C.4.3 **Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures for Supervision of Children and Youth**

C.4.3.1 **Policy Statement**
The Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign 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 (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.

In this document “child” shall mean anyone aged from infancy to 12 years, and “youth” shall mean anyone aged from 12 to less than 18 years.

**WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE GOALS THROUGH:**

- Screening 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 members of Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign 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 Religious Education (DRE) 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 DRE and minister, who may delegate tasks to responsible individuals. This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on June 10th, 2008 and will be reviewed or revised as needed by the Board of Trustees or appropriate designee.

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31 Approved 4/13/2010
C.4.3.2 Selection and Screening of Staff and Volunteers
This policy applies to all committees, task forces and organizations that function under the umbrella of Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign. It also applies to other groups and events sponsored by and using the facilities of Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign. For example, when District Youth Conferences are held at Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign, all adult advisors must complete the screening process described below or be screened by their church or another organization satisfactory to the DRE or minister. This policy does not apply to non-church groups using church facilities whether for a fee or not.

C.4.3.3 Particular Requirements

C.4.3.3.1 Existing Teachers, Volunteer Nursery Helpers and Employees
Existing teachers, volunteer nursery helpers and employees currently serving as of the date of the adoption of this policy or who have served within the prior two years shall sign the Code of Ethics form annually and have a criminal records check, which shall be updated every three years by the DRE or designee.

Those working with Junior and senior high youth groups (6th-8th grade and 9th-12th grade) should be at least 25 years of age. The Director of Religious Education (DRE) must approve workers below the age of 25. Those youth working in the nursery must be at least 16 years of age and always work with someone who is at least 21 years of age. (C)

C.4.3.3.2 Persons New to Positions
Persons regularly scheduled to work or volunteer with children or youth and who are new to positions or who have not served within the two years prior to the adoption of this policy shall be screened and processed in accordance with this policy. This includes: future ministers, directors of religious education, paid staff, volunteer nursery workers, all religious education teachers (except substitutes), youth group advisors and Coming of Age mentors. The following shall be required:

- Primary Screening Form with proof of identity. This form is to be updated by the applicant every 3 years.
- Two oral references requested by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign prior to beginning work with children or youth. The DRE or designee shall personally speak with both of the references.
- Applicant’s authorization form for criminal records request.
- Criminal records check updated every 3 years.
- Code of Ethics Form (signed annually).
- YRUU advisers, RE teachers and paid nursery workers must attend regular training sessions facilitated by the DRE.
- DRE or designee shall interview paid child care workers, and retain notes of the interviews.
C.4.3.3.3 **Volunteers Needed on Short Notice**
The DRE may utilize adult or teen volunteers satisfactory to the DRE and meeting the requirements set out in this policy.

C.4.3.3.4 **Screening and Selection of Volunteers Under Age 18 Teachers**
Volunteers under age 18 shall not supervise high school students. For RE teachers who are under age 18 the following is required:

- Primary Screening Form with proof of identity, signed by parent or guardian and applicant. This form is to be updated by the applicant every 3 years.
- Two oral references requested by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign prior to beginning work with children or youth. The DRE or designee shall personally speak with both of the references.
- Applicant’s authorization form for criminal records request signed by parent or guardian and applicant.
- Criminal records check updated every 3 years.
- Code of Ethics Form (signed annually by parent or guardian and applicant).
- YRUU advisers, RE teachers and volunteers and paid nursery workers must attend regular training sessions facilitated by the DRE.
- DRE or designee shall interview paid child care workers and retain notes of the interviews.

C.4.3.4 **Implementation Specifics**
The DRE shall be responsible for overseeing completion of the appropriate paperwork, except where noted, and for checking references. The DRE supervisory committee shall follow up to ensure that the reference checks have been completed appropriately.

The DRE shall verify the identity of anyone working with children or youth by photo identification.

Anyone expressing interest in ongoing volunteer work with children or youth in the church first must have attended church services regularly for at least six months unless the minister and DRE determine otherwise after screening.

Criminal records checks including the National Criminal Database, Illinois Sex Offender Database and Department of Children and Family Services’ CANTS check shall be initiated and reviewed by the DRE. Results of the reference and database checks shall be maintained in writing and retained in locked files by the minister.

Conviction of any of the following offenses shall 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. The DRE and minister may make exceptions to the foregoing on a case-by-case basis by their unanimous agreement. The DRE 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.
If it is determined by the minister and DRE in consultation with the chair of the Board of Trustees that a potential volunteer should have restricted access to children or youth, he/she shall be required to sign a limited access agreement, with such restrictions and limitations as shall be required by the minister, DRE and chair of the Board of Trustees, and that person shall not be allowed to have any further contact with children or youth. If the same is determined for a potential church staff person, the person shall not be hired.

