

# Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden Safe Congregation Guidelines

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Safe Congregation Philosophy</b> .....	1
<b>II. Unitarian Universalist Principals and Sexual Ethics</b> .....	2
<b>III. Definitions</b> .....	3
<b>IV. Special Relationship Between Minister and Congregants</b> .....	4
<b>V. Special Relationship Between Professional Religious Educator and Congregants</b> .....	4
<b>VI. Preventing Sexual Misconduct, Physical Abuse and Harassment</b> .....	5
A. Education and Training.....	5
B. Hiring.....	6
<b>VII. Religious Education Safety Procedures</b> .....	7
A. Adult Volunteers.....	7
B. Working with Children and Youth.....	7
C. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery-12th Grade).....	8
D. General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming).....	9
E. General Sleep-Over Guidelines.....	9
F. Transportation To and Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden Sanctioned Events.....	11
G. RE Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process.....	11
H. Fire and Electrical Safety.....	11
I. First Aid and Incident Reporting.....	11
<b>VIII. Emergency Evacuation Guidelines</b> .....	13
<b>IX. Responding to Complaints of Sexual or Physical Abuse or Harassment</b> .....	14
<b>X. Reporting Child Abuse to Community Authorities</b> .....	15
<b>XI. Safe Congregation Response Team</b> .....	16
<b>XII. Safety Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse</b> .....	17
<b>XIII. Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse</b> .....	18
<b>XIV Safety and Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Harassment</b> .....	19
<b>XV. Guidelines Involving Sex Offenders</b> .....	20
<b>XVI. Disruptive Behavior</b> .....	21
<b>XVII. Appendices</b> .....	24
A. Accident/Incident Report.....	25
B. Application For Volunteers and Employees Who Work With Children and Youth.....	26
C. Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth.....	29
D. Draft Limited Access Agreement (Allegation).....	30
E. Draft Limited Access Agreement (Convicted Offender).....	32
F. Summary of Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut.....	34
G. Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut - Frequently Asked Questions.....	36
<b>XVIII. List of CYRE Forms</b> .....	38
<b>XIX. Resources</b> .....	38

## **I. SAFE CONGREGATION PHILOSOPHY**

Recent events and societal trends have prompted questions and concerns about safety policies and risk management procedures to protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, friends and all members of our congregation. It is prudent for us to look at resources and establish guidelines around this broad and multifaceted subject called a Safe Congregation.

A variety of potential dangers are inherent in operating a congregation. These include the physical site (buildings and grounds), operation of the Religious Education (RE) program, transportation and supervision of children off-site and instances of disruptive behavior involving members, friends, and/or staff of the congregation.

In the past few years, the issue of making our congregations safe places has become more prominent. Congregations are carefully and intentionally putting into place policies around all aspects of safety issues. 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. However, when a person's physical, sexual, or emotional well-being, or freedom to safely express their beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly.

Our commitment, as Unitarian Universalists, to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion, compel us to create a safe and nurturing environment that protects children and adults from harm and promotes their spiritual growth while part of our community. Additionally, we affirm our commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, or sexual/affectional orientation. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner, that conveys mutual respect and consideration.

If we are to be a caring community, we must ensure that everyone who comes here feels valued, safe and secure. This congregation accepts responsibility to educate ourselves and our children about sexual misconduct, abuse, molestation, harassment and exploitation. We pledge to do our best to protect and support those who come to us whether they are at risk or in crisis.

We want everyone associated with the Church to treat this as a "living document" that may need to be amended to reflect changing needs. Requests for amendments should be made through the Board of Trustees

## II. UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES AND SEXUAL ETHICS

One of the *Leader Resources in Creating Safe Congregations* restates our Principles in terms of sexual ethics, and appears in every age level of *Sexuality and Our Faith*, the companion volume to *Our Whole Lives*.

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person.  
*Every person's sexuality is sacred and is worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated.*
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relationships.  
*We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence is wrong.*
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation.  
*Accepting each other, as we are, means doing no harm and fostering well-being in one's self and others.*
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.  
*In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is as important as the responsibility for it.*
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large.  
*As a community and as an institution, we are responsible for creating a secure and safe environment.*
- The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.  
*We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty and justice in human sexuality, and we can become a model for the rest of society.*
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.  
*When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence*

### III. DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this document will have the following meanings:

- A. **Abuse** includes non-accidental conduct that involves bodily injury or impairment; offensive physical or sexual contact, including physical or sexual abuse; physical or sexual harassment; physical or sexual molestation; or physical or sexual exploitation.
- B. **Physical abuse** includes offensive physical contact or activity that causes bodily injury.
- C. **Sexual abuse** means any sexual touching of a child or any activity that causes a person to engage in any sexual act or conduct without that person's consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- D. **Physical harassment or molestation or exploitation** means activity that places a person in fear of bodily injury by such acts as threatening or tormenting behavior, compelling a person by force or threat of force to engage in conduct from which the person has a right to abstain, knowingly restricting substantially the movements of another person without that other person's consent, communicating to a person a threat to commit an act against that person or another person or entity where the natural consequence of the threat is to place that person in fear or cause that person to engage in conduct in which that person otherwise would not engage, or similar repeated offensive physical or verbal conduct.
- E. **Sexual molestation and sexual exploitation** means activity that places another person in a situation where that person feels compelled to engage in sexual conduct to which that person would not voluntarily consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- F. **Sexual harassment** means making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors to another person, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, where the other person by words or conduct has indicated that such words or conduct are not desired, or where a reasonable person would expect that such words or conduct would not be desired.
- G. **Disruptive behavior** is any speech or action that threatens the emotional or physical safety of one or more individuals of the congregation or that threatens to disrupt the normal function of congregational activities or that is offensive or disturbing enough such that it threatens to inhibit prospective or existing members from wanting to attend church or other congregational activities.

