

# UUCB Safer Congregation

## Manual of Policies and Procedures for Supervision of Children and Youth

*Our Religious Education programs for children and youth entail a high degree of responsibility for the adults working directly and peripherally with the young people. All of us in the congregation teach our children not just how to be Unitarian Universalist but, perhaps more importantly, how to live in a Unitarian Universalist community, a community that gives to, cares for, critiques, affirms, questions, and blesses those within its fold.*

*Thus, for a people who expect their adults to be faith-keepers, trust-builders, and caregivers, it is easy to see why it is so important for us to be clear about how adults interact with children. Our responsibility to nurture spiritually and emotionally the children in our community is huge. With the stakes so high, we must not fail to guard them adequately against physical and emotional abuse. Will we safeguard against every perceivable abuse? This is not likely. However, we can significantly reduce the risk by creating and following preventative policies.*

*When we create explicit guidelines for appropriate behavior, we define the values that are important to us as religious people. Our statements about safe relationships create a structure in which our religious community can thrive.*

*—Rev. Tera Klein and Laurel Amabile*

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# Policy Statement

Safety for all is a priority for Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana (UUCB). Even though the congregation and its leadership recognizes that we cannot make any venue 100% safe, we are committed to ensure that UUCB gatherings, programs, and activities are as safe as possible. We are especially attentive to the safety of vulnerable populations such as (but not limited to) children, youth, and older adults. The following safety guidelines speak to our dedication to safety and our special attention to children and youth as a vulnerable population.

In this document “child” will mean anyone aged from infancy to 12 years, and “youth” will mean anyone aged from 12 up to and including 17 years.

## **We will achieve our safety goals through:**

- Screening and training all church staff and volunteers who work with children or youth.
- Supervising our children and youth and those who work with them.
- Providing a specific process by which allegations of abuse are reported and investigated.
- Treating all persons with dignity and respect.
- Requiring those at risk of incident or accusation to refrain from contact with children or youth.

These policies are directed at those working with our children or youth. However all UUCB members carry a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social and intellectual growth are encouraged.

We are committed to the care of our children and youth, and to the principles of fairness, kindness and forgiveness that have long been part of our religious tradition. The Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) will periodically make the congregation aware of these policies and procedures. Each person working with our children and youth will be screened in accordance with this policy, under the leadership of the DLRE and minister, who may delegate tasks to responsible individuals.

## Screening and Training of Staff and Volunteers

This policy applies to all committees, task forces and organizations that function under the umbrella of Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana. It also applies to other groups and events sponsored by UUCB and using the facility. For example, if a youth conference is held at Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana, all adult advisors must complete the screening process described below or be screened by their church, denomination, or another organization satisfactory to the DLRE and Lead Minister. This policy does not apply to non-church groups using church facilities whether for a fee or not.

## Application to work with children and youth

All potential employees and volunteers interested in positions involving work with children and/or youth must submit an Application for Paid or Volunteer Employment form. Finalists for each position will be asked to allow a background check from a third party.

At least two people from the reference list must be contacted and their responses recorded in writing.

## Processes for new hires and volunteers:

- At least every third year, and as often as annually, employees and volunteers working with children and/or youth will undergo a new background check.
- Each person who is working with children and youth must read and sign The Code of Ethics Statement (see sample in the appendix)
- Each employee will supply a copy of a photo identification.
- Each person will sign a statement noting that they received a copy of UUCB's Safer Congregation Policies and have read them in their entirety, and will agree to act in accordance.

## “Two-Person Rule”

At least two unrelated adults, who are not in a relationship with each other, are required to be present at all times as teachers/volunteers for religious education, youth group, children and teen choirs, and other children or teen activities in the congregation. For example, a third staffer would need to be present with a wife/husband team in the nursery.

One adult should never be alone with a child or in a classroom, and, under no circumstances, is a child to be left in a classroom or anywhere unattended. This protects children from abuse, and it protects our children's ministry volunteers from accusation.

## Implementation Specifics

- The DLRE will be responsible for overseeing completion of the appropriate paperwork, except where noted.

