Youth.
- V. In this spirit, we endorse this policy for church-sponsored activities and events.

#### 2. Background

- I. This document has been most recently updated to fill in gaps in accountability and coverage of the policies and to separate a Congregational Safety Policy regarding building and congregational emergency procedures from a Child and Youth Safety Policy focused on people's behavior and Religious Exploration-specific policies.

#### 3. Purpose

- I. This document sets out First UU policy pertaining to:

- a. General Safety and Protection Requirements
  - b. Screening and Selection of Workers with Children and Youth
  - c. Supervision Requirements
  - d. Transporting Children and Youth
  - e. Reporting of Incidents, Incident Response, and Removal of a Worker
  - f. Including Sex Offenders in the Church
- II. It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation to create and maintain a safe environment that supports the growth and welfare of adults, children and Youth in our church programs. Because of the particular vulnerability of children and Youth, much of this policy pertains to situations in which children are in a supervised relationship with congregants other than their parents.
4. Application
- I. This policy applies to all members, friends and congregants and to all First Unitarian Universalist and UUA local, regional, or national sponsored events including those in which children and Youth are present (for example, events sponsored by the Religious Exploration Team, the Adult Programs Team, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), the Central East Region (CER or CERG), and Ohio Meadville Youth or YAC events.

## **B. General Safety and Protection**

1. General Requirements
- I. The Coordinating Team has the responsibility and authority to update and modify the Child and Youth Safety Policy, establish specific safety procedures and make changes in current policies and procedures.
- II. The Coordinating Team has the responsibility and authority to maintain a Response Team consisting of the Associate Minister and the Director/Minister of Religious Exploration (who need not participate simultaneously) and four volunteers who are members of First UU. Volunteer members of the Response Team serve a two-year term, renewable.
- III. The Response Team has the responsibility and authority to respond to an allegation of abuse, an allegation of disruptive behavior under the Healthy Relations Policy, or any other incident or behavior that poses a risk to safety of members of the First UU community, their guests, and visitors. The Response Team includes the Associate Minister and/or the Director/Minister of Religious Exploration (D/MRE) and is accountable to the Coordinating Team.
2. General Safety Preparation
- I. The D/MRE and the Director of Administration (Administrator) have joint responsibility and authority to maintain safety readiness as specified in the Congregational Safety Policy.

- II. The Administrator shall maintain a Safety Team as specified in the Congregational Safety Policy.

### **C. Screening and Selection of Workers with Children and Youth**

1. With the exception of family assisting in their child's program as required or as requested, all other workers, defined as those persons both volunteer and compensated who provide direct care or supervision of children and/or Youth at church events must meet the following criteria:
  - I. Be at least 25 years of age and have been active in the church for at least six months. Youth leaders, who must be partnered with an adult, must be at least 14 years of age.
  - II. Complete an Application Form (available online or by request from the D/MRE), and supply three references. These references must be people who have known the potential worker for at least three years, preferably in relation to previous work with children and Youth. Government-issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, is required.
  - III. Are required to consent to a criminal background check and such check may be performed.
  - IV. Must receive a copy of this Safe Congregation Policy Statement and acknowledge receipt of it in writing.
  - V. Must sign the Code of Ethics/Volunteer Release for Information Form (available online or by request from the D/MRE).
  - VI. Must attend at least one training session, which may be incorporated into a broader orientation session for teachers or Youth leaders that the D/MRE must offer at least once annually, to learn:
    - a. The positive roles adults can play with children and Youth in a religious community
    - b. Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct
    - c. Church policies that govern working with children or Youth
    - d. The rationale behind screening procedures
    - e. Reporting procedures in the case of observed or suspected misconduct.

### **D. On-site Supervision and Teaching Requirements**

1. D/MRE Responsibilities
  - I. The D/MRE has the responsibility and authority to implement the supervision requirements of this section. The D/MRE is accountable to the Associate Minister.
  - II. The D/MRE must establish procedures to support compliance with Parent Responsibilities listed in paragraph (B) of this section.
2. Teacher Responsibilities
  - I. Neither corporal punishment nor shaming is permitted.