## **IV. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINISTER AND CONGREGANTS**

Unitarian Universalist Ministers share a commitment to the highest ethical standards in personal and professional relationships in ministry settings and relationships with colleagues. Congregations invest parish ministers with the trust and authority they need to do the work of ministry. Misuse of that trust and authority can damage an individual congregant, the congregation, and the minister. The Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association Code of Professional Conduct codifies the parameters of ministerial conduct.

Members of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden have the right to expect the minister to live up to the standards of the Code. Should there be reason to believe that the minister has engaged in behavior in violation of the UUMA Code, a lay member of the Safety Committee should be contacted and the committee will consult with the District Executive of the Clara Barton District.

The Code of Professional Conduct is part of the UUMA Guidelines, which can be accessed at [www.uuma.org](http://www.uuma.org).

## **V. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR AND CONGREGANTS**

*“I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am both morally and legally in a professional relationship to which I am called to be faithful...I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs, which may include, but are not restricted to, sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; with any adult in another committed relationship; with interns or with youth advisors. Nor will I engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to be aware of, to advocate, and to live by this Code of Professional Practices,...Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.” ~ Excerpted from the Religious Educator’s Code of Professional Practices*

We as a community, expect the Director of Religious Education and other professional religious education staff, to abide by the Liberal Religious Educators Association’s (LREDA) Code of Professional Practice, which acknowledges that religious educators are also the recipients of special trust. In subscribing to this code, professional religious educators agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the Code is published in the LREDA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practices which is available on the LREDA website [www.uua.org/lreda/](http://www.uua.org/lreda/).

In the case of violation of this code, procedures as outlined in these Guidelines will be used.

## VI. PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, PHYSICAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

We acknowledge that preventing sexual misconduct, physical abuse and harassment in our religious communities and in society is a complex goal. Prevention education, training, careful hiring and safety procedures are concrete steps toward creating a safer environment for all concerned.

### A. Education and Training:

1. Education and training is critical in order to create a safer congregational environment. Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthy relationships based on self-esteem and respect for others. Greater understanding of sexuality and abuse will make us better able to avoid situations that could lead to abuse, and to move more effectively toward justice and healing for us all. To this end we believe it is important to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility among our children, our members, and friends. We will provide programs as follows:
  - a. The Director of Religious Education, Children and Youth Religious Education Committee (CYRE) and the Adult Religious Education Committee (ARE) share responsibility for:
    - i. Offering age-appropriate information about human development and sexuality for our children, youth, and adults on a regular basis, including clarification and understanding of the complex aspects of sexuality, as well as focusing on sexual abuse prevention and
    - ii. Keeping employees, advisors, and parents informed of our Safe Congregation Guidelines and reviewing it at least annually through the use of the following: the Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth, herein identified as the Code of Ethics (*Section XVII, Appendix C*) and Religious Education Safety Procedures (*Section VII*).
2. The Safety Committee takes short-term responsibility for:
  - a. Promoting congregational awareness about the Safe Congregation guidelines and ensure that all Church members are aware of the Code of Ethics at The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden.
  - b. Informing Church members and attendees regarding resources that address the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
3. The Board of Trustees takes on the long-term responsibility to see that items A.2.a and A.2.b. above are accomplished as necessary.

## **B. Hiring**

1. Incidents of abuse and harassment often take place in the context of ongoing relationships. Therefore it is essential that recruitment and hiring procedures protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, members and friends from injury as well as from unfounded accusations, and protect The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden(UUCM) from ethical and legal liability.
2. All persons seeking paid employment at UUCM, including (but not limited to) the minister, religious education director, secretary, pianist, child care providers and sexton shall sign the Code of Ethics. Each will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee, which will contact references (at least one of whom has known the applicant for a minimum of three years), record the contact, and conduct both a criminal history record check plus a formal interview with the candidate. The employment application and reference material will be confidential and will be available only as required by law and to those responsible for screening, hiring, supervising or participating in the Safe Congregation Response Team. All employees will sign the Code of Ethics annually and submitted to the clerk of the Board after which they shall be counter signed by the clerk and filed in a secure place.

