



Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor

SAFER CONGREGATION POLICY

Safer Congregation Team
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Reviewed Annually, Updated as Needed

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF BANGOR 120 Park St Bangor ME 04401

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UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY OF OUR SAFER CONGREGATIONAL POLICY

Our church's commitment to honoring the inherent worth and dignity of every person calls us to establish safety policies and risk management procedures in an effort to create a safer and more nurturing environment for all who are associated with our church: our staff, children, youth and all our members and friends. To do so, we shall periodically research potential resources and revise our guidelines, when warranted, in order for us to create a safer congregation. Toward this end, four areas require particular attention:

1. The care and maintenance of our building and grounds;
2. The oversight of our children and youth's Religious Education (RE) program;
3. The requirements for transporting and supervising our children and youth when they are participating in off-site church-related events;
4. The procedures to minimize and respond to disruptive behavior, involving members, friends, staff or ministers of the congregation.

Collectively, we will seek to ensure that everyone who participates here feels valued, safe, and secure. Our church accepts the responsibility to educate our adults, youth and children about sexual misconduct, abuse, molestation, harassment, and exploitation in order to create a safer religious community for all. Finally, while, as outlined in this policy, our church is committed to protecting and supporting those among us who may be at risk or in crisis, in keeping with our commitment to honor the inherent worth and dignity of all people, we will not automatically exclude those individuals who have been accused or convicted of sexual abuse in their past and who wish to be part of our church. While the safety of the congregation will always be foremost, if the requirements as outlined in this policy as well as in the church's insurance policy for inclusion of identified sexual offenders can be fulfilled, the Safer Congregation Team will craft limited access agreements with such identified offenders that will allow their limited participation in the manner and ways stipulated in such agreement.

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 to the Safer Congregation Team which will consider such requests and convey any resulting policy changes to the Church Council for approval.

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 Lives¹. These restated principles will serve as a guide for our church's perspective and policies in this aspect of our communal life:

- ❖ 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 incompatible with this philosophy.*
- ❖ 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 to 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 doing all we reasonably can in order to create a secure and safe environment.*
- ❖ The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.
 - ◆ *When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence.*

- *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.*

DEFINITIONS

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

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.

Physical abuse includes offensive physical contact or activity that causes bodily injury.

Sexual abuse means any sexual touching of a child, sexual exposure, or any activity that causes a person of any age 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.

Physical harassment or molestation or exploitation means placing a person in fear of bodily injury or abuse by threatening 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 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 which that person otherwise would not engage.

Neglect is a form of child/elder/developmentally disabled adult maltreatment, a deficit in meeting a person's basic needs including the failure to provide basic physical, health care, supervision, nutrition, emotional, education and/or safe housing needs.

The Safer Congregation Team is a committee appointed jointly by the Minister that includes the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, one member of Council, and at least three members of the congregation. It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise to include but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, child abuse and neglect, human resources, and legal issues. Team members with professional expertise with abuse shall not be considered to be acting in their professional capacities while serving as members of this committee.

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.

Sexual harassment means making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors to another person, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when 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.

SAFER CONGREGATION TEAM

In order to ensure continuity, the Safer Congregation 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 UUSB. This Team will be composed of the Minister, Director of Religious Education, a member of the Church Council and three members of the UUSB (appointed annually by the Church council). It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise to include but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, child abuse and neglect, human resources, and legal issues.

In cases of a conflict of interest, a Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Guided by the Philosophy Statement, their function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The Safer Congregation Team will generally have the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Know about community resources for child abuse, neglect, treatment for sex offenders, and support groups for survivors.
- ❖ Know about state laws regarding reporting.
- ❖ Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
- ❖ Will lead prevention education efforts for the congregation at large
- ❖ The team will meet annually, to review safer congregation policy, and update as needed
- ❖ Evaluate applications for Religious Education (RE) teachers and youth group leaders that are flagged by the Minister or Director of Religious Education as needing more information or follow up.
- ❖ Facilitate annual training for RE staff and teachers on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse and neglect.
- ❖ Work with the Religious Education Action League (REAL) to assure that the sex abuse education sections of the Our Whole Lives curricula are offered each year, or at least bi-annually.
- ❖ Receive allegations of possible abuse or neglect and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
- ❖ Meet with convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in UUSB activities

All activities of the team will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the Team.

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINISTER AND CONGREGANTS

"Congregations confer authority upon their ministers through roles which the minister is expected to assume, for example: as worship leader, teacher, counselor or representative in the larger community. The powers of ministry have a great potential for good if they are used responsibly. Similarly, they have a great potential for causing harm if they are abused...Ministers need to be fully aware of those powers and use them responsibly for the building of spiritual community, not for personal gratification. Exploiting ministerial powers for personal advantage abuses those congregants who become the inappropriate sexual objects of a minister's personal interest. Such abuse damages the religious community of which the abuser is minister." ~ Excerpted and adapted from Thomas Mikelson, Reflections Toward a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Clergy Misconduct through Sexual Abuse, December, 1992

As a Unitarian Universalist church, we expect the minister to abide by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association's (UUMA) Code of Professional Practice which addresses issues of clergy sexual misconduct and the abuse of the trust congregations place in their ministers. In subscribing to this code, ministers agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the code is published in the UUMA Guidelines which is available in the church office, or from the UUMA at 24 Farnsworth St. Boston, MA 02210-1409, or the UUMA website (Log on to www.uuma.org, click onto Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice.)

