



The Unitarian Society

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Safer Congregations Policy for Children & Youth

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Preamble

We at The Unitarian Society, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation (TUS) recognize the importance of creating a community in which everyone is safe. This responsibility is particularly important with respect to our children and youth. We recognize that religious communities are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit, and the strong reliance on volunteers, especially in programs for children and youth.

To minimize the risk of abuse in youth and children, we recognize the need to adopt policies and procedures to guard against such incidents. 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, equity and compassion in human relations to these policies, which support our being together in community. We incorporate our commitment to accountability, dismantling racism and other systemic oppressions.

We recognize that to adequately address the need for a safe environment, we may need to make changes and sacrifice some convenience. Knowing that authentic faith formation cannot happen unless safety prevails, we acknowledge that it is our responsibility to respond to the reality of our situation and to protect our children and youth. In this spirit, we endorse the following protocols for TUS events.

Article I: SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1) Definitions

- a. Workers with Children and Youth ("Workers") include both volunteer and compensated individuals who provide direct care, supervision, instruction, or transportation of children or youth for TUS events. Examples include the Director of Religious Education, the Minister, religious education leaders and assistants, Affirmation (aka "Coming-of-Age") mentors, chaperones for group trips. One-time guest speakers for classes or other activities are considered "helpers," and as such, are not included, and do not count as adults for the purposes of clearances.
- b. Except as specifically provided below, an adult is a person who is at least 18 years of age.
- c. A group is defined as those children or youth who have been assigned to a nursery, individual class or specific program or activity within the context of a class or other TUS event.
- d. The Director of Religious Education ("DRE") is the TUS staff person charged with supervision and training of adult leaders in the RE program. If there is no DRE, the chair(s) of the Religious Education Committee take on all responsibilities assigned herein to the DRE. If there is no DRE or Religious Education Committee then the responsibility becomes that of the Minister and President of the Board of Trustees.
- e. A "TUS event," for the purpose of these Safer Congregation Policies, is a planned gathering

or activity that (a) is organized and led by a TUS member, visitor, friend or group, (b) is intended for TUS members, visitors, friends and groups and (c) supports the church mission. A TUS event can be on site or off site. TUS events do not include events that are organized or led by a renter of TUS space.

2) Qualifications

All Workers shall satisfy the following criteria:

a. All Workers shall consent to a criminal background check, to be performed as described below. Individuals who do not consent to the background check, or who are deemed to be ineligible as a consequence of the background check, are prohibited from working with children or youth at TUS. Minister may request further information from the candidate in order to fully understand the circumstances of prior convictions, and to assess the accuracy and relevance of the results, before making a determination of eligibility.

b. All workers (exception of teen helpers see below) shall be at least 21 years of age and shall have been active at TUS for at six months OR obtain approval from the Director of Religious Education (DRE) following review of a referral from a religious educator or minister of another congregation where the person was previously a member or active participant. All drivers must be at least 25 years old and have been active at TUS for at least six months OR obtain approval from the Director of Religious Education (DRE) following review of a referral from a religious educator or minister of another congregation where the person was previously a member or active participant.

c. RE helpers can be aged 16 and up and have been active at TUS for at least six months as long as the leader of RE meets the above requirement. Assistants who are less than 16 years of age may not be considered adults for purposes of the "two adult" policy but are welcome to assist.

e. Childcare workers during Sunday services and during other TUS events and activities shall be at least in high school and must either (i) have been active at TUS for at six months or (ii) provide references to, and be approved by, the DRE or in the absence of the DRE, the Minister. All non-adult childcare workers shall have completed the Red Cross Babysitter's Training, Red Cross first aid or CPR, or an equivalent course, and shall provide proof of training to the DRE. Childcare workers during Sunday services shall report to the DRE. The DRE is responsible for arranging childcare during activities other than Sunday services, using only approved childcare workers. Approved non-adult childcare workers may be considered adults for purposes of the "two adult" policy.

f. Government issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, may be requested.

g. All Workers shall read and sign the TUS Code of Conduct Form for Persons Working with Children and Youth (see Appendix 3) annually. Copies of the signed form shall be retained by the DRE and be placed in any personnel file created.

h. Religious Education Workers shall be approved by the DRE following an interview with the

DRE and consideration of any other evidence deemed relevant by the DRE (or in the absence of a DRE, by the Minister).

i. The DRE may waive or alter the above requirements in special circumstances, and with the consent of the RE committee or Minister, and may generate other specific job descriptions with alternate requirements.