## VII. CYRE SAFETY PROCEDURES

### A. Adult Volunteers

1. Volunteers in the Children and Youth Religious Education (CYRE) programs at The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM ) must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Prior to participating in the Religious Education (RE) and/ or Youth Group programs, all teaching team volunteers and regularly scheduled classroom assistant volunteers will agree to a background check that includes one reference. After the initial background check and review of references, a background check will be conducted every five years. Volunteers will be asked to complete the “Application Form for Volunteers and Employees Who Work With Children and Youth” and the “Code of Ethics” (*Section XVII, Appendix C*). In addition, volunteer teachers will attend a yearly teacher training session, scheduled by the /director of Religious Education which includes a review of the Safe Congregation Guidelines and general UUCM safety procedures.
  - b. Various supervisory methods are listed below. They will help Church leaders avoid setting up situations in which personal boundary issues can become a problem. Some of these methods will help leaders and teachers decrease the risk of misunderstandings and offer some support for handling concerns
    - a. Regular consultations between CYRE volunteers and the Director of Religious Education
    - b. On-going training for CYRE volunteers
    - c. Written parental permission is obtained whenever warranted
    - d. Classroom activity is visible through doorway windows
    - e. Regular review of the Behavioral Policy and the Safe Congregation Guidelines

### B. Working with Children and Youth

1. It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just those in leadership and teaching positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth. We encourage all Church members and friends to read and abide by the Code of Ethics (*Section XVII, Appendix C*). However, those working with young people in the context of our Unitarian Universalist movement have a crucial and privileged role, one which carries with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone, childcare worker, teacher, or in any other role, the volunteer has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to all involved.
2. While it is important that volunteers be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, they must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth, and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with people older than themselves, and may find it difficult to speak out about any inappropriate behavior of their leaders, teachers, and caregivers.

3. Teachers, helpers, and youth group leaders who have gained the trust of young people, are in a unique situation to observe behavior or be party to a conversation in which a possible abusive situation (either within or outside the Church) is revealed. In this situation, it is the adult's responsibility to report any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse to legal authorities as required (*Section XVII, Appendix F*). The Minister or Director of Religious Education shall then be notified. The CYRE Committee will provide regular training on dealing with suspected abuse or neglect.
4. Interactions with youth and children on social networking and electronic media shall be monitored. All social media and electronic communications between adults and youth or children shall be viewed as not confidential. Adults and Youth must consider all communications as if they were happening in person (face-to-face) and apply the same standards applied to face-to-face meetings to exchanges through electronic media.
  - a. When emailing youth or children the Minister, DRE, teacher, advisor, event chairperson or other adult shall cc parents.
  - b. Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to that on the UUCM website. Other privacy settings allowing posting or viewing of personnel information should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see

A closed but not "hidden" group should be used for youth groups. Youth groups must have two unrelated adult administrators as well as two youth administrators and include the DRE as a member. Behavioral covenants shall be created each year or at the beginning of any new group to govern what content is appropriate. Inappropriate material shall be removed immediately. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established UUCM Behavioral Covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity will be addressed by the DRE.

### **C. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery – 12th Grade)**

1. All classes including the nursery must be taught by a minimum of a two persons in the classroom. One adult and one teen may staff the nursery and preparatory class. The teen must be approved by DRE. This requirement applies to off-site UUCM CYRE activity as well as on-site classes. Teaching Teams members must be active participants at UUCM for at least one year or have 6 months of active membership in another UU congregation and a reference from that congregation. There must always be one vetted member of the class Teaching Team or OWL Team present in the classroom at all times.
2. Parents may serve as classroom aides and/or visit classes at any time. Teachers are subject to the approval of the CYRE Committee. 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.
3. Youth group teachers for grades 7 - 12 must be at least twenty-five years of age

## **D. General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming)**

1. Each child shall have a registration form on file that includes information about special needs and permission to accompany his or her RE class and teachers on walks around the Church or neighborhood on Sunday mornings. All personal information is held confidential.
2. Parents are responsible for their children before the service begins and after the RE program has ended.
3. During services and classes, children under the age of fourteen must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director of Religious Education.
4. Parents, teachers, volunteers and children are the only people allowed in the downstairs RE space and upstairs in the nursery during services.
5. To assure the safety of the RE space downstairs, the door to the outside will remain locked unless the teacher takes the students outside. Locking the door to the outside will not have any effect on our ability to exit the RE space in an emergency.
6. The DRE, or designated supervisor, will do a walk-through of all RE spaces and check in with teachers during classes.
7. Nursery parents must pick up their child(ren) from the nursery at the end of the service. The DRE or appropriate designee will locate parents who fail to comply.
8. Teachers of students in Preschool through Middle School shall escort their students upstairs for coffee hour.

## **E. General Sleepover Guidelines**

1. Adults supervising youth sleepovers must be active participants at UUCM for at least one year or have 6 months of active membership at UUCM if active for one (1) year or longer in another UU congregation or camp. Parents who are staying over with their own youth need not have been active participants.
2. There shall always be a minimum of two adults present during sleeping hours regardless of the numbers of youth attending. During a sleepover at UUCM, there should be a minimum ratio of one adult to five youth with one additional adult required for each additional four youth.
3. During sleepovers at the Church, all outside doors will be locked against entry once the last youth has arrived, and will remain locked until parents arrive for pick-up.

4. A Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release Form and a Medical Information Form will be required for each youth at the sleepover. Copies to be filed in the DRE's office.
5. Each youth will be required to complete and sign the Youth Code of Ethics for each sleepover event.
6. The adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees and originals of the Medical Release form and Medical Information form.
7. Youth will sleep only in areas equipped with a functioning smoke detector.
8. Adults will be trained in fire safety procedures and youth will be made aware of fire safety guidelines (*Section VII, G*).