- Anyone expressing interest in ongoing volunteer work with children or youth in the church first must have been involved in worship or other congregational community for at least six months unless the minister and DLRE determine otherwise after screening.
- Those working with Junior and Senior High youth groups (6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) should be at least 25 years of age. The Director of Lifespan Religious Education must approve workers below the age of 25. Those youth working in the nursery must be at least 14 years of age, and those aged 14-17 must always work with someone who is at least 18 years of age.
- Records will be kept in a secure location. Paper files may be shredded after three years if digital format has been created.
- Conviction of any of the following offenses does not preclude an individual from working with children and youth. Instead, the lead minister, DLRE, and President of the Board of Directors will use the information to decide if and how the person is allowed to work with children and youth. The decision must be unanimous. It is possible that the answer is that they are not allowed to work with children and youth. (1) Any offenses involving illegal drugs (2) any sex offense, (3) any felony within the past 12 years, or (4) any offense involving violence against any person.
- In the case of a potential or existing church staff member, conviction of (1) any offense involving illegal drugs (2) any sex offense, (3) any felony within the past 12 years, or (4) any offense involving violence against any person, the potential or existing staff member will not be hired or will be terminated
- If it is determined by the Lead Minister, DLRE, and President of the Board of Directors that a potential volunteer or other congregant should have restricted access to children or youth, he/she/they will be required to sign and follow a limited access agreement, with such restrictions and limitations as will be required by the minister, DLRE, and President of the Board of Directors. The level of restriction and limitation will depend of the level of offense and the perceived danger to children or youth. A registered sex offender will not be allowed to have any further contact with children or youth. A registered sex offender might be eligible for a Limited Access Agreement, if agreed by the lead minister, DLRE, and President of the Board of Directors, or could be banned from participation in all church activities if determined by unanimous agreement of the lead minister, DLRE, and President of the Board of Directors.
- The Lead Minister will keep on file indefinitely all information required to be gathered by this policy in secure locations in accordance with current church record keeping procedures.

## Training

**Every person working with children and youth will attend a yearly training or take a comparable online training designed or approved by the DLRE or lead minister. The training will include:**

- The definition of child abuse,
- Sexual and physical abuse symptoms,
- What constitutes inappropriate conduct,
- What are appropriate boundaries
- Church policies and practices that govern working with children or youth,

- That there are civil and criminal consequences of misconduct,
- Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct, and
- The rationale behind screening procedures.

## **Children and Youth Supervision Requirements**

### **Nursery and any gathering with children ages 0-5**

- Nursery and early childhood programming will follow the same protocols as outlined in the *Children and Youth Safety and Supervision* section below.
- In addition, all children supervised in programming for children ages 0-5 will be signed in and out by the responsible adult. Records of sign in and sign out forms will be kept in a file in the locked DLRE office. These forms can also be digitized and safely kept in accordance with current church record keeping procedures.
- Church functions providing childcare require at least two screened childcare workers. One worker must be at least 18 years old. The second child care worker must be at least 14 years old. There should be at least one child care worker for every 5 children.

### **Children and Youth Safety and Supervision**

- At every church sponsored activity where there are children and youth present without their parents and caregivers in the same room, there will be at least 2 unrelated screened adults supervising and/or leading the program.
- An intentional and well-communicated check-in and check-out process will be created each year based on the needs of the participants, caregivers and leaders.
- Visibility and access into classrooms must be maintained at all times.
- For Sunday morning programs, a DLRE/ Religious Education Associate and /or designee will circulate in the RE classroom area and monitor classroom activities randomly during the regular RE classes.
- All UUCB outings and events, onsite or offsite, will follow the same safer congregations regulations as stated in this document. Participating children and youth must have a formal permission form signed by a parent or guardian.
- The lead minister and DLRE will stay abreast of Indiana Mandated Reporters laws and follow them accordingly.

### **Diapering, Bathroom Use, and Toileting**

The “two person” rule applies when diapering children and during bathroom trips. Diapers should be changed in the nursery, where two unrelated adults are present. Under no circumstances should one volunteer take a child into a bathroom or other separate room for a diaper change. Children over age 4 are expected to take care of their own bathroom needs or request the assistance of their parent/caregiver if necessary.

