

Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Policy

This policy is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist principles and practices. We believe in the worth and dignity of every person. We believe in justice, equity and compassion in human relations. We affirm the use of due process in our congregations and honor the hard work we do together in community. We place a high value on creating a culture of sanctuary and safety within our congregation. As a community, we recognize the necessity of policies and guidelines that prepare us for responding with courage and compassion to situations that challenge the safety of our congregation.

The policy addresses two topics: (1) Keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse; and (2) Responding to a request for participation from a person accused or found guilty of a sexual offense against a child, youth or adult.

Keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse

This section of the policy addresses requirements for screening and selecting volunteers and employees to work with children and youth, for supervising and transporting children and youth and for reporting known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

As stated by the UUA: “Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one that can carry a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone, child care worker, teacher, choir director, minister, or in any other role, adults have a special opportunity to interact with young people in ways that are affirming and inspiring to young people and adults.... while it is important that adults be capable of meaningful friendships with the young people with whom they work, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and young adults.” (*UUA Congregational Handbook*, 1995)

Screening and selecting employees and volunteers: All individuals who will be working with UUSS children and youth will be formally screened (see Attachment A), including providing the information required to conduct a background or other record check. They must also receive a copy of the UUSS Sexually Safer Congregation Policy: Sexual Misconduct and Abuse, and they must sign the UUSS Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth (Attachment B) and the Agreement to Teach Form (Attachment C).

Individuals who are new to the congregation and wish to be involved in leading programs for children or youth must either (1) have been involved with UUSS for a minimum of one year or (2) receive an exception, based on a basic interview, from the Religious Educator in consultation with a minister, or on the recommendation of a minister or Religious Educator at another congregation where the volunteer has provided such services or has been an active member for a minimum of one year.

Supervision of children and youth: At least two unrelated adults must be present at all times in each UUSS classroom, at youth group meetings, in child care, and at other activities involving children and youth in the church. Child care providers must meet the criteria for screening and selecting employees and volunteers. Teens and preteens may assist with child care when there are already two adults present. They must be approved to assist by undergoing a screening interview by the minister, the Religious Educator, or the volunteer in the charge of the program.

Written permission from a parent or legal guardian is required for children or youth to attend an off-site UUSS activity. They also must not be transported to or from such events without parent or legal guardian permission for transportation. Two adults must be in the car with the children or youth. In exceptional circumstances a single adult may transport one child with special written permission given by the parent or guardian.

Reporting known or suspected child abuse or neglect: Mandated reporters of child sexual abuse or neglect in California include ministers (with the exception of privileged communications) and employees of organizations where they work with or supervise others who work with children. If the situation is an emergency, call 911 immediately. Mandated reporters at UUSS who reasonably suspect that a child has been abused or neglected must, as soon as possible, call in a report to the Sacramento County Child Protective Services child abuse 24-hour hotline at (916) 875-KIDS. For the mandated reporter, this must be followed within 36 hours by a written report on form SS8572 that can be completed online. The form requires a password from the official who has taken the verbal report. The form and instructions for completing it are available at <http://dhhs.saccounty.net> They must also file a UUSS Incident and Injury Report.

A UUSS volunteer who works with children or youth and reasonably suspects child abuse or neglect may make a verbal report by calling the CPS 24-hour hotline at (916) 875-KIDS. No written report is required to be submitted for non-mandated reporters. They have legal confidentiality protection and protection against criminal or civil liability. The volunteer must file a UUSS Incident Report (Attachment E) and inform a UUSS minister under all circumstances. A description of what constitutes child abuse or neglect in California is available at <http://ag.ca.gov/childabuse/pdf/8583guide.pdf>.

Responding to a request for participation from a person who has been accused or found guilty of a sexual offense

This section of the policy establishes guidelines for responding to a person with a history or an accusation of sexual abuse who wishes to participate in our congregation, or an existing member of the congregation with similar circumstances who wishes to continue participation in the congregation. A sex offender may become known to the congregation in various ways. It may be that the individual requests a meeting with a minister to discuss involvement with UUSS. This is often a therapist's recommendation, as research indicates that engagement with a faith community is a positive step toward

healing, accountability and reduces the risk of recidivism. In other cases, another member of the congregation may discover a congregant's history of sexual offenses, or a familiar name may appear on the public sex offender registry.