The minister/DRE will keep indefinitely all information required to be gathered by this policy.

We endeavor to have all necessary paperwork completed before beginning work at the church whether as a volunteer or paid employee. However, if after 30 days from the start of work paperwork and phone calls are not completed then work will be restricted, suspended, or terminated.

C.4.3.5  **Training of Staff Members, RE Teachers, Youth Advisors and Child Care Workers**

Staff members, RE teachers, youth advisors and child care workers shall receive a copy of this policy, and shall be trained by the DRE, minister or designee to understand the following:

- The definition of child abuse,
- Sexual and physical abuse symptoms, (V.14) (C)
- What constitutes inappropriate conduct,
- 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.

C.4.3.6  **Children and Youth Supervision Requirements**

C.4.3.6.1  **Nursery**

At least two appropriately screened child care workers (at least one of whom is an adult) will be present at all times in the nursery, and at least two appropriately screened adults shall be present at all times in other classrooms when children or youth are present.

On occasions when the regular adult is not available for service in the nursery, then another adult approved by the DRE may serve, upon completion of the secondary screening form, or two screened teens may serve.

All children supervised in the nursery shall be signed in and out by the responsible adult in the nursery. The DRE shall develop a check-in check-out policy to ensure that the child is released only to the parent or guardian bringing the child to the nursery, or by a person authorized by that guardian.
C.4.3.6.2 **Other Children and Youth Supervision**

The building will not be open to children or youth for any activity until two appropriately screened adults are present.

- No child under-fifth (C)-grade will be dismissed from religious education class except to a parent, guardian or other appropriate supervisor.
- Church functions providing child care require at least two screened child care workers. One worker must be at least 21 years old. (C)
- On occasions when the regular adult is not available for service, then another adult approved by the DRE may serve, upon completion of the secondary screening form;
- Visibility and access into classrooms must be maintained at all times. (E)
- The DRE and /or designee shall circulate in the RE classroom area and monitor classroom activities randomly during the regular RE classes. (E)
- No private off-site meetings with children or youth are allowed, other than with a parent or guardian present, or with prior written approval from one parent or guardian and DCE. (E)
- All outings and events, onsite or offsite, which are organized by UUCUC staff or volunteers, must be approved by the DRE (or his/her) designee. Participating children and youth must have a formal permission form a parent or guardian. (E)

C.4.3.6.3 **Supervision Requirements for Field Trips, Youth Gatherings, Vehicle Rides and Sleepovers**

Procedures for field trips, youth gatherings, vehicle rides, and sleepovers shall follow the CMWD Youth Con Planning Manual whenever appropriate. A copy of that manual is available in the Church office.

- Permission slip and medical release form is required for each child or youth.
- All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and submit proof of a current and valid driver’s license. (E)
- Proof of at least $100,000 per person, $300,000 per incident auto insurance for every driver shall be required.
- 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 DRE. (E)
- The DRE shall develop written procedures for supervision for field trips, youth gatherings, vehicle rides and sleepovers.
- On occasions when the regular adult is not available for service, then another adult approved by the DRE may serve, upon completion of the secondary screening form.
- There must be three adults at any late night or sleepovers at UUCUC. (C)
C.4.3.6.4  **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. (E)

Whenever alcohol is present at an UUCUC 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. All communication between adults and children or youth should be thought of as though it were occurring in-person, regardless of whether it is occurring face-to-face, over the phone, or electronically. The vast number of communication possibilities, and the quickness with which new applications and devices are created requires that adults working with children or youth be cognizant of the need to maintain appropriate relational boundaries at all times, no matter the means of communication. (E) Sexting and sending personal photos via cell phones should be discussed with the youth as an act that is personal and in an appropriate place and not something done in public via the cell phone or other electronics. (C)

C.4.3.6.5  **Rules for Youth Events and Lock-ins**

These rules are based on suggestions from the youth of UUCUC in the fall of 2014. They are based on the rules used at CMWD events. 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.