In the case of suspected violation of this code by the Minister, the Safer Congregation Team (The Minister will not participate as part of the Team under these circumstances, but the Council Chair will participate in a temporary role.) will contact the Northern New England District Executive and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to initiate an investigation. Should the investigation conclude the Minister has acted in violation of the code, the Safer Congregation Team, in consultation with the Church Council, will determine how to best communicate, counsel and respond to reactions within the congregation and the larger community.

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 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 Director of Religious Education's Code of Professional Practices

As a community we expect the Director of Religious Education and other professional religious education staff to abide by the Liberal Director of Religious Education's Association's (LREDA) Code of Professional Practice, which acknowledges that Directors of Religious Education are also the recipients of special trust. In subscribing to this code, professional Directors of Religious Education 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 in the church office and from LREDA, 24 Farnsworth St. Boston, MA 02210-1409, or the LREDA website (www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html)⁵. In the case of violation of this code, procedures as outlined in this policy will be used.

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.

Education and Training:

Education and training is critical to the creation of 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 members, friends, youth and children. We will provide programs, through using the Our Whole Lives (OWL) human relationships and sexuality program, as follows:

The Director of Religious Education (DRE) and the Religious Education Action League (REAL) are responsible for:

- ❖ Offering age-appropriate information about development and sexuality for our youth on a regular basis, including clarification and understanding of the complex aspects of sexuality, as well as focusing on sexual abuse prevention (At the present time, November 2015, we are offering junior and senior OWL classes for youth in grades 7-12, though we are in the preliminary planning stages for adding OWL for all ages.)

- ❖ Keeping employees, volunteer teachers, and parents informed of this policy and reviewing it at least annually by covering the following: the Code of Ethics for those working with children and youth, herein identified as the Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix D) and RE Safety Procedures (Section VII).

The Safer Congregation Team is taking responsibility for:

- ❖ Promoting congregational awareness about this policy. As part of this we will ensure that all Society members and friends are aware of the Code of Ethics at The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor.
- ❖ Informing Society members and attendees regarding resources that address the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
- ❖ The Safer Congregation Team recommends that the Committee on Ministry (or Council when CoM is not functioning such as during an interim ministry) assume the long-term responsibility, in conjunction with the Safer Congregation Team, to see that items A2a and A2b above are accomplished on an ongoing basis.

Hiring:

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 Society of Bangor (UUSB) from ethical and legal liability.

All persons seeking paid employment at UUSB, including (but not limited to) the Minister, the Religious Education Director, the Administrator, the Music Director, and the cleaning staff, will sign the Code of Ethics. They 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 five 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, or participating in the Safer Congregation Team (in a consultation role). All employees will sign the Code of Ethics annually, and a criminal background check will be completed annually. The Administrator is responsible for collecting these signed forms and filing them in a secure place.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SAFETY PROCEDURES

Adult Volunteers

Volunteers in the Religious Education (RE) programs at The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor (UUSB) must meet the following criteria:

- ❖ Prior to participating in the RE and Youth Group programs, all volunteers will agree to a background check. After the initial background check, a background check will be done every two years. Yearly, they will be asked to complete a Code of Ethics Form. In addition, volunteer teachers will attend a yearly teacher training session to be scheduled by the DRE.
- ❖ Various supervisory methods are listed below. They will help Society 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 various concerns.
- ❖ Regular consultations with the DRE
- ❖ On-going training
- ❖ Parental permission whenever necessary
- ❖ Visible classroom activity, mandatory 2 teachers present at all times with youth
- ❖ Support for following the behavior guidelines of the Safer Congregation Policy

Working with Children and Youth

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 UUSB members and friends to read and abide by the Code of Ethics. 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/nursery 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.

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.

Teachers, helpers, or 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 Society) 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. The Minister or the DRE shall then be notified. The Religious Education Action League (R.E.A.L.) will provide regular training on dealing with suspected abuse or neglect.

Any participating adult may not consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her responsibilities.

Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery - 12th Grade)

All classes including the nursery must be taught by a minimum of a two person teaching team this requirement applies to off-site UUSB RE activity as well as on-site classes. Teams should consist of at least one person who has been an active participant at UUSB for at least one year or after six months if they have had previous teaching experience in a UU setting. Parents may serve as classroom aides and/or visit classes at any time. Teachers may be subject to the approval of the R.E.A.L. 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.

For grades 9-12, the youth group teachers must be at least twenty-five (25) years of age.

General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming)

Each child will have a registration form on file that includes information about special needs and permission to accompany their RE class and teachers on walks around the Society or neighborhood on Sunday mornings. All personal information is held confidential.

Parents are responsible for their children before the service begins and after the RE program has ended. During services and classes, children must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director of Religious Education.

Parents, teachers, volunteers and children are the only people allowed in the downstairs RE space during services and in the classrooms.

The Director of Religious Education, or designated supervisor, will do a walkthrough of all RE spaces to check in with teachers during classes. Exceptions to this procedure are discouraged, however, there will occasionally be Sundays when it will not be possible for the Director of Religious Education to do a walk through.

Nursery through Third Grade parents (or designee) must pick up their child(ren) from their classrooms at the end of the service. The Director of Religious Education or appropriate designee will locate parents (or designee) who fail to comply.