Regardless of how the information is shared, the following guidelines must be immediately followed. All steps must be documented.

(1) Meet with the minister: The Minister shall meet, as soon as possible, with the individual to discuss concerns. Checking California's Megan's Law database prior to that meeting may be helpful. Until that meeting occurs, the person should not be on our campus, unless coming to meet with the minister and accompanied by an escort.

(2) Convene a UUSS Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team: The Minister in consultation with the Board of Trustees shall convene a group to serve as a Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team for this situation. This team should include the Minister, at least one member of the Board of Trustees, and one or two members of the congregation. The charge for this team is: given the circumstances of the individual and what professionals have advised you, is it appropriate to require that this person sign a Limited Access Agreement (discussed below) that they can maintain with UUSS leadership in order to assure the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults in the congregation? If appropriate, it is reasonable to expect that the individual will sign and obey the Agreement.

(3) Establish contact with the individual's team members: The Minister shall require the individual to sign release forms so that the team can contact the person's parole officer and treatment provider and/or current therapist. It is important to know the number, timing and nature of offenses. The parole officer and therapist should also be asked their professional opinion about the likelihood that the individual will reoffend and whether restrictions beyond the Limited Access Agreement should be placed on the individual's participation.

If the individual has been in the community for some time and has previously completed mandated treatment, the Response Team should ask the person to go to a therapist who specializes in working with sex offenders for a professional assessment of re-offense risk and whether restrictions beyond the Limited Access Agreement should be placed on the individual's participation.

(4) Sign a Limited Access Agreement: Once the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team has gathered information from the steps above and from any other appropriate professional resources, they will determine whether a Limited Access Agreement is appropriate (see Attachment D). The Minister must inform the individual in writing, copying the Board of Trustees.

A Limited Access Agreement invites the individual with a history of sex offenses to participate in certain aspects of congregational life while setting clear

boundaries. All persons with past histories of sexual offenses should be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement. Depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to sign one annually. If the offender refuses to do so, the person should be denied 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.

(5) Assign a Support and Accountability Group: Once a Limited Access Agreement is signed, a Support and Accountability Group will be selected for this individual by the Minister in consultation with the Board. The Group should include the Minister and 3 members of the congregation, preferably those who have served on the person's Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team. They would serve as monitors and companions for the person when they are on site or engaged in any UUSS activity approved by the Limited Access Agreement. The Limited Access Agreement will not be implemented until the Support and Accountability Group is selected.

(6) Determine the need to inform others: Key people in the congregation who are already informed of the situation at this point include the Minister, the Board of Trustees, members of the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team, and members of the individual's Support and Accountability Group. The Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team is responsible for determining whether, at this time, additional members or the entire congregation should be notified of the situation, the conditions of the Limited Access Agreement, and the identity of the individual. If the Team decides that additional sharing is appropriate, the Minister, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, will quickly determine the manner in which that information is shared and will proceed to implement it.

Reasons for excluding a person from all congregation activities:

- The person refuses to sign release forms allowing the team to contact the treatment provider and parole officer
- The person refuses to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist, if that is requested
- A report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism
- The person refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement
- The individual refuses or fails to comply in any way with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement

The congregation will be informed of this policy through an annual announcement in the *Unigram* and the policy will be posted on our website in an easily accessible place.

Approved by UUSS Board of Trustees August 2018; to be reviewed every 2 years.

Attachments

A: Screening Form for Religious Educators, Youth Group Staff and Volunteers

B: Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth

C: Agreement to Teach Form

D: Limited Access Agreement Form

E: UUSS Incident and Injury Reports

Attachment A

Screening Form for Religious Educators and Youth Group Staff and Volunteers

Thank you for your interest in working with the children and youth of UUSS. Our congregation takes seriously our responsibility of assuring the safety of our youth.

Please fill out this form and give it to the Religious Educator. Thank you for your support in providing a safe and secure environment for all of the congregation's children and youth.

Full Legal Name

First:

Middle:

Last:

Have you ever used a different name?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please list with dates:

How long have you been attending UUSS?

Address/Employment:

Street:

Town, State, Zip:

Number of years at current address:

If you have not lived at this address for at least 5 years, please list any previous addresses with dates:

What states have you lived in since you were 18 years old?