## **F. Transportation To and From UUCM Sanctioned Events**

1. It is the responsibility of the UUCM CYRE Program, or the parents, to provide safe transportation to and from UUCM sanctioned events. The UUCM CYRE Program requires the following:
  - a. When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings, and other Church activities, a parent/guardian signed permission slip is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an off-site activity. In addition, each youth must sign the Youth Code of Ethics and each adult must sign an Adult Advisor Responsibilities Form .
  - b. Drivers must be at least 25 years old.
  - c. Every person in the car will use a seat belt and age-appropriate seating placed in reference to airbag safety rules.
  - d. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her duty as a driver.
  - e. A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may only be made by the primary on-site adult leader.
  - f. Each driver must show proof of license, registration, and insurance coverage.
  - g. There will be a phone chain for parents of children on trips at the discretion of the DRE for arriving at destination and when leaving to return to home site.

## **G. Religious Education Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process**

1. In the event of fire or other emergency evacuation, infants and toddlers in the nursery will be escorted downstairs to the first floor by their teachers. Designee greeter will assist the nursery teachers with escorting the infants and toddlers out of the building through the front porch exit. Parents of nursery children should exit the building as quickly as possible, at the nearest exit door and proceed to the area by the shed near the parking lot to retrieve their child(ren). **Neither children or adults on the Religious Education floor level nor parents on the first floor sanctuary level should use the stair cases during emergencies.**
2. In the event of an emergency evacuation, all children will be escorted out of the building by their teachers, and taken to the area by the shed near the parking lot.
3. Every year a fire drill is required to be conducted during Sunday services to ensure the safety of our congregation.
4. The Property Committee Chair, Worship Committee Chair and the Director of Religious Education will be accountable for executing the Emergency Evacuation Guidelines

## **H. Fire and Electrical Safety**

1. Childproof plugs are to be placed in unused electrical outlets in the RE Space and nursery rooms.
2. Smoke Detectors are hard-wired and checked yearly by the Meriden Fire Department.
3. Fire Extinguishers are located on all floors of the Church.
4. Emergence Information Signs are posted in the following rooms in the Church: a RE rooms, nursery and in the kitchen.
5. The Property Committee Chair, Worship Committee Chair and Director of Religious Education will conduct a Sunday morning fire drill annually for all.
6. Fire evacuation plans as well as the location of Fire Extinguishers and Smoke Detectors will be provided at the time of teacher training.

## **I. First Aid and Incident Reporting**

1. First aid kits are maintained by the sexton and Director of Religious Education(DRE). The first aid kit in the Kitchen will be maintained by the Sexton. The first aid kit on the second floor and downstairs in the large room leading to the backyard will be maintained by the DRE.

2. In case of serious injury, 911 will be called for emergency assistance. Land line phones are located in the DRE office (kept open during CYRE programming on Sunday), Kitchen and the large room downstairs leading to the backyard. Parents and/or guardians will be notified as soon as possible and an incident report shall be completed and submitted to the Director of Religious Education (DRE).
3. In case of minor injury, appropriate first aid will be applied, the parent/guardian notified, and an incident report completed and turned over to the DRE.
4. A file is maintained in the DRE office of all incident/accident reports, as well as the Church Office at the Church. Parents and/or guardians will be notified as soon as possible and an incident report shall be completed and submitted to the DRE.
5. **Note: Any exceptions to the RE Safety Procedures must be approved by the Director of Religious Education.**

## VIII. EMERGENCY EVACUATION GUIDELINES

When the fire alarm sounds please do the following:

1. Immediately leave the building through the nearest exit (**DO NOT use any indoor stairway!**). **Walk briskly away from the building and assemble by the shed near the parking lot.** If there is a person near you who might need assistance, please offer such assistance or get additional help if necessary
2. Anyone who accompanied someone in a wheelchair should proceed with the wheelchair bound person to the foyer (main door) exit and to the shed.
3. In the event of fire or other emergency evacuation, infants and toddlers in the nursery will be escorted downstairs to the first floor by their teachers. Designee greeter will assist the nursery teachers with escorting the infants and toddlers out of the building through the front porch door exit. Parents of nursery children should exit the building as quickly as possible, at the nearest exit door and proceed to the **area by the shed** near the parking lot to their child. **Neither children nor adults the Religious Education floor level nor parents on the first floor level shall use the stair cases during emergencies.**
4. In the event of an emergency evacuation, **all children will be escorted out of the building by their teachers and assemble by the shed near the parking lot.**

Once a year the Property Committee Chair, Worship Committee Chair and the director of Religious Education will jointly conduct a fire drill during Sunday Service.

## **IX. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE OR HARASSMENT**

- A. There are several situations which may prompt a response regarding a complaint or concern about sexual or physical abuse, including but not limited to:
1. A child, youth or adult reports possible abuse by a Church official, member or attendee;
  2. Church official, member, friend, or attendee suspects that a child or youth is being abused;
  3. Child or youth reports possible abuse by a family member or other individual; or
  4. Church officials learn that a Church member, friend, or attendee (child, youth or adult) is under investigation for allegedly abusing others.
- B. Because child abuse is addressed directly in Connecticut state law, such cases require that reporting laws be followed. This is summarized in Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut (*Section XVII, Appendix F*). When any of the situations described above is reported, the procedures outlined in Section X will be utilized.