- II. No worker or volunteer is to be alone with a child or Youth either on-site or off-site, except as noted in section F. Communication with Children and Youth and section G. Transporting Children and Youth.
  - III. A roaming supervisor (for example: a parent, the D/MRE, or RE Assistant) shall be present in the RE wing during Sunday School to provide supervision for children going to the lavatory.
3. Child and Youth Supervision
- I. There will be a minimum of two adults scheduled to supervise a group of children or Youth.
  - II. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may be made only by the primary on-site adult leader. This policy protects both the children and the adult in that it minimizes the opportunity for abuse as well as minimizes the risk of false accusations. Any other exception to this requirement is allowed only with written permission from the parent or guardian (for example, to transport children from one location to another).
  - III. For the purposes of these requirements a “group” is defined as those children and Youth who have been assigned to a nursery, or individual class or specific program or activity within the context of that class, program or event, as well as Youth who are taking part in a planned, organized component of a program or event.
    - a. The minimum children/Youth-to-adult ratio is as follows:
      - i. Infants through age 3 4:1
      - ii. Age 4 through 7 6:1
      - iii. Age 8 and Older 10:1
    - b. Different ratios apply to off-site overnights as specified in the Youth Events section.
  - IV. The building will not be open to children or Youth for any activity until two adults are present. A child’s parent or guardian is responsible for supervising their child or Youth until two adult supervisors are present in the classroom(s) or in the church building for a church-sponsored activity.
4. Youth Events
- I. In the event of Youth-run/Youth-led events, Youth in a leadership position must sign the Code of Ethics/Volunteer Release for Information Form (available online or by request from the D/MRE) and submit it to the D/MRE.
  - II. Youth under the age of 18 who are attending a UUA Central East Region event or local UU-sponsored event must have an on-site sponsor. The registrar of each event is expected to verify to the best of their ability that each Youth has an adult sponsor, but the D/MRE must communicate the sponsor policy to the parents and guardians of First UU Youth.
- III. Youth Overnights and Off-Site Events

- a. For overnight youth events, at least one adult (age 25 or older) must be present for every six Junior High youth and one adult for every eight Senior High youth. For other, non-overnight but off-site, church-sponsored field trips, there must be at least one adult for every five children.
  - b. Overnight events sponsored by the church must have at least two adult advisors of different genders.
  - c. For each youth participant in an overnight, a Blanket Permission Form will be kept on file with a copy of the youth's health insurance card.
5. Reporting Requirements
- I. In case of a minor injury requiring a band-aid or less, the teacher or adult leader is permitted to treat the injured child and notify the child's parent or guardian following the class or activity.
  - II. In case of a more serious injury, the teacher or adult leader is required to notify the child's parent or guardian immediately and to call emergency services if necessary. The teacher or adult leader must inform the D/MRE or RE assistant as soon as possible and must make a written incident report.

#### **E. Parent Responsibilities**

- 1. The parent or guardian of a child in Sunday School is responsible for supervising the child before and after classes.
  - I. The parent or guardian of a child age 7 or younger must pick up the child promptly after the worship service ends and must sign the child in and out of the classroom.
  - II. The parent or guardian of an 8-11 year old may arrange with the teacher to have their child dismissed independently, but the arrangement must be in writing.
- 2. A child's parent or guardian is responsible for supervising their child or Youth until two adult supervisors are present in the classroom(s) or in the church building for a church-sponsored activity.
- 3. A parent or guardian must fill out a Pick-up Authorization Form the first day they bring a child to RE classes.
- 4. The parent or guardian of child under age 7 must sign the child in and out with the classroom teacher.
- 5. Parents visiting for the first time must fill out a Visitor Form.
- 6. Parent or guardian presence during church-sponsored events.
  - I. The parent or guardian of children age 7 and younger must remain on church premises.
  - II. The parent or guardian of children ages 8-13 must remain within five minutes of the church premises and provide direct contact information (cell phone number, for example) to teachers/supervisors.

- III. Parents of older children may drop their children off for services or activities so long as they provide direct contact information and must pick them up following services or activities.
  - IV. Children and Youth whose behavior indicates a need for greater parental involvement may be required by the D/MRE or classroom teachers to remain onsite or in closer proximity than their age placement would normally indicate.
  - V. If a child's parent or guardian cannot be located, the D/MRE or delegate will contact appropriate authorities.
7. Medications: A parent or guardian is the only person authorized to administer medication (prescription or over-the-counter) to their children. Under no circumstances are church staff or volunteers authorized to administer medication.
  8. Allergies: The parent or guardian must note on the child's registration form any serious or life-threatening allergy, including any food allergy. The D/MRE is responsible for and has the authority to make this information known to the teachers/supervisors to assure adequate monitoring in the case of snacks, presence of insects, and other risks of exposure to the allergen. For further information, please see the Allergens Policy.

