



## **Safety Policies Updated 9/27/2016**

### **Safer Congregations Committee Charter**

The First Unitarian Church of Wilmington will have a standing Safer Congregations Committee. This Committee will be composed of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education (DRE), a member of the Board of Trustees, and at least one member of the congregation appointed by the minister.

The Safer Congregations Committee will generally have the following responsibilities:

- Know about community resources for child abuse, treatment for sex offenders, and support groups for survivors.
- Know about state laws regarding reporting.
- Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
- Evaluate applications for Religious Education (RE) teachers, youth group leaders or Pastoral Care Associates that are flagged by the Minister or Religious Educator as needing more information or follow up.
- Facilitate annual training on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse.
- Receive allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
- Meet with convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in congregational activities.
- Regularly review the Safer Congregation policies of the First Unitarian Church of Wilmington and make recommendations to the Board about updating and revisions.

All activities of the Committee will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate.

The congregation will be advised annually of the members of the Safer Congregations Committee via the E-News, the website, and the Annual Report.

Information regarding the Safer Congregations Committee and Safety Policies will be presented in the Path to Membership classes and incorporated into the new member handbook. Additionally, this information will appear in the Annual Report.

### **Technology and Social Media**

- Any social media where the congregation has an official presence is only open to members and friends of First Unitarian Church, age 13 and above.
- Any youth group social media space will be moderated by the DRE or a volunteer approved by the DRE, and no sexual content will be allowed.
- Adults will not friend unrelated minors without explicit permission of parents.
- Adults will not text minors without explicit permission of parents.

- Parents must give permission through the registration form for use or posting of any minors' photos in any venue; tagging of minors photos is not allowed in any public venue.
- Photographing of minors at congregation events is only by parental permission.

## **Pastoral Care**

- Pastoral Care Associates will receive biannual training in elder abuse and other issues related to Pastoral Care.
- All Pastoral Care associates will complete and sign the [Background Check and Application Form](#) and the [Code of Ethics Form](#) and return them prior to beginning work with pastoral care. Background checks for Pastoral Care volunteers include criminal and financial checks.
  - A person with a history of criminal offenses will only be able to serve as a Pastoral Care Associate after careful consideration by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Safer Congregations Team.
  - Persons who are found to have significant financial issues will be asked to discuss their situation with the senior minister and will be assessed individually about potential limitations on service.
- Pastoral Care associates must provide copies of driver's licenses and insurance.

## **Children and Youth Religious Exploration**

### **Volunteer Requirements**

- Volunteers will have participated in the life of the First Unitarian Church of Wilmington community for 12 months prior to volunteering in the CYRE Program. The DRE may make an exception, including if a person has previously volunteered at another Unitarian Universalist community and provides contact information for references from the former DRE.
- Adult volunteers and CYRE Staff member must complete and sign the [Background Check and Application Form](#) and the [Code of Ethics Form](#) and return them to the CYRE office prior to beginning work with children or youth.
- Teen volunteers must complete the Application Form and Code of Ethics Form.
- No person who has a history of crimes against children or pending legal action involving children may volunteer in the RE program.
- A person who is subject to pending legal action for violent or belligerent behavior, whether or not involving children, may not volunteer in the CYRE program. Any current volunteers must disclose new or pending legal actions to the DRE and remove themselves from the program.
- Youth Advisors must be 25 years of age or older.
- Youth or teens volunteering in CYRE must be at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are volunteering or working.
- Volunteer mentors spending time individually with children or youth outside of the Sunday morning program should do so only with explicit parental permission.

The DRE, in consultation with the senior clergy staff, determines volunteer teams and strives to make decisions that promote a safe and nurturing environment for all.

### **Volunteer and CYRE Staff Training**

All volunteers and CYRE Staff are expected to attend annual CYRE training and are required to read the Safety Policies and other information posted on the CYRE website.

Training includes

- Safety procedures
- Signs of abuse, neglect, sex abuse, sex abuse prevention, and reporting procedures
- Standard practices related to the duties of the volunteer position
- Child development information.

### **Supervision of children and youth**

- There shall be at least two unrelated volunteers or CYRE Staff in any area with children or youth at all times. This requirement applies to off-site activities as well as on-site classes. One individual may be briefly alone with a group when the other must leave as dictated by common sense and necessity for such purposes as bathroom breaks and escorting individual children away from the group.
- Volunteers shall immediately notify the DRE, CYRE Team Member on Duty or other First Unitarian staff whenever there are not at least two Guides or Assistants so that CYRE staff can assist in providing a second volunteer or staff member or provide for merging of groups for that activity.
- Children engaging in CYRE activities on First Unitarian property, including on the playground or on the grounds, shall also be adequately supervised. In an open area (e.g., for nature walks), one Guide or Assistant should lead the group and one should follow at the rear.
- Volunteers and CYRE Staff should be aware of the special needs and allergies for children in their care (as provided by parents and shared by the DRE).
- All volunteers and CYRE Staff are required to share concerns about children or youth with the DRE.
- Parents are responsible for supervision of children and youth on First Unitarian property outside of organized CYRE classes and activities.
- Volunteers and CYRE Staff may not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs when supervising children or youth.