## **X. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE TO COMMUNITY AUTHORITIES**

- A. It is not the function of the Minister, Director of Religious Education or the Moderator of the Board of Trustees to conduct an investigation into accusations of child abuse. Rather it is both Connecticut law and the policy of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM) to immediately report any situation in which any person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected. Such a report must be made to Connecticut's The Department of Children and Families (DCF) at (1-800-842-2288); TDD:1-800-624-5518 (*Section XVII, Appendix F*).
- B. Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, the Church will rely on the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint. It is also the Church's responsibility under these guidelines to develop an appropriate plan of response to the allegations.
- C. In all cases, the Minister or DRE will also notify the Moderator of the Board of Trustees and the church's attorney, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Minister will notify the Church's insurance company.
- D. In the event the accused abuser is the Minister, reports will be filed by, and the notifications referenced above will be the responsibility of, the Moderator of the Board of Trustees.

## **XI. SAFE CONGREGATION RESPONSE TEAM**

- A. The Safe Congregations Response Team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden(UUCM). The team will be composed of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and three members of the congregation. The three lay members shall be appointed annually by the Board of Trustees. It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise, such as but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, human resources, and questions of legality.
- B. In cases of a conflict of interest, a Safe Congregation Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Guided by the aforementioned Safe Congregation Philosophy Statement, the Team's function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The Safe Congregation Response Team will generally have the following responsibilities:
1. Know about community resources for child abuse, treatment for sex offenders and support groups for survivors.
  2. Be knowledgeable of state laws regarding reporting.
  3. Be a resource for people who may share their concerns or experiences.
  4. Evaluate applications for religious education (CYRE) teachers, volunteers and youth group leaders that are flagged by the Minister or Director of Religious Education as needing more information or follow up.
  5. Facilitate annual training for religious education volunteers, staff and teachers on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse and all policies contained in the Safe Congregation Guidelines document.
  6. Work with the Children and Youth Religious Education Committee to ensure that the sex abuse education sections of the Our Whole Lives curricula are offered at each age level annually.
  7. Receive allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
  8. Meet with accused or convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in Church activities
- C. All activities of the Response Team will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the Safe Congregations Response Team.

## **XII. SAFETY NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE**

1. Interim Safety Plan: When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child and the suspected abuser is a church employee, member or attendee, the Response Team will develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of abuse. This plan may include, but not be limited to implementation of an interim Limited Access Agreement. The purpose of this plan is not only to safeguard our children and all participants in our community, but also to provide protection to the accused abuser from further complaints. If the accused abuser is another youth, the plan must be developed with input from both sets of parents or guardians. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser and, if a minor, his or her parents or guardians, by the Response Team. The Minister and/or DRE may implement similar steps while awaiting initial action of the Response Team.
2. Permanent Safety Plan: Upon final disposition by appropriate authorities, a permanent Limited Access Agreement will be developed by the Response Team. A disposition requiring a response would be substantiation by the Department of Children and Families or conviction by a Court of Law.
3. In all cases, the Response Team, Minister, Director of Religious Education or Moderator of the Board of Trustees may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Limited Access Agreement

### **XIII. PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF ABUSE**

- A. Following a report of suspected abuse, the Safe Congregations Response Team will also develop a plan to address the pastoral needs of our congregation, including:
1. The person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused: This may include providing information about, or referrals to, appropriate professional, community, and Church or UU resources, as needed. Additionally the Safe Congregation Response Team may assist in dealing with Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Prosecutor's Office or the Police Department.
  2. Other members and friends of our congregation:
    - a. members, friends, or attendees immediately affected by the incident (such as family members or partners) whose needs we can help meet, either directly or indirectly;
    - b. the Minister (or other members of the Church Staff) to aid in dealing with the pastoral needs of the victim or accused person;
    - c. other members and friends of the congregation who witnessed one or more incidents or, having heard about them, are reminded of their own concerns or experience; and
    - d. other congregation members and friends who are relied on to a great degree by the person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused or accused offender and those connected either party.
  3. The accused person: Support shall include helping the accused person access the appropriate professional, community and spiritual resources. While there may be feelings of ill-will toward the accused person, if that individual is a part of our community, he or she also deserves our support. Withdrawing it at this critical point in that person's life might have severe detrimental long-term effects on his or her behavior in the future. It remains the mission of this congregation to recognize and support the integrity and inherent worth and dignity of that person-- even though we do not condone inappropriate behaviors-- and to treat him or her with compassion
  4. Other people or children who have allegedly been sexually abused and who have been reluctant to come forward: If warranted, the response plan will include a way of reaching out to these individuals in a manner that is nonthreatening.
- B. Responses to the safety and pastoral needs of the congregation when an incident of child abuse has been alleged will be such that other individuals are not put at risk for harm.