#### **F. Communication with Children and Youth**

1. Employees and volunteers who supervise children are not to have private communication with children via social media, electronic, or other means, except as provided in subparagraph 5 of this paragraph.
2. Acceptable social media and electronic communication includes group emails or Facebook Pages and Groups pertaining to church groups or activities.
3. Vulgar, harassing, or defamatory content or links are prohibited in any communication.
4. No adult acting as a teacher, mentor, or representative of the church shall engage in private one-to-one phone or digital communication with any child or Youth. If direct communication is to occur via social media, or electronic communication, a parent, guardian, or the D/MRE should be notified in advance that the private communication will occur and its intended purpose. A parent, D/MRE, or another adult teacher should be included in any communication, with at least 3 people (2 adults and one Youth or at least two Youth and one adult) being included in all communications.
5. Any one-to-one personal interactions within or outside the church must take place in a public place, unless a parent or guardian has given specific permission for an activity to occur in a semi-private setting (for example, a minister's office with a window, an outdoor public hiking trail, or a classroom with a glass wall).

#### **G. Transporting Children and Youth**

1. It is a joint responsibility of the church and parents or guardians to provide safe transportation to and from all church events. The D/MRE has the responsibility and authority to implement the reporting requirements of this section.
2. Youth and children being transported are permitted to ride only with adults who meet the requirements of this section.
3. The driver of a vehicle containing minors other than the driver's own children must be at least 25 years of age and must provide proof of insurance, a valid driver's license, and fill out a Drivers Form (Section 7, E). The driver for a church activity is not permitted to drive a vehicle with only one adult and one child unless that child is the driver's own child.
4. A vehicle used to transport children or youth must have enough functioning seat belts for everyone and everyone must wear a seat belt. When transporting young children, the driver must follow the state's laws for the use of car seats and booster seats. This seat belt requirement takes priority over the requirement for two adults to be in each vehicle, provided, however, that upon arrival at the off-site destination, a minimum of two adults must accompany a group of children or youth. This exception does not apply if the driver and a child or youth will be the only persons traveling in the vehicle.
5. Emergency contact information (including name of physician, health insurance information, and consent to treat in case of an emergency) must accompany all minors who are being transported by adults other than their parents. During travel, a copy of the Blanket Permission form will be kept by the driver of the vehicle, or the responsible adult traveling with a group using an alternate form of transportation (for example, bus or train). Each adult driver will leave the names of all children accompanying them and an emergency contact number, such as cell phone or pager, with the D/MRE.
6. A driver is not permitted to transport children or youth if the driver is sleep-deprived, has consumed alcohol within 8 hours, or has used any form of drug that may, during the time of transportation, affect the driver's physical or mental performance.

#### **H. Reporting of Incidents, Response, and Removal of a Worker with Children and Youth**

1. Responsibility
  - I. The D/MRE has the responsibility and authority to implement the reporting requirements of this section.
2. Definitions of Abuse
  - I. Staff and volunteers who work with children and youth on a regular basis are to be trained to recognize child abuse, generally defined as the following:
    - a. Physical Abuse – bodily injury to a person. This includes, but is not limited to hitting, biting, scalding, burning, strangulation, or suffocation.
    - b. Physical Neglect – the failure to adequately provide the essentials of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care.