Article II: BACKGROUND CHECKS

1) Purpose. The purpose of the check is to identify individuals who have committed a child-related or violent offense, or who have a history of other offenses that raises concern about suitability for working with children and youth (e.g., alcohol or drug offenses, theft, or driving-related offenses). During scheduled programming, a minimum of two background-checked workers will be present with each group of children and youth. Exceptions to this may be made at the DRE's discretion in rare situations; however, at least one background-checked worker will always be present with each group of children and youth.

2) Individuals to be checked. Criminal background checks shall be performed on: a. compensated employees who have direct contact with children and youth (e.g., the DRE, Minister, and paid childcare workers, teachers and youth advisors);

b. volunteer workers who are scheduled childcare workers, teachers, classroom leaders & helpers, advisors, field trip chaperones, Affirmation mentors and volunteers at middle school or high school youth conferences (cons);

c. volunteer workers in other capacities that regularly involve direct contact with children and youth that, in the opinion of the DRE and Minister, is sufficient to warrant a background check.

3) Timing. The background check shall be performed before a compensated employee or volunteer begins work with children or youth, and a minimum of every five (5) years thereafter. For Workers who have been working with TUS children and youth prior to the adoption of this policy, background checks completed within the past five years shall be considered valid, and shall be conducted then every five (5) years thereafter from the date of the last check. If a person has moved, lived out of state, and then returned to New Jersey within the five years, a check must be conducted upon their move back to the state. At the discretion of the DRE and the Minister, additional background checks on any Worker may be performed at any other time.

4) Type of Screen. The background check shall be a state based criminal record check, including sex-offender registries. For those workers who may drive as part of a TUS event, a driving record check may also be obtained. Any legitimate service deemed suitable by the DRE and the Minister may be used.

5) Application. Candidates will authorize the background check using a consent through an email

with the minister or designated person with access to the background check agency.

6) Review. The background check results shall be reviewed by the Minister. Following review of the background check results, the Minister shall be responsible for determining the eligibility of each candidate. The Minister may request further information from the candidate in order to fully understand the circumstances of prior convictions, and to assess the accuracy and relevance of the results, before making a determination of eligibility. In such cases, the Minister is encouraged to consult with the DRE.

The determination of eligibility shall be based on the following criteria.

- a. Any conviction of a violent or sexual offense, or other form of child abuse, against a minor SHALL disqualify the candidate.
- b. Any conviction of a violent or sexual offense, against any person of any age SHALL disqualify the candidate.
- d. Any conviction of a drug or alcohol-related offense within the past 10 years SHALL disqualify the candidate from driving children or youth.
- e. A record of driving offense(s) which, in the opinion of the Minister (or in consultation with the DRE), indicates an elevated risk of harm to passengers SHALL disqualify the candidate from driving children or youth.
- f. Any conviction(s) which, in the opinion of the Minister (or in consultation with the DRE), render a candidate poorly suited to a leadership position with children and youth may disqualify the candidate. The Minister, sometimes in consultation with the DRE, shall consider the totality of convictions and the circumstances of each in making this determination.

The Minister, or the DRE if so designated, shall convey the determination of eligibility to each candidate within two weeks of receipt of the results, or as soon thereafter as is practical. The candidate may view the results of the background check upon request.

8) Confidentiality. Background check results and consent forms in paper form shall be kept in a locked file to which only the Minister has access, and will be destroyed after five (5) years. Digital background check results and consent forms shall be stored so as to permit access only by those authorized herein. Background check results and consent forms may be viewed only by those authorized herein.

- a. Only the Minister are authorized to view the results and the background check. The Minister or DRE may communicate the candidate's eligibility status, without mentioning details, to members of the RE Committee if necessary for the performance of RE Committee duties. If the candidate wishes to see the background check results, the Minister will arrange a time for the candidate to view the results in the presence of the Minister. The candidate may not copy or remove the results from the possession of TUS.
- b. Background check results and consent forms for the DRE may be viewed by the Minister, the President of the Board of Trustees, and the Chair of any Personnel Committee.
- c. Background check results and consent forms for the Minister may be viewed by the President of the Board of Trustees, the Executive Team of the Board of Trustees, or a representative of any Personnel Committee.