#### **XIV. SAFETY AND PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF HARASSMENT**

- A. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of minors which do not warrant involvement of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or law enforcement, after reporting, shall be referred to the Director of Religious Education and/or Minister. Either may request that the Safe Congregation Response Team investigate such allegations. A plan shall be developed to address and resolve these complaints which shall make clear to the accused person that this Church will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resources for both the child being harassed and the alleged offender. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the minor(s) shall also be informed of this plan and involved, as appropriate, in its development.
  
- B. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of adults will be referred to the DRE and/or Minister. These allegations may also be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team, which will then make clear to the accused person that this congregation will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resource for both the adult who has allegedly been harassed and the alleged offender. The Safe Congregation Response Team would also be available to discuss concerns regarding situations that have felt uncomfortable but may not constitute abuse or harassment as defined in these Guidelines. The function of the Safe Congregation Response Team would be to help individuals clarify the source of their discomfort, brainstorm effective means of resolving the problem, and share information about appropriate resources.
  
- C. In the absence of an Adult Harassment Policy, incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of staff will be referred to the Moderator of the Board of Trustees.

## **XV. GUIDELINES INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS**

Situations may occur involving individuals accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior.

Those situations will be addressed as follows:

1. An individual who has been convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of sexual misconduct or who has been determined to have engaged in any form of child abuse in any civil, criminal, administrative or ecclesiastical forum will not have contact with children or youth at our congregation.
2. If an individual has been legally accused of sexual misconduct and is currently involved in civil or criminal litigation of such a charge, that individual will not have contact with children or youth at our congregation until there is final disposition of the case i.e. resolution.
3. In the event that a person has been convicted of a sexual offense and completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden, the Safe Congregation Response Team will meet to make a determination as to whether or not and the ways in which the individual may be safely involved in the life of the congregation. If it is determined that the person can participate in congregation life, a Limited Access Plan will be developed in keeping with item #1 of Section XV.
4. In all cases, the Safe Congregation Response Team, Minister, Religious Educator or Moderator of the Board of Trustees may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Limited Access Agreement

## **XVI. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM) has enjoyed a long tradition of peace, fellowship, and civility within its congregation. Each Sunday we affirm our commitment to be a free and open Church where differences are respected. In order to secure our tradition of civility and tolerance, we recognize the need to address the potential for behavior that may challenge our sense of individual and communal safety and well-being. Therefore, the following shall be the policy of UUCM if and when such a challenge may arise:

- A. Situations involving disruptive behavior will be brought to the attention of the Moderator of the Board of Trustees and/or the Minister, either of whom may refer the situation to the Safe Congregation Response Team (*Section XI*). The Board of Trustees will be notified of this action.
- B. The Safe Congregation Response Team will investigate the matter using this Safe Congregations Guidelines document for guidance. This team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden. The team will be composed of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and three lay members of the congregation. The three lay members shall be appointed annually by the Board of Trustees. It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise, such as but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, human resources, and questions of legality. In cases of a conflict of interest, a team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Members of the team will be educated in the Safe Congregation Guidelines.
- C. If an immediate response to disruptive behavior is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister, if available, and/or the Moderator or Moderator Elect. 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. Any time any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister being present, the Minister and the Moderator of the Board of Trustees must be notified as soon as possible. All plans for follow up steps will be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team.
- D. Persons identified as being disruptive will be responded to as individuals of dignity and worth.

- E. Information concerning the alleged incident(s) that led to concern will be systematically collected from the concerned parties by delegated Safe Congregation Response Team members and documented before any formal action is taken.
- F. The Response Team will meet to assess the findings and decide on a course of action, with the following four levels of response recommended to them.
  - 1. Level One: A Safe Congregation Response Team member or members contacts the person named as the source of the disruption and informs them of the nature of the concern. The person's viewpoint of the matter will be elicited, valued, and documented. Response Team members will then assess the situation given this information.
  - 2. Level Two: If the basis of the original concern is determined to be valid, this finding will be clearly communicated to the person in question and a contract for clearly defined behavior change will be negotiated. Such communication and contract will be documented.
  - 3. Level Three: If the person in question refuses to negotiate a contract, refuses to abide by a contract or is engaging in behavior of sufficient severity, he or she may be excluded from the Church for up to 30 days pending review by the Board of Trustees, with reasons for such action, and conditions for return, clearly communicated and documented.
  - 4. Level Four: The person in question is permanently excluded from the Church and the Church premises with steps taken as needed to enforce the integrity of this decision.
- G. Should the Safe Congregation Response Team decide that exclusion or expulsion from the Society is necessary, they will refer the matter to the Board of Trustees with a recommendation for determination and plan of action to be voted by the Board of Trustees
- H. The four levels of response recommended by these guidelines may be applied in the order determined by the Safe Congregation Response Team and the Board of Trustees in their judgment.
- I. If appropriate, the Safe Congregation Response Team may offer referrals for professional services.

- J. All documentation developed in the course of investigating and resolving allegations of disruptive behavior will be kept confidential. The Moderator of the Board of Trustees will be responsible for determining access to such documentation and for ensuring its security.
- K. To aid in evaluating the problem and determining the appropriate response, the following points will be used in assessing the nature and severity of referred problems.
1. **Dangerousness:** Is the individual a source of threat or harm to persons or property?
  2. **Disruptiveness:** What is the extent of disruption to congregation functions?
  3. **Congregational Integrity:** How likely is it that existing or prospective Church members will be driven away by the alleged behavior?
  4. **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?
  5. **Probability of Change:** How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
  6. **History:** What has been the frequency or degree of disruption caused by the individual in the past?