Procedures for Overnight Gatherings at UUSB and Off Site Trips with Youth

❖ BEHAVIOR CODE:

In order to hold a safe and effective conference, the Unitarian Universalist Overnight Gathering participant (youth or adult), promise to: Respect others and not engage in behavior that constitutes verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuses to self or others. Take responsibility for my actions. Acknowledge that my actions affect the people around me. Bring no cell phones (youth) or electronic devices. Not engage in sexual activity or violence and not have weapons or drugs at the conference. (No tobacco, alcoholic or unauthorized medications). Stay on the premises. Keep the leadership informed of my whereabouts at all times. Participate in all activities. Sleep in the designated areas at the specified time and remain in supervised areas at all times. Abide by all Overnight Gathering rules, with the knowledge that if rules are not followed it may result in my expulsion from activities at my own expense. Abide by the UU Principles.

❖ EXPECTATIONS OF ADULTS AT OVERNIGHT GATHERINGS:

Adults attending the Overnight Gathering may be expected to wake up during the night shift to check on the youth. Are resources for youth and need to be available and visible to interact with youth. Are expected to stay at the Overnight Gathering for the entire time. If they cannot, this needs to be communicated on the registration form stating who will stand in for them. Should establish check-in times with youth under their responsibility to assess wellbeing, concerns, and issues. Participate fully in every activity. Report concerns or issues to the adult coordinators. Maintain clear boundaries and model appropriate and respectful behavior Assist adult coordinators when needed.

❖ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

When outside churches participate in overnight gatherings at UUSB, they are responsible for completing background checks of the adults that will be participating. A positive endorsement for each adult must be provided by the Minister or DRE from his/her church. The UUSB DRE will verify that these background checks are completed. The ratio of adults to youth at the Overnight Gathering is 1:5. Adults may cover youth not from their congregations. Parents, RE leaders and advisors need to communicate about this and inform the Coordinator. This arrangement should be reflected on the registration sheet. RE leaders or Coordinator should make adult advisors aware of special needs or considerations of youth for whom advisors are responsible. Transportation is the responsibility of the churches and parents.

Transportation To and From UUSB Sanctioned Events

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

- ❖ When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings, and other Society activities, a parent/guardian signed permission slip is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an off-site activity. Drivers must be at least 25 years old.
- ❖ Every person in the car will have a seat belt and age appropriate seating arranged in reference to airbag safety rules.
- ❖ Each driver must show proof of license, registration, and insurance coverage upon request.

Fire and Electrical Safety

- ❖ Childproof plugs are to be placed in unused electrical outlets in the RE Space.
- ❖ Smoke Detectors are hard-wired and checked yearly.
- ❖ Fire Extinguishers are located on all floors of the Society.
- ❖ The Religious Education Director will conduct a Sunday morning fire drill annually for all Sunday Religious Education classes and coordinate with adult services. See Appendices for procedure.
- ❖ Fire evacuation plans at UUSB and are located in the classrooms.

First Aid and Incident Reporting

- ❖ First aid kits are maintained by the Director of Religious Education. It is located in the supply hallway in the RE Wing.
- ❖ In case of serious injury, 911 will be called for emergency assistance. A landline phone is located in the RE Hallway or the upstairs Kitchen. 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.
- ❖ 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 Director of Religious Education.
- ❖ A file is maintained in office of Director of Religious Education for all incident/accident reports.

REPORTING CHILD/ELDER ABUSE OR NEGLECT IN MAINE

It is not the function of the Minister, Director of Religious Education, Church Council Chair or Safer Congregation team member to conduct an investigation into accusations of abuse or neglect. Rather it is both Maine law and the policy of UUSB to immediately report any situation in which any person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child, developmentally disabled adult, or an elderly person has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected. As needed, a member of the Safer Congregation Response Team will assist the person in making the report, and will ensure the report is made in a timely manner.

Such a report must be made within 24 hours to the Maine Dept. of Health and Human Services at 1-800-452-1999 (regarding children) and 1-800-624-8404 (regarding adults, elderly)

Hotlines are open 24 hours, 7 days/week. For more information, go to: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/mandated-reporters.shtml>

DHHS accepts allegations of child abuse and neglect by telephone and in person from all sources including identified sources, anonymous sources, sources which have incomplete information and referrals educators, from the child or parent themselves.

Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, UUSB will rely on the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint. The DHHS caseworker will investigate the allegations and take such action as is necessary to insure the safety of the child, including intervention or referrals to other child advocacy groups or resources. It is also the UUSB Safer Congregation Team's responsibility under these guidelines to develop an appropriate plan of response to the allegations.

In cases where an abuse or neglect report is made due to an incident which occurred on church property or at a church sanctioned event, the Minister will also notify the UUSB Council Chair and the Northeast District Executive, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Minister will notify the UUSB's insurance company. In the event the accused abuser is the minister, the UUSB council chair will make these notifications.

CHURCH SAFETY PLANNING IN RELATION TO ABUSE REPORTS

Interim Safety Plan: When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child or adult and the suspected abuser is a church employee, member or attendee, the Safer Congregation Team will develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of abuse. This plan may include, but not be limited to, implementation of a temporary Limited Access Agreement (See Appendix E). The purpose of this plan is not only to safeguard our children, 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, or, if a minor, his or her parents or guardians, by the Team. The Minister and/or Director of Religious Education may implement similar steps while awaiting initial action of the Team.

Long Term Safety Plan: Upon final disposition by appropriate authorities, a revised Limited Access Agreement will be developed by the Team, to be updated, at the minimum, annually. A disposition requiring a response would be substantiation by the Department of Health and Human Services or Adult Protective Services or conviction by a Court of Law.

In all cases, the Safer Congregation Team, Minister, Religious Education Director or Church Council Chair may seek legal counsel before proceeding with a Limited Access Agreement.

PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF ABUSE

Following a report of suspected abuse, the Safer Congregation Team will also develop a plan to address the pastoral needs of the congregation, including:

- ❖ *The person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused:* The plan may include providing information about or referrals to appropriate professional, community, and Society or UU resources, as needed.
- ❖ *Other members and friends of our congregation:*
 - Members, friends, or attendees immediately affected by the incident (such as family members or partners);
 - the Minister (or other members of the Society staff) to aid in dealing with the pastoral needs of the victim or accused person;
 - other members and friends of the congregation who witnessed one or more incidents or, who having heard about them, are reminded of their own concerns; and other congregation members and friends upon whom the person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused, or by the accused offender (or those connected to them), relied significantly.
- ❖ *The accused person:* Support may 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 support; withdrawing it at such a 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 without condoning inappropriate behaviors, and to treat him or her with compassion.

SAFETY AND PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF HARASSMENT

Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of minors or adults, which do not warrant involvement of the Department of Health and Human Services or law enforcement shall be referred to the Religious Education Director and/or minister, who will consult with the Safer Congregation Team as needed. The minister in consultation with the Safer Congregation Team will develop a plan a plan to address and resolve these complaints which shall make clear to the accused person that the UUSB will not tolerate harassment in any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resources for both the person being harassed and the alleged offender. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of minor(s) shall also be informed of this plan and involved, as appropriate, in its development.

Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment are handled in the Disruptive Behavior Policy, appendix P of this document.

GUIDELINES INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS

In the event that a person has been convicted of or charged with a sexual offense and/or completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor, the Safer Congregation 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 congregational life, a Limited Access Agreement will be developed (see appendices). This needs to be completed and signed before the person can attend any church services or functions. The message to the sex offender in the agreement should be that they are welcome in the congregation within safe guidelines set forth in the Limited Access Agreement.

In all cases, the Team, Minister, Director of Religious Education or Chair of Church Council may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Limited Access Agreement.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY

Disruptive Behavior Policy of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor Council Adopted July, 2002 Council Reviewed and Approved March, 2008.

Preamble: In agreement with the UUA principles, we promote the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We encourage the use of the democratic process, both within and outside of our church. The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor (UUSB) encourages the open exchange of opinions among a wide variety of individuals. At the same time, we do our best to provide a safe environment so that such openness can exist. Real or perceived threats to the physical, emotional or spiritual well-being of members and friends must be addressed firmly and promptly. We must have the freedom to safely express our beliefs.

Defining Disruptive Behavior: Any action that creates concern for the physical or emotional safety of children or adults is considered Disruptive Behavior. Disruptive Behavior includes actions that disturb church activities or weaken UUSB's ability to serve present and future members. Disruptive Behavior may happen within the church building or at church-sponsored events. Defining Respectful Behavior Respectful behavior shall be in line with our ethical, moral, and spiritual traditions. We value and respect others with our communication with one another. UUSB members and friends shall work comprehensively and collaboratively to support sensitive and respectful caring and consideration by all.

The following shall be the policy of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor:

Whenever possible, disruptive behavior will be addressed immediately by those present. The Minister or Committee on Ministry should be informed immediately. If the behavior continues, the individual will be asked to leave the premises. If the person does not leave, they will be escorted from the building. If the person refuses to be escorted from the building, the police will be called.

If disruptive behavior or complaints of potential danger occur and an immediate response is not required, the situation will be referred to the Executive Committee. The committee will use its best judgment and follow these guidelines:

- ❖ Problems will be addressed as they arise. There will be no attempt to define "acceptable" behavior in advance.
- ❖ Each situation will be evaluated on its own merits.
- ❖ The Committee will gather as much relevant information as available before acting. At least two members of the committee will jointly contact the person whose behavior is in question to get his or her point of view about the situation.
- ❖ Evaluation of the situation will include consideration of:

- ◆ POSSIBLE DANGER - Is the individual's behavior the source of real or perceived threat to persons or property?
- ◆ DISRUPTIVENESS - To what degree does the behavior in question interfere with church functions, activities, or mission?
- ◆ OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that the behavior in question is offensive to current or prospective members and friends? Is there likelihood that current or prospective members and friends will be driven away?
- ❖ In determining the response to the behavior in question, the committee will consider factors giving rise to the situation, such as the person's history within the church and other local community institutions. It will also consider how likely it is that the person in question can alter the problematic behavior to avoid further actions which might imperil the sense of safety in the church community.
- ❖ Remedies will be applied after consideration of the particular factors of each situation. The committee shall inform the Minister, the Safer Congregation Team, and the Committee on Ministry of its recommendation BEFORE acting. Any of the following four levels of response are recommended for most situations:
 - ◆ LEVEL ONE-The committee may decide that no action is warranted. In this case, the Minister, Committee on Ministry, and Council will be informed.
 - ◆ LEVEL TWO-The Minister and a committee member will meet with the individual in question to communicate the concerns and recommendations of the committee. If the committee decides it is necessary, a contract for clearly defined parameters of behavior will be signed at this time. If such a contract cannot be agreed upon, Level Four may be enacted immediately.
 - ◆ LEVEL THREE- The offending individual shall be excluded from the church or specific church activities for a designated period of time. The reasons for exclusion and the conditions of return will be made clear in a letter to the individual given to the individual by the Minister and one member of the committee.
 - ◆ LEVEL FOUR- The individual in question will be excluded from the church premises and all church activities permanently. Before this sanction is executed, the committee will consult both the Minister, the Church Council, and the Safer Congregation Team. If expulsion is recommended and Church Council votes to enact that recommendation, the Council Chair will send a letter, return receipt requested, to the individual explaining the expulsion. Contact information will be provided so that the individual will know whom to address regarding possible recourse.
- ❖ Action taken by the committee in Levels Two and Three may be appealed by the individual to the Church Council. There is no appeal of Level Four within this policy. H. If arguments erupt and become disruptive during a church meeting, the person will be asked to participate respectfully. If the disputant is unwilling to do so, they may be asked to withdraw from the meeting. The request for withdrawal may be made by the chair or a member of the committee or council member, in such circumstances withdrawal is obligatory. I. If an immediate response to disruptive behavior is required, the Minister or Council Chair, or Church Employee will respond according to their best judgment. If none of these is present, any church member may exercise their best judgment as long as such action does not violate Maine State or Federal law. Such response may include asking the offending person or persons to leave the premises or suspend activity in progress. If further assistance is required, the Police will be called.
- ❖ If such action is undertaken without the Minister being present, the Minister and Council Chair must be notified as soon as possible. The Minister and the committee will determine what further action should be taken, using Levels one through four described above.