When a child with special needs requires additional toileting assistance, their parents or another certified guardian should be located.

## Food Allergies and Children's Safety

Food is often a part of congregational life. Meals, potlucks, coffee hour, and classroom snacks can all pose a potential threat to persons with severe food allergies. We strive to keep children and youth safe through communication with parents about their children’s allergies, documenting relevant information and action plans and ensuring access to that documentation for all who work with affected children/youth, and training volunteers and staff.

1. Communication between leaders, parents, and children about the child’s specific allergies. Parents will describe all known food allergies on each child’s annual registration form, and will update that information throughout the year as necessary. The DLRE will follow up with any questions about the allergy. Parents will fill out an Allergy Action Plan form for each child who may experience a severe allergic reaction.
2. Documentation of the child’s allergies and who will have access to those records. Each child’s allergies reported by parents will be listed in the class roster book, which will be kept in the classroom accessible to all volunteers and staff working with that class. An Allergy Action Plan will also be included for each child who may experience a severe allergic reaction.
3. Volunteer and staff training will include education on common food allergies, how to recognize the signs and symptoms of allergies, how to minimize risk of allergic reactions, and what to do in case of allergic reaction.



# Supervision Requirements for Field Trips, Youth Gatherings, Vehicle Rides, and Sleepovers

Procedures for field trips, youth gatherings, vehicle rides, and sleepovers will follow the Unitarian Universalist Association and MidAmerica Protocols and recommendations whenever appropriate.

- Permission slip and medical release form is required for each child or youth.
- All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must have an approved background check including a drivers background check.
- Every driving adult will provide proof of adequate insurance.
- Every person transported in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt or be restrained in an appropriate car seat.
- Drivers should have two or more children or youth in the car when they are transporting children and youth to and from activities. The only exception is when the driver is transporting a child or youth with prior parent approval and notification of the DLRE or minister
- The DLRE will develop written procedures for supervision for field trips, youth gatherings, vehicle rides and sleepovers.
- There must be two adults at any late night or overnight event at Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana. There will be at least one adult for every 5 youth in attendance.
- All night events will develop a protocol where supervising adults take turns being awake and present for youth.

## Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

### Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol

Children and youth are prohibited from using tobacco, drugs or alcohol, and must not be allowed to engage in illegal behavior while participating in church – sanctioned activities. Volunteers and paid staff should, at all times, be aware that their own behavior is a powerful statement to children and youth.

Adults, while actively supervising children and youth at a church sponsored event or gathering, must not consume alcohol, use illegal drugs, or use tobacco products.

Whenever alcohol is present at a UUCB event, adults of legal drinking age (21 and older) who are consuming alcohol are expected to do so in a responsible manner, which does not endanger themselves or others.

## Communication

All communication, regardless of the method, between adults and children and youth **must be AND appear to be** above reproach. It is highly recommended that all communication with youth include either parent or caregivers unless explicit written permission to communicate directly with youth has been provided by parents and caregivers and approved by DLRE or religious education staff (i.e. youth coordinator). In the permission, the mode of communication must be identified.

## Rules for Youth Events and Lock-ins

These rules and suggestions should be reviewed by youth and advisors who work with you on a regular basis. They will be the rules used at late nights, sleepovers, lock-ins and any youth event at the church. When away at an event it is expected that the youth follow the rules stated in the signed covenant of the event.

1. If coming late, notify organizers, as there will be a clear start time.
2. Do not bring, use, or arrive under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances.
3. Refrain from any sexualized behavior. There is a ZERO tolerance policy.
4. NO means NO.
5. Be aware of personal space. Make sure there is no pair-wise space.
6. Maintain the wearing of appropriate clothing at all times. Dress as if you are going to school in front of parents. Upper and lower torso must be covered at all times.
7. The bringing or use of weapons, fireworks, explosives or flammable items is prohibited.
8. No pets.
9. Consuming or bringing energy drinks or pills is not allowed.
10. Events have clear end times. Youth are not allowed to leave church without the agreement of one supervisor.
11. Be sure to take care of yourself.
12. Be careful not to break the law.
13. Do not take photos, video, or audio or post pictures without the permission of all the people in the photo video or audio conversation. (Think of the Vegas Rule)
14. No sexting on cell phones will be allowed.
15. There will be designated sleeping spaces: Loud and quiet. NO SLEEPING ELSEWHERE. Supervising adults will work with the youth to develop a plan so that adults are available and present.