- c. Sexual Abuse – the exploitation of a child or youth for the gratification of an adult. It includes, but is not limited to inappropriate touching, intercourse, incest, rape, and sodomy as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, and the use of children in pornography.
  - d. Emotional maltreatment – the failure to provide the love, care, support, and guidance necessary for healthy psychological development. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal abuse, such as excessive teasing, belittling, and rejection.
3. Response Team
- I. Maintenance of the Response Team
    - a. The Response Team described in section (B), paragraph (II) of this policy is to be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of the church upon request to any minister or the D/MRE.
  - II. Responsibilities of the Response Team:
    - a. The Response Team, individually and collectively, offers confidential support, advice, and counsel, with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The team may serve as a resource for children, Youth or adult survivors of sexual abuse, victims of violence, or perpetrators who are in treatment, and can assist in connecting them to ministerial staff should they look to their religious community for support until a professional counselor can be identified.
    - b. The Response Team aids in filing a report to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services if a member of the congregation observes or has reasonable cause to suspect behavior they believe constitutes abuse of a child, or if someone discloses abuse.
    - c. The Response Team recommends changes in this policy or its procedures.
    - d. If there is an allegation of a violation of this Safety Policy or the Healthy Relations Policy, or an allegation of the endangerment of a member of the First UU community, visitor, or guest, the Response Team has the responsibility and authority to evaluate the allegation and to determine whether a limitation of access is appropriate.
    - e. The Response Team shall report decisions to limit the access or make a report to authorities regarding the actions of members, friends, visitors, or guests to the Coordinating Team.
4. Reporting Procedures.
- I. A First UU paid staff member or a volunteer, whether adult or youth, who acquires knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more adult, child, or youth at a church event has been sexually molested or exploited, injured, or the victim of significant objectionable conduct must:



- a. Immediately report the incident to a Minister, the D/MRE, or Response Team member.
  - b. The Response Team will follow the incident report procedure.
  - c. An incident report must be made within 24 hours following the incident or notice thereof.
- II. If a person who is not a First UU staff member or volunteer acquires knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that a child, youth, or adult has been sexually molested, exploited, injured, or been a victim of significant objectionable conduct, that person is encouraged to follow the procedure outlined above, beginning with the first step, by reporting the incident to a Minister, the D/MRE, or a Response Team member.
5. Confidentiality
- I. Although First UU encourages reporting of all concerns or suspicions of child abuse, harassment, or other inappropriate conduct, all staff and volunteers subject to reporting requirements must carry out the reporting responsibility in a manner that allows for maximum confidentiality so that no one need fear retaliation or recrimination.
6. Youth Who May Be Abusers
- I. 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. If an older child forces sex or any sexual behavior on a younger child or exposes their 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, the situation should be further investigated.
  - II. Definition of Sexual Behavior
    - a. "Sexual behavior includes, but is not limited to: open mouth or prolonged kissing, touching of genitals, buttocks, breasts, and nipples, and any touch meant to arouse the other person. This includes sexualized public displays of affection, nudity of any kind, and clothing that would not be considered appropriate for public spaces (ie, underwear, see through clothing). It also includes inappropriate use of social media including but not limited to sexting, snapchat, facebook, twitter and tumblr postings of sexualized photos, sexualized games, persons undressing or in sexualized poses, or bullying of any kind." (citation: UUA, Central East Region definition of "sexual behavior" via the UUA website)
  - III. If such an incident comes to the attention of the minister, the D/MRE, or member of the Response Team, the D/MRE (or other Response Team member, if appropriate) is required to initiate contact individually with the parent or guardian of the children involved to discuss the allegation and next steps. Depending on state law and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to contact Child Protective Services.

- IV. Before an alleged perpetrator who is a child is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive a thorough assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist with experience with children with sexual behavior problems. It is NOT the responsibility of a minister, D/MRE, or the Response Team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place. The D/MRE, in consultation with the Response Team, may decide to remove the child from religious education during this time, a decision that should take into account that the child shall not be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete.
  - V. For an alleged perpetrator who is a teenager, the D/MRE, in consultation with the Response Team, may remove the teenager from religious education or limit their access in accordance with limited access as defined for adults in section 6.
7. False Accusations
    - I. Protecting adults who teach in the Religious Exploration program or otherwise interact with children at church from false or mistaken allegations is also an important goal of this policy. A key way to prevent false or mistaken allegations is to abide by the prevention guidelines outlined in the Supervision portion of this policy (section D). The D/MRE and the Response Team must be sensitive to the disruption and damage a false accusation may cause to both the adults and the children involved. This is true even when the accusation is one due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of what seems a child's straightforward report of an event.
  8. Other Inappropriate Behavior
    - I. Some incidents or allegations in RE or other programs for children, youth, or adults may involve behavior that is not clearly child abuse, sexual misconduct, or other behavior obviously in violation of this Safety Policy or the Disruptive Policy, but may be in some other way deemed inappropriate by a parent, by the D/MRE, or by a member of the First UU community. In such cases, the Associate Minister or the D/MRE has the responsibility and authority to call the Response Team together to review the situation and decide what action to take.
  9. Reporting to Police in Response to Criminal Behavior
    - I. When an allegation of neglect, abuse, or harm to a person constitutes a crime, a report must be made to the police, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, or both.
  10. Role of the Senior Minister
    - I. The Senior Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Columbus will be informed about any allegation of sexual abuse in which the Response Team is involved. Identities of the victim, accused, and reporter may be kept confidential to the Ministers and Response Team.