Summary

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor strives to be an inclusive community. We embrace and encourage differences in our beliefs, opinions, and life experiences, but do not tolerate public comments or behaviors that are prejudicial, exclusive, or oppressive. Assuring the safety and wellbeing of our congregation as a whole will be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of any individual.

MANAGEMENT OF POSSIBLE RISKS AND HAZARDS

Firearms

- ❖ No firearms are allowed on UUSB property.
- ❖ If a person possesses a gun on the premises, the person will be asked to leave immediately.
- ❖ If the person refuses to leave, the Bangor Police Department will be called.

Surveillance

The church monitors all entrances via video devices during church services. The surveillance devices are on 24 hours, 7 days a week--all activity at the entrances is recorded and can be reviewed.

Appendices

COMING OF AGE MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND AGREEMENT

Mentor responsibilities include:

- Mentor should answer, or help the participant find answers to any questions the participant may have about the program.
- Mentor should discuss with participant any fears and concerns about fulfilling any of the requirements and help the participant over the rough spots.
- Mentor must show interest in the participant's progress and keep informed about the program. Updates and information will be provided via email and telephone by the Director of Religious Education.
- Mentor must show enthusiasm for the program and the Society and generally encourage the participant to value what he or she is doing.
- Mentor should work to provide an open relationship one in which teen issues such as drugs, alcohol and sex can be discussed confidentially and free of parental judgment.
- Mentor is encouraged to find ways in which to have social time with the participant. For instance, it can be particularly rewarding to have lunch with your participant along with another mentor and their participant. Please note that all "one on one" time must be spent in the presence of other adults (i.e. at a restaurant, sporting event, or before/after class at The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor.)
- Mentor is encouraged to find ways to participate in some part of the participant's social justice project if their schedule allows.
- Mentor is expected to communicate weekly with their participant starting on or around _____ . (date)
- Mentor is expected to develop and present their own Credo Statement to the class during one of the scheduled class times.
- Mentor must be present at the Coming of Age Service on Affirmation Sunday on _____ . (date)

Signature _____ Date _____

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY

Once a year a fire drill is required to be conducted in both buildings during a Sunday service to ensure the safety of our congregation.

When the fire alarm sounds, please do the following:

- Teachers will gather students into a line and exit their rooms in the closest to the rear door exit in Room 8.
- Teachers will remember to bring their attendance books.
- The RE Community will walk, single file, along the back side of the church, through the employee parking lot, and down the sidewalk that runs between UUSB and City Hall.
- Teachers will take attendance and wait for parents to arrive to pick up their child(ren).
- Parents must check their child out with their teacher.
- If there is a person near you who might need assistance, please offer such assistance or get additional help if necessary.
- If the building is being evacuated for a real emergency, parents should find their children in the appointed place and inform their teachers that they are taking them. All others should locate their family members and/or significant others. All should go home as quickly as possible

INCIDENT REPORT

Name of the person filling out form: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Place of Incident: _____

People Involved in Incident: _____

Statement(s) from the people involved – Please describe briefly. (Continue on back if necessary)

=====

POST INCIDENT REPORT

After the incident has been reported, please fill out the following:

Person who reported or recorded the incident: _____

Incident was reported to whom: _____

On what date?: _____

Please describe the follow-up, noting if any ongoing action is necessary:

AN EXAMPLE OF A LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

(This is one example, but specific details need to be individualized)

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. Based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. We also have concerns about your potential for inappropriate behavior with adults in the congregation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our congregants and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. This agreement will be updated and amended, as the Safer Congregation Team sees fit, and will need to be signed by you and designated parties, at 6 months, and then once per year thereafter.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in... (To be determined by the Safer Congregation Team). You will remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when on church property. We will work with you to find a few appropriate church members to be with you.

You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Do not talk or otherwise interact with children.
- Do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at the UUSB or in the Bangor Area, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Do not have conversations of any sexual or romantic nature with congregants while on church property. Do not ask congregants out on a date of a romantic nature.

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

I have reviewed this agreement and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future UUSB functions and property.

Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Minister _____ Date _____

DRE _____ Date _____

Council Chair _____ Date _____

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION FORM

Child(ren) Name DOB Grade Age Allergies Special Needs

Family Information

Parent / Guardian #1

Parent / Guardian #2

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Cell phone _____

Home phone _____

Work phone _____

E-mail _____

Best way to reach you? _____

May we use your child's photograph and/or artwork on Community Bulletin Boards, Church Website, Brochures, Newsletters, and Church Facebook Page? Yes _____ or No _____

Emergency Info

Doctor Name _____ Phone Number _____

Health Insurance Provider _____ I. D.# _____

In case of emergency, I authorize the adults in charge to contact the nearest emergency services if a medical emergency arises.