## Safe Spaces for Youth Pastoral Care

Because of the power disparities and the potential for boundary violation in pastoral care conversations between adults and youth, adults will engage in these recommended practices to create a supportive, appropriately confidential, and safer space for youth:

- Choose a space for pastoral care and conversation that is easily observable by others. If it's in a minister's study or religious educator's office, the door should have a window and/or be ajar.
- There should be someone else working nearby in the building, such as a church administrator who understands the importance of maintaining the privacy of the young person visiting as well as the safety of the space.
- A pastoral conversation could take place at a crowded coffee shop or mall, where the participants (especially the adult) are visible to others and the noise provides privacy.

## Child Abuse Prevention in church sponsored activities, programs and gatherings

UUCB recognizes the reality of child abuse in our society, its impact on children and families, and the need for a responsible means of addressing this issue. By overcoming secrecy and by providing a framework for addressing problems and concerns, we reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

Child abuse means the non-accidental injury, sexual abuse (both touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances that indicate that the child's health, welfare or safety are harmed.

## Reporting and Responding Procedures

Inform and consult with the Lead Minister and/or the DLRE as soon as possible. However, according to Indiana law, all adults are mandated reporters and must report suspected child abuse or neglect directly to the Indiana Department of Child Services

(<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>) (1-800-800-5556)

If the report involves a church employee, volunteer, or youth then the minister, the board president, and the DLRE shall additionally:

- Collect and review all pertinent facts regarding the incident or charges;
- Review application and reference forms kept on the person;
- Carefully document all meetings, conversations, information, etc. regarding the matter, and keep all related information as confidential as the circumstances warrant.
- In the event that knowledge of the incident becomes public, the minister and the board president will designate a spokesperson for the church. The spokesperson will use the text of a prepared statement to answer the news media and convey the incident to the congregation, taking care to safeguard the privacy of all parties involved.
- The minister, the board president and the DLRE will carefully document the handling of the incident, and report the incident, as appropriate, immediately to the child's or youth's parents and inform the church's insurance company.
- The minister, the board president, and the DLRE (or one of them) will consult an attorney for advice as to what steps are necessary or prudent to protect the interests of the children and the church.
- The minister, the board president and the DLRE will determine how to address the incident within the congregation with an understanding that transparency is better than secrecy
- If the accused is the minister, DLRE or board president, that person will be removed from the decision-making process for the review of the alleged abuse, and the remaining two will select a third person as a replacement to conduct this process.
- In the event that the charges involve a minister, the board president will then notify and consult with MidAmerica Regional Staff and/or the UUA Department of Ministry.

## Actions by the Church Regarding Allegations of Abuse

If the minister, board president and DLRE unanimously conclude that allegations of child abuse, personal abuse or neglect are more likely true than not, then they will notify the appropriate Indiana authorities per Indiana law. They will also provide written documentation on the decision to be kept in a locked file or secure digital location. This written document will include a description of the incident, the decision, follow up action items, and who is included in the communication.

In addition, the minister, board president, and DLRE may do any of the following:

- Require a limited access agreement which includes supervision requirements. If these allegations are against a person under the age of 18, then restrictions from regular youth gatherings and future lock-ins or CONS may be a part of the limited access agreement. If the person is under the age of 18, their parents or caregiver must be a part of the negotiations of the limited access agreement.
- Determine who in the church and the larger community should be notified, and means of notification;
- Suspend or terminate volunteer duties or membership, or in the case of an employee, suspend or terminate employment. If termination of membership is recommended, they will report the decision to the Board of Directors, and inform the individual of the right to appeal the decision to that body.
- Take any other action(s) that, in the opinion of the minister, DLRE, and board president, would be in the interests of the church, the church community, or children or youth.