### **Youth Group Guidelines**

The Youth Group will create a covenant each year that addresses issues of sexual behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual relationships. The Youth Group may review the prior year's covenant and discuss whether they want to make changes. Adult leaders should guide the discussion to assure that it does not violate the state's consent laws or federal sexual harassment law. Items to discuss include:

- Is it permissible for youth group members to be in romantic and/or sexual relationships with each other?
- What physical displays of affection are allowed in the group among members?

- If hugging and cuddling is okay, how can a person who does not want such touching let the other members of the youth group know?
- During youth group events, is kissing, hand holding, or going off alone to engage in permissible sexual behaviors permissible?
- If a person is found violating the guidelines on private sexual behaviors, what actions will the youth group and the adult advisors take?
- What will be done if someone makes comments and remarks that are offensive to another based on a person's sex, sexual experience, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or gender identity?
- What policies will be followed if someone creates a sexually harassing environment such as sexting, sharing sexually explicit materials, or telling sexual jokes during youth group times? Outside of the group?
- What are the policies related to cell phones, picture taking, posting online, using the Internet to access sexually explicit materials during youth group or youth group events? What will be done if these policies are violated?
- What does the Youth Group assume about confidentiality about people's individual sharing? What is it okay to share outside of the group?

### **Transportation To and From First Unitarian Church of Wilmington Sanctioned Events**

It is the responsibility of the First Unitarian CYRE Program, or the parents, to provide safe transportation to and from First Unitarian sanctioned events. The First Unitarian CYRE Program requires the following:

- When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings and other First Unitarian activities, a parent/guardian signed permission slip is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an off-site activity.
- Drivers must be at least 25 years old.
- Every person in the car will have a seat belt and age appropriate seating arranged in reference to airbag safety rules.
- The Ratio for adults transporting youth traveling off-site is.
  - A car carrying only one youth must have at least 2 unrelated adults
  - A car with 2 or more youth must have at least 1 unrelated adult
  - A van or bus with 6 or more youth must have at least 2 adults
- Each driver must show proof of license, registration and insurance coverage upon request.
- Youth may drive themselves and others to events only with the approval of their parents/guardians. Youth are expected to ask their parent's permission prior to driving themselves or others to a First Unitarian event and must follow all Delaware state driving laws.

### **Permission for Youth Conferences (Cons), Field Trips and Overnights**

1. The DRE must approve all off-campus field trips and overnights. Approval will include the consideration of age and developmental stages, transportation, costs and appropriately screened chaperones. If age restrictions preclude the entire group from attending, or the activity appears inappropriate, the field trip will not be approved. Volunteers must bring up potential conflicts when proposing a field trip to allow for full consideration by CYRE staff.

2. The CYRE staff prefers to receive information on all field trips and overnights involving children and youth 4 weeks in advance, but at a minimum at least 2 weeks in advance in order to vet, promote and obtain permission forms from parents/guardians.
3. There must be a signed field-trip permission form for every child or youth under age 18 who will attend a field trip or stay overnight at First Unitarian Church of Wilmington... A youth who is 18 or older may provide his/her own emergency and medical information on a permission slip.
4. Chaperones shall carry a copy of the permission slips that contain emergency and medical information with them on any trip or overnight.
5. Volunteer/child or youth ratio for:  
Field trips:
  - Preschoolers: 2 adults for up to 6 children with an additional adult for up to 3 additional children
  - Gr. K-12: 2 adults for every 12 children/youth with an additional adult for up to 6 additional children/youth
 Regional and UUA Sponsored Cons
  - Gr. 9-12: 1 adult advisor for every 5 youth
6. Overnights are supervised by the number of required adults (see above), with adults taking shifts so that one adult is awake at all times.
7. If a person (an adult leader or youth) has been asked not to participate in our program, we will share that information with other UU-affiliated children and youth-related programs such as Youth Cons.

## **Reporting**

Any person in the congregation who has a concern or knowledge of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or sexual harassment involving a congregant (child, youth or adult), visitor or staff member of the congregation is urged to contact a member of the Safer Congregations Committee.

