

# Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent

## SAFER CONGREGATION POLICY

Board Approved 4/26/2016

### *Preamble*

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent (UUCK), as a religious community, strive to create an environment upholding Unitarian Universalist principles by living in respectful relationship with each other. Our welcoming spirit and volunteer commitment is necessary for our congregational growth and health. Part of maintaining a healthy congregation is attention to safety. Safety is a condition in which individuals and a community experiences a freedom from danger or injury. In this spirit, we endorse the following policy for church sponsored events.

### **I. Shared Responsibility for Safety**

This policy is established by the Board of Trustees, who has ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the congregation. Implementation is shared between the Ministry Executive Team (MET), the staff of UUCK, the Religious Education Committee (REC), the Safer Congregation Team, and other persons or groups assigned by the Board. Ultimately, the safety of all members and friends of the congregation depends on our shared commitment to the spirit, as well as, to the letter of this policy.

It is expected that members of the congregation, staff or participants with a history or active accusation of sexual misconduct/a sexual offense/child abuse will make that history or accusation immediately known to the Minister, Director of Religious Educator (DRE) or the Moderator. Their situation will be reviewed by the Safer Congregation Team, but until that review is complete will not continue to attend or participate in any programs of UUCK. The Safer Congregation Team is authorized to put in place a *Limited Access Agreement* to protect all parties.

Parents and guardians have an important part to play in keeping us all safe, and to that end, UUCK maintains the following expectations:

- A. Complete and submit religious education registration and/or event forms with accurate information in a timely manner.
- B. Be on site and available during Religious Education programming and when babysitting is provided, so if your child has a need, i.e. diaper change, accident or behavioral issues, you can be reached for assistance. Exceptions to this should be discussed in advance with the Director of Religious Education (DRE) or designee, but in all cases parental/guardian contact information is required.
- C. For programs like Junior High Our Whole Lives (OWL), Hogwarts, Golden Tones choir and other occasions when parental attendance is not required, be timely in dropping off and picking up.
- D. Share any safety concerns that you or your child have with the DRE or Minister.

- E. We strive to make the UUCK a place of welcome that feels like home to you and your children; however, some areas are out-of-bounds to children and youth during non-program times. We expect adults and children to respect those limits.

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

Child and Youth Ministry (CYM) of the UUCK includes Nursery Care during worship services, Religious Education programming Our Whole Lives programs, Coming of Age, KentHogwarts Camp, Youth Conference Advisor, and similar events which involve the direct care or supervision of children or youth under 18 years of age. In addition, UUCK also may provide babysitting during events, sponsor musical groups and other church events. All workers or leaders in CYM, volunteer or compensated, must meet the following criteria\*:

- A. Volunteer workers should be affiliated with UUCK (member or attending) for at least 6 months prior to volunteer service. Exceptions to this can be made by the DRE or designee, especially if the person is known to another congregation or is recommended by a member of the church.
- B. A completed Application is required for all workers which includes contact information, 2-3 references (not relatives), prior experience with children and youth, and any criminal record. It is the responsibility of the worker to update UUCK of any changes to contact information or status. Persons 18 years or older are also required to consent to a criminal background check; and if they might be transporting children or youth, to a motor vehicle record check.
- C. The application form, ethics form and background check requirements can be considered met if a person is hired through an agency/company which has completed a similar screening within the past year. A valid copy must be submitted to the DRE or designee.
- D. No person convicted of sexual abuse of any person, child abuse, or any offense included in but not limited to "Unemployable Offenses" listed in the Ohio Revised Code 3319.39(B)(1) for Ohio School employees is eligible to be a worker with children or youth. (See addendum: OR3319.39(B)(1))
- E. Persons working with youth, generally defined as 12-18 years old and/or in Middle or High School, must be at least 25 year of age.
- F. An adult at least 25 years old is required to be present and responsible for each CYM program involving children.
- G. Youth 14 – 17 years, and adults 18 – 20 years can be a worker if they are paired with and work under the supervision of an adult, aged 25 years or older.
- H. In situations where babysitting is provided by minors, the parents/guardians of the children must be onsite, at least 2 workers must always be present with every group, and a designated adult 25 or older must be readily available for assistance and supervision.
- I. Prior to assuming their position, all workers are required to participate in an orientation/training for their position which would cover expectations and procedures for reporting suspected abuse to church as well as State of Ohio child welfare authorities.

\* An exception is made for parents/guardians exclusively assisting their own child as required or requested.