## Procedures for Working with and Caring for a Person against Whom Allegations of Abuse or Neglect Have Been Made

- Throughout the review process, the accused will be treated with dignity and respect.
- If the accused is a paid staff person or a volunteer, that person will be suspended immediately from all activities involving the supervision or care of children, youth or other vulnerable persons. If the accused is a youth allegedly involved in sexual misconduct, he or she will be suspended from all youth activities. This is true for an incident that allegedly occurred either within or outside the realm of the church.
- Regardless of where or under what circumstances any incident is alleged to occur, if the minister, DLRE, and board president have placed restrictions upon an employee, volunteer or youth those restrictions will remain in effect until all allegations have been cleared.
- The minister, DLRE and board president may remove the person from service at their discretion, and for employees, that removal may be with or without pay. The youth may be removed from

the youth gatherings, lock-ins, CONS and children and youth religious education programs for one or more meetings.

## Procedures for Working with and Caring for a Person Who Has Engaged in Abuse, Neglect, or Inappropriate Behavior

Because we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we do not believe any person should be automatically excluded from participation because of his or her actions. However, we have a responsibility to ensure the well-being of all of our attendees. The ability of some perpetrators to change their behavior is uncertain. If someone wishes to participate in this church who has been convicted of abuse or neglect, we will welcome that individual to the extent that their participation does not compromise the safety of others. However, the person's participation may be limited to ensure the safety of all.

If it is determined that any person should have restricted access to children, youth or other populations, he/she will be required to sign a limited access agreement, and will not be allowed to have access to children, youth or other populations except as consistent with that agreement. The minister, DLRE, and board president will determine if a limited access agreement is necessary, and the terms of that agreement.

## Monitoring Policies and Procedures

This policy should be routinely communicated to the Religious Education Development Team, Connections Coordinator, and all volunteers who work with children and youth. This policy should be posted on the church website and annually be placed in some form of church communication.

The lead minister and DLRE will determine who is responsible for implementing screening procedures, and initial training for all volunteers working with children and youth, and the lead minister will ensure that all staff are up to date on the most current guideline. The Board will see that these responsibilities are performed.

The DLRE, lead minister, and board of trustees will review this policy every two years to be sure it is up to date and appropriate for the current congregation.

*This version is adopted on \_\_\_\_\_ by*

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# Appendix

- Code of Ethics
- Children and Youth Participation Release and Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Rules for Youth Events and Lock-ins
- Protocol for Reporting Suspected Abuse
- Training for Staff Members, RE Teachers, Youth Advisors and Child Care Workers
- Limited Access Agreement
- Annual Notice for UUCB Regarding the Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures for Supervision of Children and Youth
- Religious Education Program Accident Report Form

**Code of Ethics**

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth  
Who are in leadership roles with children/youth  
(adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1986)

Unitarian Universalist Church Of Bloomington, Indiana, Inc.

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles 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 to positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the 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 will they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth, which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders will 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.

When any minister, adult leader, child care employee, church school teacher or other person working under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, IN has reason to suspect that a youth or child under 18 has been the victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, these suspicions will be immediately reported to the President of the Congregation, one of the ministers, or a professional staff person of the church.

I have read and understand the above statement and the expectations that it places on me.

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SIGNED

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POSITION

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DATE



# Children and Youth Participation Release and Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment

I, \_\_\_\_\_, represent that I am the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_. I grant permission for my child/youth to participate in the following supervised activity:

\_\_\_\_\_

This activity will take place at \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM to \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_. I also grant permission for my child/youth to be transported to and from the location.

I know that Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana (UUCB) will do everything in their power to keep my child safe. I agree to hereby release Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana (UUCB) from any and all liability which may arise from damages, loss or injuries, either to person or property, which my child/youth or I may sustain while my child/youth or I engage in the activity conducted including, but not limited to, any damages, loss or injuries that may be sustained through transportation to and from the activity, except that this release will not apply to any damages, loss or injuries covered by liability insurance of the. I further agree to assume responsibility for any liability that may arise from damage to property caused or contributed to by my child.