Article III: SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

1) Supervision during TUS religious education programming and TUS religious education sponsored activities.

a. The DRE, DRE's representative, Workers and child care providers are responsible for supervision of children and youth during RE Classes and TUS RE-sponsored programming (e.g. field trips on or off site, "cons," etc.)

b. During TUS Sunday services, children are welcome to attend the Religious Education class for their age group (it is currently designed for ages 5-11 but younger and older children are welcome to try it out for themselves) (if available) or to attend the service with a parent/guardian.

1. If a parent/guardian cannot be present at TUS with an enrolled child of any age, known to the DRE and to TUS, the parent/guardian must obtain prior consent from the DRE or DRE representative, and provide the DRE or DRE representative with written emergency contact information and the name of a responsible adult at TUS who will take responsibility for the child or youth. This procedure must be followed each time the parent/guardian cannot be present.

2. Children ages 0-5 are typically to remain with their adults in the sanctuary unless there is a staff Nursery program. In some instances, children on the older side of this range may attend the RE programming after their parent/caregiver has discussed this with the Director of Religious Education who has granted their approval. Youth ages 12 - 16 are also expected to remain in the sanctuary and are under the supervision of their parent/caregiver.. Children and youth are not permitted in other areas of the building without their parent or guardian supervision except the restroom.

c. Best practices for safety require a minimum of two adult Workers to supervise any group of children and youth, where at least one of the Workers satisfies the requirements above for a classroom instructor. Spouses, immediate relations and partners do not fulfill the two-adult requirement. If such related individuals teach or supervise together, a third unrelated adult must be present or all activities must be conducted in a public area with other TUS adults present. The DRE may require more than two adults in certain situations or for large groups. Exceptions for unexpected circumstances, or specific cases, may only be made by the DRE or the DRE's representative. In such cases, the classroom door is left open to provide visibility, and the DRE or DRE's representative will check in with the group periodically. This policy protects both the children and the adults, in that it minimizes the opportunity for abuse and the risk of false accusations.

d. If circumstances result in a Worker being alone with one or more children or youth, the DRE or the DRE's representative shall be notified of this occurrence as soon as is practical and no later than at the end of the RE program. The DRE or the DRE's representative shall determine whether to move the group to a public space, provide additional adult supervision or make an exception to the two adult rule.

e. As per the Code of Conduct (Appendix 3), under no circumstances should an adult Volunteer Worker arrange to meet privately with a child or youth, either on-site or off-site. Meetings between an adult and an individual child or youth, if necessary, should be held at The Unitarian Society and with the knowledge of the DRE, DRE's representative or parent/guardian. Such meetings should be held in a public space at TUS, with others present, or in a room in which the door is left open and another adult can see and hear the meeting. Such meetings are most likely to occur between mentors and youth in Affirmation classes; where possible, mentors are encouraged to hold such meetings jointly with one or more additional mentors and youth. During one-on-one meetings with the Minister, the Minister will follow UUMA professional guidelines.

f. Anyone who believes a child or youth needs to be protected from her/himself or others during a TUS RE program or TUS RE sponsored activity should contact the DRE, DRE's representative, minister and/or leader of the event immediately

2) Supervision before and after RE programming and during non-religious education sponsored activities

a. Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their children and youth before and after programming, as well as during non-RE sponsored activities (e.g. coffee hour, congregational meetings, Sunday service in the sanctuary, etc.).

b. Childcare for events may be provided after being arranged by the DRE or the DRE's representatives.

c. Parents are responsible for supervision and safety of their child(ren) on TUS grounds. No child or children are to be on the playground without adult supervision and parental consent.

Article IV: CONDUCT FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Those who work with children and youth at TUS are expected to always have the best interests of the children and youth at heart. They are expected to nurture the young people's physical, emotional and spiritual growth in an environment of kindness, trust, respect and fun. The TUS community strives to create an environment in which children and youth are able to explore the spiritual and religious aspects of their lives. The behavior of Workers is expected to be consistent with this goal at all times.