### III. Supervision Requirements

- A. On an annual basis, all workers will be required to sign an Ethics form and provide any updates to contact information, name, any changes related to accusations, charges or convictions of crimes or other significant changes affecting their ability to serve as a role model for children and youth.
- B. To remain an active worker in CYM, participation in at least one training a year is expected.
- C. A minimum of two workers will be scheduled to lead/supervise each group of children or youth. The preference is that these will be two non-related adults (25 years or older), but it is acceptable on occasion for only one worker with children to be 25 or older. This 2 person requirement protects all by minimizing both the opportunity for abuse, as well as false accusations.
- D. We recognize that on occasion volunteers who have not completed the application and training process will be utilized to provide backup or meet the requirement for two adults to be present when a UUCK program is in progress.
- E. Workers are expected to comply with established procedures regarding recording attendance, fire drills, discipline, arranging backup when they are unable to serve as scheduled, as well as other health and safety procedures.
- F. The **Minimum ratio** of workers to children/youth is:

Infants through age 5:	2:12
Elementary and Middle School	2:16
Senior High	2:20
- G. Corporal punishment may not be used under any circumstance.
- H. No worker is to be alone with a child or youth, either on site or off site for a UUCK event, except in the case of an emergency or with the expressed permission of the parent/guardian.
- I. No worker shall take children and/or youth off site without the expressed consent of the parent/guardian.
- J. All rooms used routinely for onsite events with children or youth will have windows in the doors or other means to monitor activities inside.
- K. An Incident Report Form will be available in every room used for religious education programming as well on the UUCK website, along with instructions on how to complete and submit the form. Information on how to report questionable behavior will be included in the orientation of every worker involved with CYM.
- L. All children and youth attending UUCK events held off-site will have an adult sponsor present.

### IV. Transportation of Children and Youth

The following requirements for transportation are in effect only when CYM workers transport children/youth as part of a scheduled UUCK or denominational event. *It does not apply to*

*individual arrangements made by parents/guardians of the children involved in events when UUCK is not responsible for transportation.*

- A. All drivers of vehicles containing minors (other than their own children) must be at least 25 years of age and provide a valid driver's license and current proof of insurance.
- B. The driver and each passenger must have and wear a working seatbelt in accordance with Ohio state law.
- C. Car seats and booster seats must be properly secured and used in accordance with Ohio state law.
- D. No driver may be sleep deprived, consume alcohol, be under the influence of mind-altering substances including prescribed drugs or otherwise have their physical or mental performance compromised while carrying out this leadership position.
- E. Drivers will be alert to the distractions of cell phone use, and will at a minimum adhere to state laws and recommended best practices.
- F. When possible, a vehicle should contain 2 unrelated adults. If this is not possible, a vehicle should not contain one adult and only one child or youth unless that minor is the driver's child. Any deviation from this practice will require permission from the youth or child's parent or the DRE or designee.
- G. Written permission is required for all minors being transported off church property. Parents/guardians will be given relevant information pertaining to the event, including, but not limited to: date, time(s), location, etc. Parents/guardians will provide emergency contact information, name of physician, health insurance information, relevant medical information, and consent to treat in case of emergency.
- H. Emergency contact information will be kept by the driver or responsible adult if using an alternate form of transportation.
- I. Each adult driving or in charge will leave the names of all children/youth accompanying them and emergency contact information with the DRE or designee.

**V. Safer Congregation Team**

- A. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the members of a Safer Congregation Team to proactively assure this policy is implemented through appropriate procedures. Safer Congregation Team tasks may include, but are not limited to, presentations on abuse, evaluation of applications for CYM workers that are flagged by the religious professionals in the congregation, receive allegations of possible abuse, develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations, and meet with known or convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in church activities.
- B. The Safer Congregation Team shall consist of the Minister, the DRE, the chairperson of the Religious Education Committee, a member of the Committee on Ministry, and 2-5 additional persons designated by the Board for their knowledge or skills in the area of law, social work, education, psychology, law enforcement, counseling, etc.
- C. The Safer Congregation Team shall meet at least twice annually to review current policy and practices, make recommendations to the Board of Trustees or Ministry Executive Team as appropriate, and will provide an annual report to the congregation.

- D. When an allegation of abuse or questionable conduct arises, a meeting of the Safer Congregation Team will be promptly called. Depending on the particulars of the situation, a subset of at least 3 members is sufficient.
- E. The Safer Congregations Team shall be informed of any relevant custody or restraining order involving members or participants and work with relevant staff to provide an appropriate response.
- F. Non-urgent but important matters brought to the Safer Congregation Team (ex. questions raised in a background check, clarification about procedures, approval of forms related to this policy, inquiries about church involvement by a sex offender, etc.) will be considered in a prompt and timely manner.
- G. If there is an allegation of abuse by the minister, the Moderator or their designee will inform the Unitarian Universalist Association and appropriate regional staff. If an accusation is made regarding a minister or a member of their family, the Moderator will serve on the Safer Congregation Team in their stead.
- H. If there is an allegation of abuse by any member of the Safer Congregation Team or a member of their families, that person will not participate in the Safer Congregation Team.
- I. In their work the Safer Congregation Team will be mindful and respectful of the worth and dignity of all persons, as well as of the congregation and the wider community. Notification to law enforcement or child welfare agencies will be made in a timely manner as warranted.
- J. In the event of media inquiries about any situations considered by the Safer Congregation Team, the Board of Trustees shall designate a single spokesperson for the congregation.

