

Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation...

Executive Summary

This policy is aimed at the prevention of sexual misconduct, physical abuse and harassment and includes a policy on Disruptive Behavior.

The policy states that **education and training** is critical to the creation of a safer church environment and commits us to: Providing age appropriate information about development and sexuality for our children, youth, and adults on a regular basis. Keeping church workers, volunteer teachers, advisors and parents informed of this policy and review it at least annually through the use of the following:

- the Code of Ethics
- the Affirmation for Those Working with Children and Youth, herein identified as The Affirmation and
- Safety Procedures.

Screening, contacting references, conducting criminal history record checks, and formally interviewing all persons seeking paid employment at Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County (UUCDC); signing the Code of Ethics and Affirmation upon hire and annually thereafter.

Safety procedures outlined within the policy are in place to help staff, volunteers, teachers, and youth advisors avoid creating situations in which personal boundaries can become problematic. In addition, they address legal requirements and insurance obligations. Below are several of the 13 listed in the policy:

All volunteer teachers and youth advisors must have regularly attended UUCDC for at least 6 months.

At least two adult volunteers or paid staff will be assigned to and will be present in the nursery, each classroom and each youth group activity.

Church functions where care is provided require at least two adults providing and/or supervising the provision of child care. To the extent practicable those adults should be screened.

Children in Pre-K - first grade classes must be picked up by a parent or guardian at the end of RE class, unless other arrangements have been made with the Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) or Lifespan Religious Education (LRE) teacher of that class.

When/if situations involving individuals accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior, the accused individual will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved. In cases that involve the local DAs office or a conviction, the individual will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved and a response team will be formed to determine recommendations for this person to be safely involved with the UUCDC community. The response team will consist of the minister, DLRE, President of the Board of Trustees, and 2 members of the congregation. The policy outlines procedures specific to situations, for the formation of the response team and its subsequent tasks.

Any teacher, advisor, or parent who suspects or is made aware of an allegation of child abuse will report that concern to the DLRE or the Minister as soon as possible. If neither the Minister nor DLRE is available, the concern should be reported to the President of the Board of Trustees.

In the event of allegations of child abuse or of perceived threats to children's safety within the Church Community, the Minister and/or the President of the Board of Trustees will convene a Response Team in accordance with the response procedure described in the policy.

The policy includes a process for reporting child abuse; phone numbers are included.

The policy addresses safety and pastoral needs of an accused abuser and of the congregation in regards to reports of abuse and harassment.

The policy states that the safe congregation committee will report to the board of trustees annually regarding the implementation and compliance of the policy and that the board will be responsible for the education, implementation and compliance of this policy.

With regards to **health and safety procedures for preventing risk**, the policy states: that each classroom be supplied with band aids and non-latex gloves; nursery toys and furniture be cleaned regularly; shelves and furniture in classrooms be regularly checked for soundness; Chalice candles in classes Pre-K - Grade 5 be blown out immediately after prayer.

Before and after Lifespan Religious Education class time, parents are responsible to supervise their children and youth.

A policy on disruptive behavior is part of this document. Disruptive behavior challenges our sense of individual and communal safety and well-being. This policy includes 4 levels of response including the permanent exclusion from the church and its premises.

Available attachments include: Policy of disruptive behavior; Code of Ethics; Affirmation by those working with children and youth; LRE program volunteer reference sheet; PA mandatory reporting law regarding child abuse and neglect; statement of philosophy behind safety plan # 12(plan involving individuals accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior); Medical release form; Notice regarding the policy and procedures of "toward a safe church and safe congregation."

February 1, 2007

Copies of the document: "Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation..." and attachments are available in the church office.