## **XVII. Appendices**

A. Accident/Incident Report.....	24
B. Application Form for Volunteers and Employees Who Work with Children and Youth.....	
C. Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth.....	25
D. Limited Access Agreement (Allegation).....	26
E. Limited Access Agreement (Convicted Offender).....	28
F. Summary of Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut.....	30
G. Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut - Frequently Asked Questions.....	32

**A. XVII. Appendices**  
**Accident/Incident Report (*Under Development*)**

Name of Injured Person \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Injury \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity during which injury occurred:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Location where injury occurred:  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did injury occur:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who was present?:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What could be done in the future to prevent similar injuries?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Adult Completing Report  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Director of Religious Education or Religious Education Committee Member  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appropriate Authorities Contacted: (circle all that apply)  
Fire Department Police Department of Children and Families Not Required  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



Prior Work with Children/Youth

List previous congregational and/or community work involving children/youth: (Please include name of religious institution or organization and your role or duties, and person to whom you reported.)

**REFERENCES**

May we call your current employer for a character reference?

If not, please tell us why:

List two personal references whom you have known for 3 or more years (not former employers or relatives):

1) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information**

Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense?

Have you ever been accused of any crimes against a person, including rape, incest, sexual exploitation of a minor, or sexual or physical assault of a minor?

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?

Has any civil judgment ever been made against you for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?

Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by an employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide details (attach a separate piece of paper if necessary):

Other than above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children or youth?

If yes, please provide details:

## Driving Information

Please provide the following:

1. Driver's License Number:
2. Please attach a copy of your current Driver's License.

If you will be driving children and/or youth:

1. Please attach a copy of your certificate of insurance. We recommend personal injury liability insurance of \$100,000 minimum.
2. Have you ever been convicted of a moving violation or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

YES ( If yes, please state date and nature of conviction)                      NO

## Applicant's Statement and Release

I authorize the congregation to contact references, other religious institutions, and employers past and present, listed in this application to obtain information about my background regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. I authorize references to provide such information (including opinions) about me. I hereby release and hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information. I also agree to hold harmless this congregation, its trustees, employees and volunteers.

Further, I understand that a person responsible for screening staff or volunteers will conduct a background check which may include the sex offender registry and/or contact with the local police.

I understand that any information obtained about me through this application process will be kept in the strictest confidence and will be available only to those responsible for screening staff or Director of Religious Education, Minster, or as required by law.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the policies of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden regarding child care and youth workers. Any information obtained through this process may be used, at the sole discretion of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden, to deny this application.

I attest that the above information is true and correct.

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

### For use by The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden only:

Application Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Placed? YES NO

Position Assigned : \_\_\_\_\_

## C. XVII. Appendices

### Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth

Those who teach and/or lead our children and youth play a key role in fostering the spiritual growth and character development of our children and youth. It is especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable our children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Therefore, those who teach and/or lead our children/youth will:

- Provide nurturing care and support to all children/youth.
- Work to help children/youth develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence.
- Respect the selfhood of each young person, including the absolute right to privacy of his or her own mind and body.
- Not engage in any behavior with young people, that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- Not engage in behavior or language, which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- Not engage in any sexually harassing behavior, nor any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children/youth.
- Not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of children/youth.

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 the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of those working with the children and youth at Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden.

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_

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

**D. XVII. Appendices**  
**Draft Limited Access Agreement—Confidential (*Example*)**  
**(Allegation)**

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Safe Congregations Response Team of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM). 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, Moderator and the members of the Safe Congregation Response Team. It will be kept in a locked file in the UUCM 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, and driving children and young people.

The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we agree 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 (X) Yes ( )
- Multigenerational church activities  
No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )
- Multigenerational 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:
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )

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

The following individuals have agreed to be support persons and have been approved by the Safe Congregation Response Team..

1.

2.

3.

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:

1.

2.

3.

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 (on or off site) and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain in effect for an indefinite period of time.

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

Date:

Minister:

Date:

Director of Religious Education:

Date:

Moderator:

**D. XVII. Appendices**  
**Draft Limited Access Agreement—Confidential (*Example*)**  
**(Convicted Offender)**

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM) 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. However, based on your 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 but 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 adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people.

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 (X) Yes ( )
- Multigenerational church activities  
No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )
- Multigenerational 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:
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )
  - Activity:  
No ( ) Yes ( )

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

The following individuals have agreed to be support persons and have been approved by the Safe Congregation Response Team.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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 in effect for an indefinite period of time.