Certain minimal specific expectations for Workers, which are intended to further this goal,

include: 1) **Child Abuse** - Workers must not engage in any form of child abuse, such as:

a. Physical abuse – bodily injury to a person. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, corporal punishment, hitting, pinching, pushing, kicking or shoving a child or youth.

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. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, inappropriate touching, intercourse, incest, rape and sodomy, as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism and the use of minors in pornography.

d. Emotional abuse – the failure to provide care, support and guidance necessary for healthy psychological development. This includes verbal abuse, such as excessive teasing, belittling and rejection. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, yelling, abusive language, using profanities and threatening a child or youth.

2) Isolated Contact with Youth - Volunteer Workers are not permitted to be with a child or youth (who is not their own child) alone, in a closed room, or without another Worker in the immediate vicinity.

3) Friendship with Youth – although we hope that youth and adults will have a genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for friendship is not sufficiently mature to be in a position of responsibility over youth. In the adult/youth relationship, the adult assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is the adult Worker's responsibility to avoid inappropriate relationships.

4) Unofficial Contact with Youth – TUS takes no responsibility for monitoring unofficial contact between youth and adults outside of TUS activities; thus, any such contact is at the discretion of the parents/guardians involved. Workers are expected to ensure that parents/guardians are aware of and approve any such unofficial contact.

5) Sexualized behavior – It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with a child or youth. 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. Physical expressions of affection such as hugs certainly have their place, but consent is necessary and it is best that the child or youth initiate such contact, with the adult mindful of the context, proximity/presence of others, physical space, body language, and tenor of the physical contact.

6) Confidentiality – In some situations, such as certain OWL classes or Affirmation mentoring, and youth group meetings and activities, there is an expectation of confidentiality with regard to classroom discussions. This means that participants, both youth and adult, will generally not discuss the confidential subject matter with others. However, if an adult learns about a serious matter that relates to a child or youth (e.g., the child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, is revealed to be using drugs etc.), such information **MUST** be communicated to the TUS professional staff (Minister or DRE) immediately, and may also be required to be reported to the New Jersey Department of Children, Youth and Families. Workers must avoid giving children and youth the impression that Workers will keep such matters a secret.

7) Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol - Workers shall not be under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, and/or other drugs (legal or otherwise), and shall not use tobacco, while working with children or youth, either at TUS or off-site TUS sponsored events involving children and youth. Workers also shall not encourage tobacco, marijuana, drug or alcohol use, or permit children and youth under their supervision to use tobacco, marijuana, drugs, or alcohol.

Article V: TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1) Transportation to and from TUS sponsored events

a. Parent/Guardian Responsibility

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to provide or arrange for transportation of children and youth to and from TUS events. This includes transportation to and from services and programs held at TUS, as well as transportation to and from off-site events (such as cons or service projects) for which transportation is not coordinated by the DRE or a Worker responsible for arranging group transportation.

b. Non-Parent/Guardian Drivers of Minors

Following a TUS event, children and youth may not leave with a driver other than the parent/guardian, except by prior written arrangement with a parent/guardian and notification of the DRE or event leader.

2) Transportation During TUS Events

a. Drivers

i. All drivers of vehicles containing minors other than their own children must be at least 25 years of age and must provide proof of insurance, a copy of which, along with a copy of a valid driver's license, will be kept in a locked cabinet.

ii. No driver may be sleep deprived, consume alcohol or use any form of drug (prescription or non-prescription, legal or illegal) that can affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his or her duties as a driver. In addition, drivers shall not have any known medical condition that might reasonably be expected to result in an increased risk of accident. The TUS community relies on individual Workers to monitor their own fitness to drive on any particular occasion; however, the DRE or event leader is expected to remove any driver for whom there is a reasonable suspicion of impaired driving ability.

iii. Everyone must wear a functioning seat belt, and the driver must follow the state laws regarding the use of car seats and booster seats.

b. Two Adult Rule

i. Whenever possible, there should be two unrelated adults in each vehicle.

ii. An exception to this requirement may be made if needed, provided that (a) there are at least two minors in the vehicle (three if one is the child of said driver), (b) the vehicle goes directly to the destination and (c) upon arrival at the destination a minimum of two unrelated adults accompany the group of children or youth. In such cases, it is preferred that all vehicles remain within sight of each other while traveling, and rest stops will be coordinated with other drivers.