- II. If a staff member is accused of misconduct, the Senior Minister, as head of staff, will make the final determination of any additional consequences appropriate to the violation of this policy, including, but not limited to, termination of employment.
  - III. If the Senior Minister is alleged to have engaged in misconduct, the Response Team is required to make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which has the responsibility and authority to make a determination of the consequences.
11. Removal of a Person who Works with Children or Youth
- I. If there the D/MRE has reasonable suspicion that a person is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, the D/MRE must take immediate steps to remove that person from involvement or contact with children or youth. Anyone who has concerns about a staff member or volunteer who works with children or youth must immediately contact the D/MRE or another Minister. The D/MRE and other Ministers have the discretion to consult as appropriate, including with Response Team, to determine whether action is necessary.
  - II. In acting to remove, the D/MRE and Ministers must afford the accused person an opportunity to know the accusations, the evidence supporting the accusations, and their right to reply to or rebut such charges, but this process need not occur in advance of temporary but immediate removal. If the accused person disputes the allegations, the Response Team has the authority to make a determination and recommend action to the Senior Minister (in the case of paid staff) or the D/MRE (in the case of a volunteer). Our Unitarian Universalist principles, which call on us to honor compassion in our relationships with each other, must guide the actions and decisions of the Response Team and the Ministers.
  - III. The Ministers and the Response Team are required to handle any removal process with due caution and discretion.
  - IV. The Coordinating Team and the Board of Trustees are expected to extend their support and backing to the Response Team and the Ministers who determine to remove a person from the RE program for children and youth or more widely from congregational participation. In considering whether a person is a risk to the First UU community, the following circumstances support the Response Team's decision to exclude a person from all congregational activity:
    - a. Refusal of permission for a minister to contact their treatment provider and/or parole officer.
    - b. Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
    - c. Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at high risk of recidivism.
    - d. Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement (for an example, see Resources in section 7).
    - e. Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

- V. Once an individual decides that they can comply with these conditions, the process would begin again to reassess the individual and see if they could be welcomed into the life of the congregation anew.

## 12. Procedures.

- I. The Response Team will recommend procedures that outline specific responses to allegations of abuse.

### **I. Policy for Including Sex Offenders in the Church**

1. This policy balances the need for the First UU community to be inclusive and the need to maintain a safe environment for all adults and children. This policy recognizes that striking this balance can be delicate and divisive. Many members may be victims of abuse; unknown sex offenders are likely present in the church; and sex offenders, identified or not, have spiritual needs and the need for community.
2. The Response Team, in collaboration with the Ministers and the D/MRE, has the responsibility and authority to establish procedures for limited access agreements to separate sex offenders from vulnerable populations within the church, especially children.  
Sex offenders:
  - I. Must be supervised by a reliable ‘buddy’ at all times
  - II. Must have limited contact with children
  - III. Must not enter the RE classroom wings of the building
3. The Ministers and the Response Team will evaluate each individual and situation on a case-by-case basis as sex offenders become known to them. In some cases, complete exclusion may be appropriate; in others, limited access to worship services and Church activities may be appropriate as outlined above.

### **J. Resources**

1. The D/MRE will maintain documents and procedures to support the Safety Policy and make them available via the website and upon request to any member or friend of the congregation.

### **K. Names and Acronyms**

1. Children are people under the age of 18 in legal terms, but are most often those under the age of 13 in the programmatic language of the congregation.
2. “Youth” are those between the ages of 13 and 18, including those who are 18 but have not yet graduated from high school and attend the Youth programming of the congregation.
3. The “D/MRE” is the Director or Minister of Religious Exploration.

### **L. Revision History**

1. This policy was created in 2014 and heavily revised in 2017.
2. The policy was revised in 2019 to make the sections and definitions consistent with the formatting of all church policies and to fill gaps in supervision and make our policies consistent with regional and national best practices regarding communication with Youth. This revision also filled in a gap in response to abuse which is alleged to be perpetrated by a Youth.