**Signature:**

Date:

Witness:

Date:

Minister:

Date:

Director/Minister of Religious Education:

Date:

Moderator:

Date:

E. XVII. Appendices  
Statute Summary of Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut

**Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect**

**Professional Required of Report**

**Citation: Gen. Stat. 17a-10**

**The following persons are required to report:**

- Physicians, Surgeons, Interns, Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Chiropractors, Medical Examiners, Physician Assistants, Physical Therapists, Dentists, Dental Hygienists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, Pharmacists
- Psychologists or Mental Health Professionals
- School superintendent, teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, or coaches
- Social workers
- Police officers, Parole Officers (Juvenile or Adult), Probation Officers (Juvenile or Adult)
- Members of the clergy
- Alcohol and drug counselors, Professional Counselor, Battered Women’s Counselor, licensed Marital and Family Therapists ,Sexual Assault Counselors
- Licensed foster parents
- Emergency medical services providers
- Any person paid to care for a child in any public or private facility, child day care center, group day care home or family day care home which is licensed by the State
- Employees of the Department of Children and Families Employees ,Department of Public Health employees responsible for the licensing of child day care centers, group day care homes, family day care homes or youth camps
- The Child Advocate and any employee of the Office of the Child
- Judicial Department Employees (Family Relations Counselors, Family Counselor Trainees, Family Services Supervisors \*as of 10-01-2010)

**Reporting by Other Persons**

**Citation: Gen. Stat. 17a-103**

Any mandated reporter acting outside his or her profession capacity, or any person having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, may report.

**Standards for making a report**

**Citation: Gen. Stat. 17a-101a**

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm.

**Privileged communications**

Not addressed in statutes reviewed.

**Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report****Citation: Gen. Stat. 17a-10d: 17a-103**

the reporter is not specifically required by statute to include his or her name in the report. The Commissioner of Children and Families shall use his or her best effort to obtain the name and address of the reporter.

**Disclosure of Reporter Identity****Citation: Gen. Stat. 17a-28(13)(i), (m)**

The name of an individual reporting child abuse and neglect shall not be disclosed to anyone without his or her written consent except to:

- a DCF employee
- a law enforcement officer
- an appropriate state's attorney
- an appropriate assistant attorney general
- a judge and all necessary parties in a court proceeding
- a state child care licensing agency, executive director of any institution, school or facility or superintendent of schools

Information identifying an individual who reported abuse or neglect of a person, including any tape recording of an oral report, shall not be released to the subject of the report unless, upon application to the Superior Court by such person and served on the Commissioner of Children and Families, a judge determines, after in camera inspection of relevant records and a hearing, that there is reasonable cause to believe the reporter knowingly made a false report or that other interests of justice require such release

## F. XVII. Appendices

### Reporting Child Abuse in Connecticut - Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Who Must Report**

Individuals who have reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected should make a report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at the toll-free, 24 hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-842-2288). Certain social service, mental health, education, and other professionals are **mandated reporters**, and are therefore **required** by law to make a report, if in their professional capacity, they have reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected. If you are unsure if a situation is reportable under the law, feel free to call the DCF Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. The social work staff is prepared to discuss the situation with you and help you determine the appropriate course of action

#### **What Must Be Reported**

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a)

#### **How to Report**

Reporters must report orally to the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Careline or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected and must submit a written report (DCF-136 form) to DCF within 48 hours of making the oral report. DCF is required to tape record all reports to the Careline.

#### **What happens after I report?**

DCF is responsible for immediately evaluating and classifying all reports of suspected abuse/neglect/imminent risk. If the report contains information to warrant an investigation, DCF must make its best effort to begin an investigation within two hours if there is an imminent risk of physical harm to a child or another emergency; and within three days for all other reports. In all cases, DCF must complete the investigation in 30 calendar day

#### **Immunity from Civil or Criminal Liability and Penalty for Failure to Report**

Anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report of child abuse and who has reasonable grounds for making the report, shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed with respect to the making or content of such report. Any such participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participating in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report.

Immunity from civil or criminal liability is granted to people who make required reports in good faith. Immunity is also granted to people who in good faith have not reported. However, failure to report could result in fines, which range from \$500 to \$2,500 and the individual will be required to participate in an educational and training program. In addition, mandated reporters could also be sued for damages if further injury is caused to the child because they did not act.

Employers may not discharge, discriminate or retaliate against an employee for making a good faith report or testifying in an abuse or neglect proceeding. The Attorney General can bring a court action against any employer who violates this provision, and the court can assess a civil penalty of up to \$2,500 plus other equitable relief.

## **G. XVIII LIST OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (CYRE) FORMS**

**Related forms not part of the Safe Congregation Guidelines document include the following. Copies are available for review as is Safe Congregation Guidelines. File copies are located in the church office and the Director of Religious Education's office.**

**Adult Sponsor/Advisor Responsibilities**

**Coming of Age Mentor Responsibilities and Agreement**

**Agreement to Teach**

**Volunteer Reference Form**

**Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release Form**

**Medical Information Form**

**Youth Code of Ethics**

**Procedures for Overnight Trips with Youth**

## **XX. Resources**

This Guideline was developed after consulting many sources within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and materials/policies from other UUA churches and non UUA sources. Many resource materials did not indicate which specific congregation had developed the policies. This list is as complete as possible and we apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood Safe Congregation Policy

First Unitarian Universalist of Nashville Social Media Policy

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures

All Souls Social Media Policy

Balancing Acts, UUA web site, Rev. Debra W. Haffner

The Safe Congregation Handbook, Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Frederic Muir, Editors

State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families' web site

United Way web site