#### **VI. Removal of a Worker with Children or Youth**

It sometimes happens that there is not a good match between the volunteer worker and the position in which they are placed. In such an instance the DRE or program leader can suggest alternative opportunities to serve, or request the worker take a leave of absence. Such instances can be handled outside this policy.

- A. If there is an allegation of abuse or inappropriate behavior, the Minister or DRE will immediately place the worker on leave from their position and from further engagement with children or youth until the situation is resolved.
- B. Any and all allegations of abuse will be immediately considered by the Safer Congregation Team in a meeting called by the person or a member receiving the information.
- C. The Safer Congregation Team's summary of findings and recommendations will become part of the file of the worker, which is kept in a secure and confidential manner.

#### **VII. Implementation and Ongoing Review**

As with all policies, the responsibility for reviewing and acting on needed amendments rests with the Board of Trustees, and they will undertake such a review at least every three years. The creation of Procedures to implement this policy rests with a variety of individuals and

groups including the DRE, the RE Committee, Hogwarts, the Safer Congregation Team and under the guidance of the MET.

### **VIII. Resources**

- A. <http://www.uua.org/safe> - a very extensive collection both specific to Unitarian Universalist congregations and to sexual abuse and prevention in general from a variety of sources.
- B. <http://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/index.cfm/resources/ministry-safety/guidebook/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/> - Excellent resource from a company which specializes in insuring churches.
- C. <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm> - How to report Child Abuse in Ohio.
- D. <http://www.religioustheology.org/safer-congregations/> - the Religious Institute website has sample policies, forms and a congregational assessment.

**Addendum:**

**Ohio Revised Code 3319.39 (B)(1) Offenses**

**Disqualifying offenses**

The following are disqualifying offenses for all school employees. Note that additional lists of offenses (RC 3319.31 (B)(2) and (C)) prevent districts from employing licensed employees. Some of these offenses may be eligible for rehabilitation under OAC 3301-20-01.

**Suspension of Non-licensed Employees**

RC 3319.40 requires the district to suspend an employee who is arrested, summoned or indicted for specific offenses from all duties that require the care, custody, or control of a child during the pendency of the criminal action against the person (RC 3319.40). For employees not licensed by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), other than bus drivers, the offenses are the offenses that are bars to employment for all school employees, listed below.

RC Section	Offense
2903.01	Aggravated murder
2903.02	Murder
2903.03	Voluntary manslaughter
2903.04	Involuntary manslaughter
2903.11	Felonious assault
2903.12	Aggravated assault
2903.13	Assault
2903.16	Failing to provide for a functionally impaired person
2903.21	Aggravated menacing
2903.34	Patient abuse; neglect
2905.01	Kidnapping
2905.02	Abduction
2905.04 (pre-1996)	Child stealing
2905.05	Criminal child enticement
2907.02	Rape
2907.03	Sexual battery
2907.04	Unlawful sexual contact with a minor
2907.05	Gross sexual imposition
2907.06	Sexual imposition
2907.07	Importuning
2907.08	Voyeurism
2907.09	Public indecency
2907.12 (former)	Felonious sexual penetration
2907.21	Compelling prostitution

2907.22 Promoting prostitution  
2907.23 Procuring  
2907.25 Prostitution  
2907.31 Disseminating matter harmful to juveniles  
2907.32 Pandering obscenity  
2907.321 Pandering obscenity involving a minor  
2907.322 Pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor  
2907.323 Illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material or performance  
2911.01 Aggravated robbery  
2911.02 Robbery  
2911.11 Aggravated burglary  
2911.12 Burglary  
2919.12 Performing an unlawful abortion  
2919.22 Endangering children  
2919.23 Interference with custody that would have violated RC 2905.04 as it existed prior to 1996  
2919.24 Contributing to unruliness or delinquency of child  
2919.25 Domestic violence  
2923.12 Carrying concealed weapons  
2923.13 Having weapons while under disability  
2923.161 Improperly discharging firearm  
2925.02 Corrupting another with drugs  
2925.03 Trafficking in drugs  
2925.04 Illegal manufacture of drugs or cultivation of marijuana  
2925.05 Funding of drug or marijuana trafficking  
2925.06 Illegal administration or distribution of anabolic steroids  
2925.11 Drug possession when not a minor drug possession offense  
3716.11 Placing harmful objects in food