According to Delaware state law, abuse or neglect involving children must be reported by any person who knows or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect.

- An oral report shall be made immediately and can be made through the 24-hour statewide toll-free hotline (1-800-292- 9582).
- A written report must be made if requested.

Delaware law also requires any person who believes that an older adult (over the age of 60) is being abused, neglected, exploited or abandoned to call the elder abuse hotline.

- An oral report shall be made immediately and can be made through the 24-hour statewide toll-free hotline (1-800-223-9074).
- A written report must be made if requested.

## **Harassment**

The Church is committed to providing an environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, including sexual harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion,

disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that he/she has been a victim of harassment should immediately report such incidents to his/her supervisor, the Executive Team, or the Board President. All allegations will be quickly, discreetly and thoroughly investigated. To the extent possible, all information including information from the alleged victim, any witnesses and the alleged harasser, will be kept confidential and protected against unnecessary disclosure. Reprisals against a victim of harassment are forbidden. When the investigation is completed, both the accuser and the alleged harasser will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Concerns about professional sexual misconduct by one of the ministers should be brought to the attention of the committee, and the President of the Board of Trustees who will contact the appropriate denomination staff.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment refers to behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome, personally offensive, or interferes with the performance and/or effectiveness of the recipient. Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that is demeaning to another person and undermines the integrity of the working relationship. Sexual harassment can be committed by, for example, a supervisor, co-worker, volunteer or vendor.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when one or more of the following are true:

1. Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

### **Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior by an Adult**

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles, we affirm that our congregation must maintain a safe and secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the expulsion of the offending person or persons.

There may be times when the disruptive behavior of an individual within the church building leads members to voice a concern about one or more of the following:

1. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
2. The disruption of church activities;
3. Diminishment of the appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.
4. Sexual harassment and/or creating an intimidating environment.

The following shall be the policy of The First Unitarian Church of Wilmington in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister(s), if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister(s) being present, the Minister(s) must be notified and he/she will inform the Safer Congregations Committee. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister(s) to the offending party or parties.
  
2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to the Safer Congregations Committee. The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:
  - a. The committee will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define "acceptable" behavior in advance.
  - b. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
  - c. The committee will collect all necessary information.
  - d. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:
    - DANGEROUSNESS - Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
    - DISRUPTIVENESS - How much interference with church functions is going on?
    - OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?
  - e. To determine the necessary response, the following points will be considered:
    - CAUSES - Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the church? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
    - HISTORY - What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
    - PROBABILITY OF CHANGE - How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
  - f. The committee will decide on the necessary response on a case by case basis. However, the following three levels of response are recommended:
    - LEVEL ONE - The committee shall inform the Minister(s) of the problem and either the Minister(s) and/or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern.
    - LEVEL TWO -The offending individual is excluded from the church and/or specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear. (Written notice is given to the individual from the minister, with a copy going into the Safer Congregation Committee files.)
  - g. Any action taken under item f. (above) may be appealed to the Board of Trustees
    - LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities by recommendation of the Safer Congregations Committee to the Board of Trustees. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Minister(s) explaining the expulsion.

We strive to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. However, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree the disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.

## **Sex Offenders**

It is expected that members of the congregation, staff, renters or any other adults using the building or potential members/participants with a history or active accusation of sexual misconduct/abuse/sexual offense, will make that history or accusation known to one of the congregation ministers, who will follow the procedures below:

Any adult, adolescent or child *accused* of a sexual offense of any kind will be placed on a tailored limited access agreement without prejudice. The Safer Congregations Committee will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or any member of the Safer Congregations Committee to develop the agreement (which may be subsequently revised upon more information). The limited access agreement will remain in effect until all charges are dropped or confirmed (in which case see below.) Persons will not continue to attend or participate in any programs or services of the congregation until a limited access agreement is drawn up. Adolescents or children who are known to have sexually abused or sexually assaulted another youth or child will only be allowed adult-supervised participation in future religious education or youth group activities. A therapist's evaluation can be considered by the committee before termination of the limited access agreement.

Any person convicted of a sexual offense or with a history of known sexual offenses will be placed on a limited access agreement without prejudice. The Safer Congregations committee will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or any member of the Safer Congregations committee in order to develop the limited access agreement. This will be done upon consultation with the person's parole officer and/or treatment provider so it may be determined that they can safely participate in the adult life of the congregation.

Any person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses who will not sign the limited access agreement will be denied access to any programs or services at the congregation.

For further procedures on responding to a person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses, the congregation will follow the procedures outlined in Balancing Acts. <http://www.uua.org/safe/children>