- If coming late, notify organizers, as there will be a clear start time.
- Do not bring, use, or arrive under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances.
- Refrain from any sexualized behavior. There is a ZERO tolerance policy.
- NO means NO.
- Be aware of personal space. Make sure there is no pair-wise space.
- Maintain the wearing of appropriate clothing at all times. Dress as if you going to school in front of parents. Upper and lower torso must be covered at all times.
- The bringing or use of weapons, fireworks, explosives or flammable items is prohibited.
- No pets.
- Consuming or bringing energy drinks or pills is not allowed.
- Events have clear end times. Youth are not allowed to leave church without the agreement of one supervisor.
- Be sure to take care of yourself.
- Be careful not to break the law.
- 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)
- No sexting on cell phone will be allowed
- There will be two sleeping spaces:
  - Loud and quiet. NO SLEEPING ELSEWHERE.
  - Designated (per event) sleeping time.
  - There will be at least one advisor in each sleeping space. The advisors present at the event may switch off this position. (C) (added to V.12a Children & Youth Permission Participation Form)

C.4.3.7 Reporting and Responding Procedures

C.4.3.7.1 Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse

Anyone who suspects child abuse, including an employee, volunteer, member or attendee of the church should notify the minister, the chair of the Board of Trustees or the DRE as soon as possible. Of these three, whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others. In the event that the charges involve a minister, the next point of contact shall be the board chair, which shall then notify and consult with the District Executive of the Central Midwest District or the UUA Department of Ministry.

Procedures for dealing with reports of abuse or neglect and a format for reporting suspected abuse are found in the document, “Form for Reporting Suspected Abuse,” which also outlines duties and responsibilities of the person receiving the report, the DRE, minister and the board chair. (V.13) (C)

If the report involves a church employee, volunteer, or youth (C) then the minister, the board chair and the DRE shall additionally:

- Collect and review all pertinent facts regarding the incident or charges;
- Review application and reference forms kept on the person;
- Determine what, if any, actions need to be taken; and
- 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 chair shall designate a spokesperson for the church. The spokesperson shall 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 chair and the DRE shall 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 chair and the DRE (or one of them) shall 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 chair and the DRE shall determine how to address the incident within the congregation.
- If the accused is the minister, DRE or board chair, that person shall be removed from the decision-making process for the review of the alleged abuse, and the remaining two shall select a third person as a replacement to conduct this process.

C.4.3.7.2  **Actions by the Church Regarding Employees, Volunteers, Congregants and Attendees**

If the minister, board chair and DRE unanimously conclude that allegations of child abuse, personal abuse (C) or neglect are more likely true than not, then they shall implement one or more of the following actions:

- Require a limited access agreement; for youth this may be to regular youth gatherings and future lock-ins or CONS. (C)
- Determine who in the church and the larger community should be notified, and means of notification;

Appropriately notify the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS Urbana 217-278-5400, 508 S. Race St.) (C); and/or

- Suspend or terminate volunteer duties or membership, or in the case of an employee recommending termination to the personnel committee. In case termination of membership is the decision of the minister, DRE and board chair, they shall report the decision to the Board of Trustees, 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, DRE and board chair, would be in the interests of the church, the church community, or children or youth.

C.4.3.7.3  **Procedures for Working with and Caring for a Person against Whom Allegations of Abuse or Neglect have been made**

Under this policy, the persons charged with the responsibility for determining, for church purposes, whether allegations of abuse or neglect are more likely true than not are the minister, the DRE and the board chair. Until they have made a decision, all allegations must be considered unproven.

Throughout the review process, the accused shall be treated with dignity and support.

If the accused is a paid staff person or a volunteer, that person shall be suspended immediately from all activities involving the supervision or care of children, youth or other
vulnerable persons. If the accused is a youth in the situation of sexual misconduct he or she shall 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, DRE and board chair have placed restrictions upon an employee, volunteer or youth those restrictions shall remain in effect until all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the Board of Trustees.

The minister, DRE and board chair 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, or CONS for one or more meetings. (C)

C.4.3.7.4 Procedures for Working with and Caring for a Person Who Has Engaged in Abuse, Neglect or Inappropriate Behavior (C)

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 responsibility to insure 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 that has been convicted or found “indicated” by DCFS of abuse or neglect, we will welcome that individual. 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 shall be required to sign a limited access agreement, (V.15) (C) and shall not be allowed to have access to children, youth or other populations except as consistent with that agreement. The minister, DRE and board chair shall determine if a limited access agreement is necessary, and the terms of that agreement.

C.4.3.7.5 Monitoring Policies and Procedures

The DRE shall provide a copy of this policy to the membership committee and the office administrator. The office administrator shall cause the summary of the policy to be placed in new member packets. The DRE shall have this policy posted on the church website and annually the DRE shall cause a notice and summary of this policy to be placed in The Uniter and a reminder of the policy to be placed in order of service. (V.16) (C)

The DRE shall have responsibility for implementing screening procedures, reference checks and initial training for all volunteers working with children and youth, and the personnel committee shall have those responsibilities for all employees. The Board shall see that these responsibilities are performed.
The DRE, minister and a personnel committee member shall confer at the request of any of these three persons (that is, the DRE, minister and personnel committee member) to discuss and recommend alterations to this policy, and shall present recommended changes to the Board of Trustees.