c. Permission

i. Written permission of the parent/guardian of all minor passengers will be obtained before transportation. The permission will include all relevant details pertaining to the event, including the date and location, name of driver(s) if possible, and times of departure and return.

ii. When a group, such as a Our Whole Lives (OWL) class, participates in multiple trips over the course of the church year, a single permission form covering all trips during that year may be obtained.

d. Emergency information

Emergency contact information including name of physician, health insurance information and consent to treat in case of emergency must accompany all minors who are being transported by adults other than their parent/guardian. During travel, the forms will be kept by the driver of the vehicle, or the responsible adult traveling with a group using an alternate form of transportation.

Article VI. COMPLAINTS OF CHILD ABUSE

1) Reporting Child Abuse to Community Authorities

For situations in which any person is in immediate danger, persons affiliated with a TUS event are expected to contact local police.

In New Jersey, **any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse should immediately report this information to the State Central Registry (SCR)**. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 as well as 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873).

2) Reporting Child Abuse to TUS Authorities

- a. All persons affiliated with a TUS event, including compensated and volunteer Workers, and all attending adults and youth, who know or reasonably suspect that one or more children or youth have been abused at a TUS event shall immediately report the incident to the Minister and/or DRE; a member of the Board of Trustees or the person in charge of the event, and will provide a completed incident reporting form. (see appendix)
- b. Anyone other than a member of the TUS staff who receives such a report will promptly convey the report to the Minister and/or the DRE; if unable to reach either of these staff, then the President of the Board of Trustees.
- c. The person who receives the initial report shall ensure that the incident is also reported to the DRE, Minister and President of the Board of Trustees. If the incident involves one of these individuals, the others shall be notified.

d. Should a TUS Member, Friend or employee learn that an active member of the congregation (Member, Friend, or staff person) is under investigation by Child Protective Services or law enforcement for allegedly abusing a child, they are encouraged and requested to communicate this information to the Minister, DRE, or member of the Board of Trustees. The sharing of such information shall not be considered strictly confidential and shall be shared with those whom the Minister or Board President decides is necessary to both maintain the integrity of a safer RE program and to provide relevant pastoral care to the congregant under investigation. The identity of the allegation reporter will only be disclosed as necessary.

3) Safety Needs of the Congregation Following Reports of Child Sexual Abuse to DCF or Law Enforcement

Situations involving allegations of abuse are challenging for the individuals involved and for the congregation. As Unitarian Universalists we covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and we are committed to addressing these situations in a way that respects individual worth and dignity, while promoting the safety and security of the community. We as a community will not presume or determine guilt; actions taken are routine safety precautions, without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances.

When there is an allegation of child sexual abuse against a church employee, member, friend or attendee, the Minister or Board President (if it is against the Minister) will attempt to verify reports of sexual abuse with those involved. The Minister or Board President are strongly encouraged to seek consultation with the Safe Congregations specialist for the Central East Region of the UUA. If the allegation has been confirmed to have been reported to DCF or law enforcement, TUS's safety needs will be addressed as follows:

a. **Immediate Safety Needs:** As soon as is practical, take immediate actions for the safety of the congregation. The Minister, DRE, and/or board member who received the initial report of abuse may take any actions they deem prudent.

b. **Interim Safety Plan:** An interim safety plan that will apply during the investigation of abuse. This plan will include a Limited Access Agreement for investigations of sexual abuse. The purpose of the Limited Access Agreement is to protect both the accused (who may be at risk for further accusations, which may be unfounded) and others in the congregation. If the accused abuser is another youth, input from parents or guardians must be solicited. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser or, if a minor, his /her/their parents or guardians, by the Minister, along with the DRE if appropriate.

c. **Permanent Safety Plan:** Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, TUS will await the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint before taking any final actions. Upon final disposition by appropriate authorities, an interim Limited Access Agreement may be lifted. If deemed necessary, a permanent Limited Access Agreement will be developed by the Minister that complies with any orders imposed by such authorities. The permanent safety plan should be reviewed by the Minister on a regular basis and modified as needed.