Parent/ Guardian _____ Date _____

Parent / Guardian Name _____ Date: _____

Parent Guardian Signature: _____

SAFE CHILDCARE POLICIES

- Providers must be background checked.
- Keep Nursery FREE of small OBJECTS - Nursery to be used by only 4 yrs and under, with attention to items that can choke etc. Help me keep the littlest ones safe – thanks!!
- Help children with the bathroom only to the extent they absolutely need it. If able to go by themselves close door to bathroom and wait in hall/ storage area.
- Two Providers are required to be with children /youth at all times.
- CLEAN up everything you get out and remove any cups, plates etc.
- PUT EVERYTHING back where you found in including table, chairs, books, games, materials, rugs, smocks etc.
- Light use of RE supplies and material is fine, paper, markers, etc. Try not to use “special” or expensive items for use with RE curricula.
- Going outside if fine provided all of the parents agree. Parent permission required. The youngest children should stay in the nursery to provide a familiar environment and be close to facilities!
- TURN OFF all lights when you leave.
- Turn OFF Heat when you leave.
- TURN ON dehumidifier when you leave.
- Be sure RE space is locked when you leave.

Rates - October 2015

- \$10 adult (18+)
- \$8 high school youth
- \$6 middle school youth

CHILD CARE COORDINATION

A committee member from the appropriate committee (i.e., the committee that is sponsoring the event) contacts the RE Director no less than two weeks in advance of the event with the event hours and the number of children requiring child care and their ages.

The RE Director calls and schedules the necessary childcare provider, then contacts the committee member to give the list of those childcare providers, no less than three days before the event.

The contacted committee member or an adult they designate, is present at the event, greets the childcare providers, and is available for any questions or emergencies throughout the duration of the event.

The RE Director communicates the rules of the UUSB Safety Policy and general babysitting guidelines to all childcare providers and event coordinators prior to the event.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

- Parents of children being cared for must have an up-to-date Religious Education Registration form on file. It is the parent’s responsibility to notify childcare providers of any allergies, concerns, or limitations.
- Parents are required to stay on society grounds and be available for any concerns that the childcare provider may have.

CHILDCARE PROVIDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

- The childcare provider will respect and care for each child in accordance with each child's needs.
- The childcare provider will report any problems or concerns promptly to the designated committee member and follow up with the RE Director as necessary.
- The childcare providers will coordinate childcare with each other to insure that two childcare providers are in the same room at the same time (except for bathroom or parent visiting.)
- The childcare providers will use a sign-in sheet to record the children and parents participating.

UUSB RESPONSIBILITY

- To offer and provide a safe and loving environment for children to enjoy supervised free play while their parents attend society-sponsored events.
- To pay childcare providers the prevailing hourly rate as determined by the RE Director.

EVENT COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITY

- The event coordinator, or an adult they designate, is present at the event, greets the childcare providers, and is available for any questions or emergencies throughout the event.
- At larger events, the event coordinator must designate a separate adult to be specifically in charge of babysitting on site.
- At events of long duration, the event coordinator or their designee should periodically check in on the sitters and children.
- The event coordinator collects sign-in sheet and money donated towards babysitting and delivers it to the UUSB administrator. (Administrator will give sign-in sheet to DRE for her records and so she can fill out check requisition.)

NUMBER OF PROVIDERS:

As per the safety policy, a minimum of two childcare providers must be present in the same room at all times. If more than one room is in use (e.g., nursery & main RE space), then the number of sitters should be increased to maintain this quota. The number and age of children needing babysitting will also determine the number of childcare providers needed.

For events and meetings where formal child care is not practical, or a childcare provider is not available for that date, the Society and the RE Director will support the sponsoring committee in finding other solutions (e.g. holding committee meetings in the RE space so children of committee members can play during the meeting).

OFF-SITE EVENTS:

UUSB is not responsible for arranging babysitting for off-site Society events.

UUSB is not an allergen-free environment.

STEPS FOR SAFER CONGREGATION TEAM TO DETERMINE INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONGREGATION

Steps based upon Balancing Acts, Keeping Children Safe in Congregations, Rev. Debra W. Haffner (www.uua.org)

No matter how the situation is revealed, the minister as quickly as possible should meet privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The minister may want to check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. (If the minister is the one being accused, this manual and these steps do not apply. Instead, the President of the Board should be contacted immediately and the president should contact the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA and/or the District Executive serving the congregation.) If the person is a member of the congregation and has a partner who also attends the church, then the minister should reach out to the partner as well.

If the minister determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, the person should then be asked to meet with the Safer Congregation Team.

The individual should be asked to sign a release form so that the minister can contact his/her sex offender treatment provider and/or current therapist. Ask if those people are members of ATSA, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. The therapist and, if applicable, the parole officer should be asked for their professional assessment of the likelihood that the sex offender will re-offend and whether additional restrictions beyond the Limited Access Agreement ought to be placed on the person's participation. It will be helpful to know the number, timing, and nature of offenses. Such information allows consideration of different situations. If the offender refuses permission to contact the therapist or refuses to go for an assessment, the congregation would be right to refuse participation in any congregation activity. For more information on this issue, go to Reasons for Excluding a Person from All Congregation Activities.