Should any injury or illness occur, I grant permission for my child/youth listed above to receive treatment from a health care provider to be selected by a supervisor of the activity, when in such supervisor's opinion the need for such treatment is immediate, and when efforts to contact me/us are unsuccessful. I also agree to pay and be responsible for all medical, hospital or other expenses that may be incurred as a result of such treatment.

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Family Physician \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance Provider and Record Number \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Medication child is currently taking:



**I HAVE PROVIDED ALL NECESSARY MEDICATIONS FOR MY CHILD OR YOUTH, INCLUDING WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PHYSICIAN REGARDING SUCH MEDICATION. MYCHILD OR YOUTH WILL HAVE THE MEDICATIONS WITH HIM OR HER, AND MY CHILD/YOUTH IS CAPABLE OF SELF-ADMINISTERING THE MEDICATION OR I HAVE PROVIDED INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF MEDICATION, WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HAS APPROVED FOR THIS ACTIVITY.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Rules for Youth Events and Lock-ins

These rules and suggestions should be reviewed by youth and advisors who work with you on a regular basis. They will be the rules used at late nights, sleepovers, lock-ins and any youth event at the church. When away at an event it is expected that the youth follow the rules stated in the signed covenant of the event.

1. If coming late, notify organizers, as there will be a clear start time.
2. Do not bring, use, or arrive under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances.
3. Refrain from any sexualized behavior. There is a ZERO tolerance policy.
4. NO means NO.
5. Be aware of personal space. Make sure there is no pair-wise space.
6. Maintain the wearing of appropriate clothing at all times. Dress as if you are going to school in front of parents. Upper and lower torso must be covered at all times.
7. The bringing or use of weapons, fireworks, explosives or flammable items is prohibited.
8. No pets.
9. Consuming or bringing energy drinks or pills is not allowed.
10. Events have clear end times. Youth are not allowed to leave church without the agreement of one supervisor.
11. Be sure to take care of yourself.
12. Be careful not to break the law.
13. Do not take photos, video, or audio or post pictures without the permission of all the people in the photo video or audio conversation. (Think of the Vegas Rule)
14. No sexting on cell phones will be allowed.
15. There will be two sleeping spaces: Loud and quiet. NO SLEEPING ELSEWHERE. Supervising adults will work with the youth to develop a plan so that adults are available and present .

Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana (UUCB)  
**Protocol for Reporting Suspected Abuse**

Child abuse means the non-accidental injury, sexual abuse (touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare or safety are harmed.

If any religious education (RE) teacher, other classroom volunteer, advisor, child care worker, or RE committee member or church employee is in a situation where a child, youth or other person discloses information that causes suspicion of abuse, the recipient should do the following:

1. Listen carefully.
2. Provide an appropriate setting. If, for example, a child begins to reveal possible abuse during a RE program, have the assistant teacher or another appropriately screened leader take over your supervising responsibilities, and take the child out of the room but stay with him/her.
3. Be open to his/her story and affirm his or her courage; do not be surprised by silences or tears.
4. Be honest with the person telling the story. Don't make promises you can't keep, such as guaranteeing confidentiality in all circumstances. Offer support and hope.
5. Write notes on what is said. If it is not possible to take notes while the story is being told, write them immediately afterward, so you can record the person's story as accurately as possible. Include all details offered. (*Remember, however, that you are recording, not investigating.*) If you ask questions, they should be open-ended, for example, "And then what happened?" Be sure to indicate in your notes your name, the victim's name and the time and date you received the story. Your notes will enable you to make an accurate report. You will need them if you are asked to testify later on.
6. Inform and consult with the Lead Minister and/or the DLRE as soon as possible. However, according to Indiana law, you are a mandated reporter and must report suspected child abuse or neglect directly to the Indiana Department of Child Services
7. According to the Indiana Department of Child Services (<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>):

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call the Indiana Department of Child Services' Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline today at 1-800-800-5556. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays. You can report abuse and neglect anonymously.