Article VII. DISRUPTIVE, VIOLENT, OR HARASSING BEHAVIOR

Refer to the Unitarian Society's already existing Disruptive Behaviors policy which is applicable for all workers in our religious education program.

Article VIII. ADULT OR MINOR PRIOR OFFENDER

One key component of a commitment to keep children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe in our congregation is to have policies and procedures governing requests by sex offenders to participate as part of the congregation.

As faith-based communities, we can provide support and compassion with awareness and vigilance so that all are safe as those who have sexually offended return to or join our church community.

An offender who truly wishes to participate in the life of the church, who realizes the extent of the crime and the difficulty their presence may cause to survivors, and who is truly committed to a new life will understand and accept the need for the imposition of restrictions.

The best practice for a congregation's response to a convicted sex offender is to develop a LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT. If the risk of inclusion of the offender is determined to be acceptable with conditions, a written agreement, executed between the church and the individual, invites the person with a history of sex offenses to participate in certain aspects of congregational life, and delineates clear expectations and boundaries including what the individual will not do. The message to the sex offender is that they are both welcome to participate in various church activities and that they must covenant with the congregation (through a Limited Access Agreement) and the adult offender must avoid all contact with children. In the case of a minor offender, they must agree to increased supervision around other youth and/or children. 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. No matter how the presence of a convicted sex offender is revealed to the Minister and/or a congregational member, the following steps must be taken.

- 1) The Minister meets privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The Minister will check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. If the person has a partner who also wishes to attend the church, then the Minister should reach out to the partner as well.
- 2) If, following the initial meeting, the Minister determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, a Letter of Temporary Exclusion (see Appendix 9 of SCP) will be put in place preventing the person from attending any church activities or events until the review process is complete. The Minister will determine if additional action or permanent exclusion needs to be put in place.

The Minister and/or the Board of Trustees are strongly encouraged to consult with the Safer Congregations specialist at the Central East Region of the UUA should the need arise to consider a Limited Access Agreement or a Letter of Temporary Exclusion.

REASONS FOR EXCLUDING A PRIOR SEX OFFENDER FROM ALL CONGREGATION ACTIVITIES

- Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism.
- Determination by the Minister that the potential risks of the individual not adhering to the Limited Access Agreement is too high or the overall risks to the congregation, considering all factors and information available, exceed the potential benefits to the individual and community.
- Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

Appendices: FORMS AND TEMPLATES

See next full page

Appendix 1:

The Unitarian Society, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation Religious Education Children & Youth Permission Form

My child/youth _____ has my permission to leave TUS grounds with designated adult chaperones, using any appropriate transportation (e.g., automobile, bus, subway, etc.) to attend:

Event _____

Date(s) and time: _____

Details: _____

I will provide the chaperones with any medical information and medication (e.g., inhalers, and including over-the-counter medication) that my child needs. If my child requires medical attention during the course of this event, I understand that all efforts will be made to reach me. If I can't be reached, I authorize the chaperones to obtain medical services for my youth.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Cell Phone Number: _____ Family e mail: _____

Youth cell phone number: _____

Head of Household #1 Head of Household #2 (or Emergency Contact)

Name: _____ Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Physician Name and Phone Number: _____

Please list any allergies, special diets or other information the chaperones need to allow your youth to safely participate in this activity: _____

May we post photographs of your youth from this trip (without names) on the TUS website or facebook page? YES or NO Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Printed name of Parent or Guardian: _____ DATE: _____

Appendix 2:

**The Unitarian Society, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Report of Suspected Incident Involving a Minor**

Person(s) reporting incident: _____

Child(ren) / Youth involved: _____

Person of Concern(s): _____

Person(s) preparing report: _____

Date / Time of report: _____

Details of incident (date/time, location, and persons present; continue on reverse if needed):

Actions taken prior to preparing report:

Report submitted to: _____ **Date and Time received:** _____

Appendix 3:

**The Unitarian Society, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Code of Ethics For Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth**

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of individuals as well as the community.