(E) Sections highlighted in yellow are taken from the Eliot Chapel UU Church in St. Louis, MO Safety Policy with permission.

(C) Sections highlighted in blue were edited or inserted by Cindy Wakeland, Director of Religious Education, April 2015

C.4.3.6.5 Rules for Lock-ins, Retreats, youth trips and late night events suggested by the UUCUC YRUU class 2014-2015.
V.1 FORM FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign

Form 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 (other than the minister or DRE) 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?” or “How did you feel?” 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. Tell the person, if you have not already done so, that you won’t be able to help him/her by yourself and will have to tell someone else.
7. If you feel the child or youth is in imminent danger, report immediately to the DRE, the minister or the Chair of the Board of Trustees. If you feel it is safe to allow the child or youth to go home with the person scheduled to pick him/her up, do so, but do not mention the incident to the parent, guardian or other supervising person at this time.
8. Whether or not you believe the child or youth is in immediate danger make your report as soon as possible to the DRE, minister or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
9. Whichever church leader receives this information is responsible for informing the others, and one or more of them should report the matter to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) by calling the child abuse hotline (800 25-ABUSE). In the event that the charges involve a minister, the church leader should contact the District Executive of the Central Midwest District or the UUA Department of Ministry.
10. The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act states that any person who has reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused and/or neglected may make a report to DCFS. The law also provides that people who report alleged child abuse or neglect in good faith cannot be held liable for damages under criminal or civil law. In addition, their names are not given to the
person they name as the abuser or to anyone else unless ordered by a hearing officer or judge. Members of the general public may make reports without giving their names.

11. The person who received the information in conjunction with one or more of the church leaders shall make the DCFS hotline call immediately. 1-800-252-2873, 1-800-25-ABUSE. They should also consider calling the police -- especially in emergencies or when the child or youth has been injured.

12. Keep careful notes of the conversation with the DFCS caseworker, including the time and date of the call, and the name of the caseworker.

13. It is important not to disclose the contents of the report except as required by the courts, police or DCFS caseworkers, since careless recital of the report of abuse may, by rumor or otherwise, come to be known by the abuser, resulting in increased risk to the child or youth.

Your Name

______________________________________________________________

Date and Time

______________________________________________________________

Victim’s Name

______________________________________________________________

Story exactly as it is told to you
V.2 TRAINING FOR STAFF MEMBERS, RE TEACHERS, YOUTH ADVISORS AND CHILD CARE WORKERS

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. [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

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 been touched by another youth or adult. (C)

What constitutes appropriate conduct for those working with our children and youth?

Adults who work with children and youth at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign 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 a child or youth, or with two 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, 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 chair or assistant for services 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 (DRE) will initiate criminal and other public records checks including the National Criminal Database, Illinois Sex Offender Database and Department of Children and Family Services’ Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System. Applicants will be asked to sign an authorization form before the checks are conducted.

Next, any applicant new to a position, or who hasn’t served within the previous two years, will also be asked to provide the names and contact information for two references who have known the applicant for at least two years and are not related to applicant. The DRE or designee will personally speak with those two references.
The DRE 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 by the minister.

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 shall 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 DRE and minister may make exceptions to the foregoing on a case-by-case basis by agreement.

In addition, the DRE 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 you.
V.3 LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT
(Sample Form to be modified by Minister, Director of Religious Education, and Board Chair, as appropriate to the circumstances)

Limited Access Agreement - Confidential

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign 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. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign specifies that the following is required of you. Within these terms, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign 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. Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign must provide safety for a variety of groups that use the building during the week. To that end, you are not allowed in a church building unsupervised when activities involving children or youth are in session. You may not possess or borrow a key to any church room.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign will attempt to keep this matter as confidential as deemed prudent by the Minister, Director of Religious Education and Board Chair, while ensuring the church remains a safe place for our children and youth. Please contact the Minister or the Board Chair 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.

Printed Name
Signature
Date

Printed Name
(Church Representative)
Signature
Date
All members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign have 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 Safe 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 in the church office, there are also copies available in the hall by the Nursery and Children’s Chapel downstairs. 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 of Urbana-Champaign regularly for at least six months unless approved by the DRE.
- 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 two screened supervisors are present.
- Rules for youth events have been written by the youth (YRUU class of 2014-2015) and should be signed as read and agreed to for each youth event.
- No child younger than fifth 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 child care 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:
_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

Treatment for injuries was:
_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

(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.)