It is beyond the scope and experience of congregations to assess the risk or probability that a sex offender will re-offend. According to the Center for Sex Offender Management, even therapists with special training in treating sex offenders can be wrong. They write, "There are no absolutes or magic bullets in identifying these risk factors. Rather, this process is an exercise in isolating factors that are associated with specific behaviors. While this association reflects likelihood, it does not say that all individuals who possess certain characteristics will behave in a certain manner. Some offenders will inevitably commit subsequent sex offenses...likewise not all sex offenders who have re-offense characteristics will recidivate." [xvi]

The question the Safer Congregation Team must be able to answer is this: given what professionals have advised you, will this person sign and obey a Limited Access Agreement that they can maintain with the leadership in order to assure the safety of children, youth, and all members of the congregation?

If the assessment indicates that the person has completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is not at high risk for recidivism, the Response Team may choose to develop a Limited Access Agreement. If the professional assessment indicates that the person is at high risk for re-offending, it is appropriate to deny that person involvement in the faith community until treatment is successful at reducing the risk. The Safer Congregation Team should acquaint itself with any therapeutic program the offender has undergone or will continue to be part of. The group should meet the offender, their probation officer, and other appropriate people so that clear boundaries can be established for the protection of children and youth and to reduce the likelihood of false allegations or suspicions. This group will, at best, operate alongside other agencies in a multi-agency approach to the offender's rehabilitation." Meeting with the other support people in the offender's life - their family, therapist, probation officer - can powerfully demonstrate the faith community's desire to support the person and hold them accountable. If the person has a partner in the community, that person should be involved in developing the Limited Access Agreement as well.

It is important to point out that a person with a commitment to avoiding future abuses will welcome the opportunity for controls on their behaviors. Stop It Now! writes, "You can show your support of the abuser's willingness to live a different life that keeps children safe. Your support and watchfulness can help in his or her recovery. It is also a chance to let the abuser know that you are aware of the past and are watching his or her actions today."

All persons with histories of sexual offenses should be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement. Upon entry into the congregation and depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to sign one annually. If the offender refuses to do so, it is then appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property. An offender who refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement should know that if they enter the congregation or its property, they will be asked to leave by a member of the Response Team or the Board of Trustees. If the person further refuses, the local police will be called for assistance.

The Safer Congregation Team should meet at least biannually with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If the minister or the Director of Religious Education changes, as well as the chair of the Board of Trustees, it is important that the departing person inform the new person of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved. Copies of files including Limited Access Agreement information should be treated with care, and kept in a secure file drawer.

If and when legal questions arise, the minister and/or Board President should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice informed by local and state statutes that apply.

Decide who needs to know. One of the very important and difficult questions is who needs to know that a congregant has a history of sex offense. Clearly, key people, including the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, the Chair of the Board and the Response Team need to know that the person is attending church, that he or she has agreed not to have contact with children, has signed a Limited Access Agreement, and that he or she should never be alone with children and adolescents. The Board of Trustees and/or the Safer Congregation Team, in grappling with the issue of sex offenders in the congregation, will want to make the decision about how confidentiality will be handled, and it is that decision that should be communicated to the entire congregation.

These decisions will be made in accordance with UUSB's insurance company's requirements about informing the congregation.

Reasons for Excluding a Person from All Congregation Activities

- Refusal for the minister to contact the treatment provider and parole officer.
- Refusal to undergo a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism.
- Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

The Safer Congregation Team determines, through individual assessment, that the person poses too great a risk to the congregation to be included in congregation activities at this time.

VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM & CODE OF ETHICS FOR ADULTS AND OLDER YOUTH (16-18)

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Cell / Home Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Emergency Telephone Number: _____

Allergies: _____

Best Way to Reach You: _____

Code of Ethics

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions will be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable youth to develop a positive sense of self and spirit, and of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting youth in these areas of growth.

Wisdom dictates that youth and adult suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with a young person in their care; therefore, leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

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

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

YOUTH CONVENTIONS - REGISTRATION, CONSENT, AND LIABILITY FORM FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Congregation: _____ Church email or phone: _____

YOUTH: All youth MUST be accompanied by a sanctioned adult advisor. This person is also usually the driver, but may be someone else at the gathering. Parents, DREs, and advisors must all know who the adult advisor is.

Adult Advisor: _____ from which congregation _____

E-mail or phone of DRE: _____

Parent/guardians email: _____ Phone _____

EVERYONE: Emergency contact(s):

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Phone _____ Dietary

Restrictions: _____

Medical Information: Medical conditions, mobility restrictions, or special-care needs:

Allergies: Allergic to any food or medication? NO YES If yes,

specify: _____

Dietary Restrictions/Preferences _____

Medications: Group leaders must be informed of any prescription medications brought by youth, with clear information as to proper use and dosage. If medication is "as needed", your child must understand the symptoms of their condition and know when to ask for help. Adults will only dispense medication with parental permission. List medications youth may be taking this weekend (on separate paper, if necessary):

INSURANCE INFORMATION, MEDICAL CONSENT & LIABILITY RELEASE

Company & Policy Number: _____

Policyholder: _____ Physician Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

****PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF INSURANCE CARD****

*******PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT*******

As legal guardian of the above named minor, I give my permission for him/her to be involved in the Overnight Gathering. I am familiar with the general purpose of the program. I understand that youth and adults at the event must read and sign a Behavior Code. If my child needs to be sent home for any reason, including behavior problems or medical reasons, I agree it will be at my expense and time. As the above-named legal guardian I hereby attest that I have read this complete document; all information provided is complete and true; I have legal standing to make decisions which affect the rights of the above-named participant; and, I understand and consent to all terms outlined on both pages of this document. I hereby voluntarily and knowingly assume all risks and dangers inherent and incidental to Overnight Gathering activities and travel, understanding that some activities may pose a risk of injury. I will not hold liable the Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor, their employees, agents and event/youth group leaders for any injury, illness or property damage involving the above named participant no matter how caused. Whenever deemed necessary by group leaders, I authorize the calling of a doctor and/or providing of other medical services and, unless covered by insurance, agree to pay for same.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

YOUTH and ADULTS: I have read and agree to abide by the Overnight Gathering Behavior Code:

Signature _____ Date _____

YOUTH WHO MAY BE ABUSERS

From *Balancing Acts, Keeping Children Safe in Congregations*, by Reverend Debra W. Haffner (www.uua.org)

One of the most difficult possible situations is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of inappropriately sexually touching a child in the congregation. The difficulty is that in some cases these children may simply be acting on their sexual feelings impulsively, not quite understanding the importance of boundaries, whereas in other cases, youth and children who engage in sexual activity with younger children may become future adult offenders. If an older child forces sex on a younger child or exposes his or her genitals to a younger child, both of these children will need professional help. If an older child demonstrates inappropriate sexual interest in younger children that doesn't extend to these behaviors, there may or may not be cause for congregational involvement. However, "any child who engages in sex play with a much younger child, or children who coerce or force someone to engage in sex, is beyond normal sexual exploration. If a child is being used in any way to meet the sexual needs of another, then it is sexual abuse." [xx] And some children who behave this way are acting out their own history of sexual abuse.

After such an incident comes to the attention of the minister or other staff member, the minister should initiate contact individually with the parents of both children to discuss the allegation and next steps. In both of the congregations who were interviewed where this had happened, the ministers reported that the parents had simply stopped coming to the congregation rather than seeking help for their children and support from the faith community during what is surely a difficult time.

The minister should encourage the parents of the child who was touched to seek an evaluation for this child. Some children may seem unchanged by the incident. However, a child who has been sexually abused, according to Stop It Now!, "needs specialized help and attention to heal from this abuse" through treatment with a specialist, "otherwise he or she might be at risk for further abuse or for showing abusing behaviors." However, with treatment and support, the risk of either further abuse or for abusing is dramatically decreased. Contact the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) or the Safer Society Foundation for referrals if you don't have a local list of therapists with expertise in this area. [xxi]

The parents of the child who initiated the sexual contact need to be engaged more thoroughly in discussions about next steps. Depending on the state law and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to call Child Protective Services. Regardless, before the initiator is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive an extensive assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist with experience with children with sexual behavior problems. It is NOT the responsibility of the minister or the response team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place.

While this review is occurring, it is important that the child's religious education teacher be informed of the allegation and for the parents to agree to closely monitor their child before and after the religious education program. It may make sense to remove the child from religious education during this time. It would certainly be prudent for the child not to be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete.

The minister will need to decide if the situation warrants the involvement of the entire Safer Congregation Team and at what point. If the evaluation finds that this was simply a case of inappropriate boundaries or impulsive behavior, and with the recommendation of the therapist that the child can safely attend church functions with other children, the minister and the parents can meet with the child to discuss the importance of never repeating the behavior, the harm it can do to other children, and the consequences should such a situation occur again.

On the other hand, if the treatment provider reports that the child has a sexual behavior problem that is likely to be repetitive, the minister, the Director of Religious Education, the response team, and the parents need to meet to decide how and if the child can safely be involved with the Religious Education or Youth Group program. A modified Limited Access Agreement should be developed and signed by both the child and the parents. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the young person continued involvement with other children until treatment is completed and to consider

alternative ways to provide religious education, such as through individual sessions with a Director of Religious Education or home schooling.

In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for sexual offenses back into the congregation after treatment is completed. In such cases, the steps for involving an adult offender can be followed, including a Limited Access Agreement signed by both the youth and their parents.

In any of these cases, pastoral care and support for the families involved is crucial. This will be very difficult for the parents involved, and they will need the support of their church community, especially the minister and the Director of Religious Education. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential, as is the ongoing offer of ministry.

RESOURCES

UUA Resources

UUA website-articles, links to outside resources, videos and more. Type “trauma response resources” into the search box on www.usua.org

Maine Resources

Division of Youth and Family Services- Toll free hotline (7 days/24hrs) to report child abuse and neglect: 1-877-NJ ABUSE(652-2873)

Maine Battered Women’s Coalition 609-584-8107

Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJ CASA) Hotline: 1-800-601-7200; Office: 609-631-4450

General Information about Child Sexual Abuse- ChildHelp USA - National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A Child Hotline is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week. www.childhelpusa.org

Prevent Child Abuse America 1800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373) www.childabuse.org

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network 800-656-HOPE www.rainn.org

REFERENCES

This policy was developed after consulting many sources within the UUA as well as utilizing materials/policies from UUA and Metro District workshops. Many materials did not indicate what congregation developed the policies. This list is therefore as complete as possible.

CONGREGATIONAL POLICY RESOURCES

Policy of Child Safety and Child Abuse Prevention, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas, June 20, 1995.

Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior, West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, Rocky River, OH, August 29, 1996.

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FOOTNOTES

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Limited Access Agreement (Appendix F.) from Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations, Debra W. Haffner, M.Div., M.P.H.