Mutual respect is the basis of the relationship between youth and their leaders. We define mutual respect as cultivating the conditions that affirm self-worth and the capacity for each individual to grow and sustain a healthy identity as a sexual being. Recognizing that the role adults play in this process is one that can either be beneficial or harmful, we insist on strict boundaries that protect children and youth in our care from any potential harm. As such, informal and formal leaders are explicitly directed to refrain from engaging in any kind of sexual, seductive, erotic, flirtatious, or sexualizing behavior with children and youth. Neither shall any informal or formal leader sexually harass anyone (peer or youth) or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

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

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

Name (printed): _____

Name (signed): _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4:

**The Unitarian Society, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Limited Access Agreement
Allegation of Sexual Misconduct by an Adult or Minor: *Confidential***

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the children and youth in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement.

Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and the President of the Board of Trustees. It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Agreement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Intergenerational group outings such as ice skating, baseball games, etc No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

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

Access to church computer No () Yes ()

Social activities in other member's homes with children present No () Yes ()

With support person* No () Yes ()

RE Classes and field trips, youth-related social events No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()

Other, specify: _____ No () Yes ()

Other, specify: _____ No () Yes ()

Other, specify: _____ No () Yes ()

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

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

Name: _____ &

Position in Congregation _____

Name: _____ &

Position in Congregation _____

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Minister: _____ Date: _____

Director of Religious Education : _____ Date: _____

Board President: _____ Date: _____

The following section only applicable to a MINOR and their adult:

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5:

The Unitarian Society Limited Access Agreement Convicted Adult or Minor Sex Offender: *Confidential*

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

Agreement

You understand that you will not be allowed to volunteer or chaperone events for children and adolescents, including children's religious education classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and youth activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people. You understand that you are not to volunteer in any of these capacities. The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your participation.

Worship services

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

Coffee Hour

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

Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir

No () Yes ()

Adult meetings without children in building

No () Yes ()

Have a key to the building

No () Yes ()

Intergenerational church activities

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

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

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

Alone in building with minister or other staff

No () Yes ()

Access to church computer

No () Yes ()

Social activities in other member's homes with children present

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

Other, specify: _____

No () Yes ()

Other, specify: _____
No () Yes ()
Other, specify: _____
No () Yes ()

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

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

Name: _____ &
Position in Congregation _____

Name: _____ &
Position in Congregation _____

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Minister: _____ Date: _____

Director of Religious Education : _____ Date: _____

Board President: _____ Date: _____

The following section is only applicable to a MINOR and their adult: My parent/guardian and I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I/we agree that if I/we violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property. I/we understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6:

Sex Offender Release of Information Form

I, _____, authorize the Minister, _____, to contact and/or obtain information from my counselor, parole officer, treatment provider, and/or other individuals, offices and agencies related to my conviction as a sex offender.

This permission is granted to permit the Minister to obtain information relevant to my request to participate in The Unitarian Society worship and congregation-related activities as set forth in their Safer Congregations Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Appendix 7:

Sample Letter of Temporary Exclusion

Date

[Name & Address of sex offender]

Dear _____,

It is our desire to welcome all people to worship and participate in congregation-related activities here at The Unitarian Society. To ensure the safety of our members and their children, we follow an approved Safer Congregations Policy which includes a section delineating conditions for participation of those who have been convicted of sex offenses.

The first step in that process is to put in place this Letter of Temporary Exclusion, while you, together with the Minister, review what will be needed to ensure maximum safety for you and the congregation. This letter is a routine measure, and indicates that while your situation is reviewed, we ask that you refrain from attending events or services at TUS. Your participation in this initial process and abiding by the boundaries stated in this letter are necessary for considering any future participation at TUS.

Thank you for respecting this policy.

Sincerely yours,

the Minister

Appendix 8:

Sample Letter of Permanent Exclusion

Date

[Name & Address of sex offender]

Dear _____,

It is our desire to welcome all people to worship and participate in congregation-related activities here at The Unitarian Society. To ensure the safety of our members and their children, we follow an approved Safer Congregations Policy including a section delineating conditions for participation of convicted sex offenders. It is the opinion of the Minister and Board of Trustees that you, as a convicted sex offender, have not adhered to the following conditions set forth in our Safer Congregations Policy:

For these reasons, we are giving you written notification that you are no longer welcome on congregation property or permitted to attend worship services and congregation-related activities, whether on- or off-site. We wish you the best and regret this action became necessary.

Sincerely yours,

the Minister

cc East Brunswick Police Department

Parole Officer