**Who is required to report child abuse or neglect?**

Indiana is a mandatory reporting state; anyone who suspects a child has been neglected or abused must by state law make a report.

**Can the person making the report remain anonymous?**

State law requires DCS to protect the identity of those reporting abuse or neglect allegations. DCS keeps the name and contact information of all report sources confidential. While DCS accepts child abuse and neglect allegations from persons who wish to remain anonymous, DCS encourages individuals to provide contact information. Providing your contact information allows the family case manager who is assigned the report to follow up with additional questions if needed.

**What will I need to provide when making a report?**

If you call to make a report, an intake specialist will ask for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including:

- who was involved
- what occurred
- when and where it occurred
- the extent of any injuries sustained
- any other relevant information

You may be asked for detailed information including names, addresses and phone numbers for the child, parent or alleged perpetrator. Even if you are unable to provide all of the information, please contact the hotline to make a report if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect.

# Training for Staff Members, RE Teachers, Youth Advisors and Child Care Workers

[www.churchmutual.com](http://www.churchmutual.com)

*Church Mutual has a proven record of maintaining the most up to date training and resources for congregations. Church Mutual is Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington's insurance company.*

## What is child abuse?

Child abuse means the non-accidental injury, sexual abuse (touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances that indicate that the child's health, welfare or safety are harmed.

## Sexual and physical abuse symptoms

### Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

### Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Reports being inappropriately touched by another youth or adult (C)

## Appropriate conduct for those working with our children and youth

Adults who work with children and youth at the UUCB are expected to have the best interests of children and youth at heart. They are expected to nurture their physical, emotional and spiritual growth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness and fun. Their charge is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness.

## Friendship with Youth

It is the adult volunteer or compensated worker's responsibility to avoid or discourage inappropriate friendships. The adult should take the responsibility to establish and maintain appropriate friendships. The adult should take the responsibility to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries and to cultivate a healthy atmosphere of trust.

A teenage child is no more responsible to maintain healthy boundaries than is a 3-year-old. In fact, teens may have more confusion about appropriate boundaries and should be treated appropriately.

## Unofficial Contact with Youth

Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. These relationships can be healthy and transformative for both. However, it is our concern that someone who might not have the best interest of the youth at heart could try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a youth as a mentoring relationship. Any relationship developed between an adult and a youth outside of church must be with the knowledge and consent of the youth's parents. This is for the protection of the youth and the adult. Adults will best protect themselves from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the parents informed of their actions.

## Sexualized Behavior

It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with or among children or youth. (C) This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is inappropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for instance, or to make "double entendres." Physical expressions of affection such as hugs certainly have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them, and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged.

## Confidentiality

If a child discloses incidents of abuse or neglect, the church volunteer or staff should follow the guidelines in the Form for Reporting Suspected Abuse, (V.13) including contacting the minister, director of religious education, board president as soon as possible. While you can assure a child that you will respect the information, never give the child the impression that you will keep secrets. If the child is in harm's way, the information must be shared with people who can help the child.

## Rationale for Screening Procedures

One provision of the proposed Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures for the church is a requirement that all staff and volunteers working with children or youth go through a background screening process. It's one way we are seeking to care for our children and youth by reducing the risk of abuse in our church.

What does such a screening consist of?

First, the Director of Religious Education (DLRE) will initiate the congregation's background check system. The background check through Church Mutual's third party relationship with Trusted Employee's is highly recommended.

The DLRE will also verify the identity of all applicants by photo ID. Results of the reference and database checks will be maintained in writing and retained in locked files. The location of these files will be kept in an locked space agreed upon by the minister and DLRE.

What are we looking for?

First, we are NOT looking for the record of an arrest during a student protest or a DUI offense from 20 years ago. We are primarily looking for indications that the applicant might use the position as a way of getting close to children for the purpose of abusing them. We are also looking for convictions of a crime involving violence or a felony. The policy is intended to protect our children from persons who might act in a violent or dishonest way when under stress.

Specifically, the policy states: Conviction of any of the following offenses will preclude the individual from working with children or youth: (1) any offenses involving illegal drugs, (2) any sex offense, (3) any felony within the past 12 years, or (4) any offense involving violence against any person. Because we know that some people have made mistakes in the past that do not reflect on their ability to be a child or youth worker or volunteer, the policy also states that the DLRE and minister may make exceptions to the foregoing on a case-by-case basis by agreement.

In addition, the DLRE may disapprove any person wishing to work with children or youth if there is substantial evidence the person committed any of the crimes listed above, even if there is no conviction. This might happen, for example, if the person pleaded guilty, but received a type of probation that resulted in no conviction.

We realize that at first a few people may be uncomfortable with undergoing screening. However, this type of inquiry is now mandatory for working in schools, and most people accept that background checks are necessary to protect children. We believe the same protections should apply to our church school. Although the Safe Congregations Policies and Procedures adhere to UU principles of fairness, kindness and forgiveness, our top priority is safeguarding our children and youth.

**Limited Access Agreement**  
**[Sample Form to be modified by Minister, DLRE, and Board President**  
**As Appropriate to the Circumstances]**

**Confidential**  
**Limited Access Agreement**

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington (UUCB) has reason for concern that your contact with children, youth, or other persons who may be vulnerable in our congregation potentially places both you and them at risk of incident or accusation. UUCB specifies that the following is required of you. Within these terms, UUCB welcomes your participation in worship services, committee meetings, adult discussion groups, and adult social events.

Unless in the presence of a church-approved chaperon you must:

1. Avoid all contact with children and youth on church property or at church-sponsored events.
2. Not enter the nursery or religious education classes (except adult religious education classes).
3. Not attend coffee hour or intergenerational events.
4. UUCB must provide safety for a variety of groups that use the building during the week. To that end, you are not allowed in the church building unsupervised when activities involving children or youth are in session. You may not possess or borrow a key to any church room.

UUCB will attempt to keep this matter as confidential as deemed prudent by the Lead Minister, DLRE and Board President, while ensuring the church remains a safe place for our children and youth. Staff and Safety Team members may be informed as deemed prudent. Please contact the minister should you have questions or are unsure of how to handle a particular situation.

Agreement

I have reviewed these terms, and I agree to abide by them. If I do not follow these terms, I will relinquish my participation and/or membership in this church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Minister

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Annual Notice for UUCB Regarding the Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures for Supervision of Children and Youth

All members of the Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana have a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social, and intellectual growth are encouraged.

We will achieve these goals in part through the implementation of the Safer Congregation Policies and Procedures (SCPP) for Supervision of Children and Youth. A complete copy of the SCPP is available on the church web site and the church office. Some important highlights are:

- Staff and volunteers working with children or youth will be screened and trained, and volunteers will have attended the Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana regularly for at least six months unless approved by the DLRE.
- Two appropriately screened supervisors will be present at all times in the nursery, religious education classrooms and during any church-sponsored activity involving children or youth.
- The church building will not be open to children or youth for any activity until one screened supervisor is present.
- Rules for youth events have been written by the youth and should be read, signed and agreed to for each youth event.
- No child younger than third grade will be dismissed from religious education class without an appropriate parent, guardian or other supervisor.
- Other children will be dismissed without supervision to join their parent/guardian or other appropriate supervisor.
- All children in the nursery will need to be signed in and out.
- Church functions providing childcare require at least two screened childcare workers.

## Religious Education Program Accident Report Form

Date of accident \_\_\_\_\_

Time of accident \_\_\_\_\_

Place(s) where accident occurred:

Name(s) of person(s) involved:

Brief description of accident:

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Treatment for injuries was:

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**(Use the back of this form as needed, or attach any supporting materials when completing.)**

**Did you observe the described accident directly? Yes No**

**If not, who or what was your source of this information?**

**Did you notify parents? Yes No When?**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Signed date \_\_\_\_\_

**(Please return this completed form with any supporting material to the Director of Religious Education)**