Home phone:

Work phone:

Place of work:

Number of years at current employment:

May we call your current employer for a character reference?

No () Yes ()

If not, please tell us why:

Personal History:

A. Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please explain:

B. 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?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

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

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

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

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

E. Other than the 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 and youth?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

Congregation History and Prior Work with Children and Youth:

List other congregations you have attended during the past five years:

Name of congregation(s):

City, State:

When you attended:

List all previous work involving children and youth (list name, type of work performed, person you were responsible to):

References:

Please list two references who are not relatives, who have known you for at least three years and who are familiar with your character as it pertains to your experience with children or youth:

1) Name:

Phone:

Address:

Relationship to you:

2) Name:

Phone:

Address:

Relationship to you:

I authorize UUSS to contact references and other congregations to obtain information about my background regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. I authorize references to provide such information 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 member of the staff may check the sex offender registry and/or contact the local police for more information about my background.

This information will be available only to those responsible for screening staff or volunteers or participating in a response team, or as required by law.

I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Name (printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I give the Unitarian Universalist Society my permission to use in confidence personal information to conduct my background check in accordance with the UUSS Sexually Safer Congregation Policy.

Social Security Number:
Driver's License #:
Signature:

Date of Birth:
Expiration Date:
Date:

Attachment B

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

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

The relationship between youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if 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 children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore, leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

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

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

Name _____ (printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Attachment C

Agreement to Teach for Religious Educators and Youth Group Leaders

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Cell phone:

Email:

I have read and understand our congregation's policy on keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe – the ***UUSS Sexually Safer Congregation Policy: Sexual Misconduct and Abuse***.

I agree to uphold these principles in my work with UUSS children, youth, adults, and families.

I have signed the Code of Ethics statement.

I affirm that I have never been accused of, convicted of, or pled guilty to any sexual crime. I also have not pled guilty to a lesser charge after having been charged with a sexual crime. I have never engaged in any form of child abuse, including sexual abuse. I have never been determined to have engaged in any sexual offenses in any civil, administrative, or ecclesiastical forum or another forum.

If there are any facts or circumstances in my background that call into question my being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, I have met to review this information confidentially with the Minister and the Religious Educator.

Further, I agree to notify the Minister and the Religious Educator immediately should I be accused of sexual abuse, sexual offenses, sexual harassment, or other sexual improprieties in the time that I am working with children and youth in this congregation.

Name _____ (printed) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Attachment D

Limited Access Agreement

There are two versions of the Limited Access Agreement introductory paragraph. One applies to an individual with a serious allegation and the second addresses the case of a convicted sex offender.

Introductory paragraph in cases of allegation:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to UUSS. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the children, youth and adults in our congregation 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 Religious Educator and the members of the Sexual Abuse and Response Team. It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Introductory paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:

UUSS 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. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children, youth and adults 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 to ensure the safety of our children, youth and adults and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Content of Limited Access Agreement: A draft Limited Access Agreement is on the next page. It is designed to be completed as a checklist, with a “Yes” or “No” indicated for each activity. Additional activities can be added as appropriate. The checklist should be completed in a meeting that includes the individual, the Minister, the Religious Education Director, the Board Chair, and the congregational members of the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team. All should sign the agreement. The agreement should be reviewed annually. If a new agreement is appropriate, it should be signed by all the above individuals.

Limited Access Agreement

Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

[Insert introductory paragraph, either for cases of allegation or for cases of a convicted sex offender]

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 () Yes ()

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

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

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

- Access to church computer
No () Yes ()
- Social activities in other member's homes with children present
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Other:
 - 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.

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. ***[Insert names, position in congregational leadership as appropriate, sign and date]***

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 at least annually and will remain for an indefinite period.

Printed _____ Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness _____ Printed _____ Name: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Minister Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director/Minister Religious Education Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Chair, Board of Trustees Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Member of Support Team Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Member of Support Team Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Attachment E

UUSS Incident Report and Notice of Injury Report

Incident/Injury Report: As soon as you witness or are informed that an injury has occurred on the church campus, please make sure that the person injured is taken care of. Then please complete these forms with all the info available and include any attachments. File the originals with the UUSS Administrative & Facilities Coordinator.

PLEASE PRINT!

When did the incident occur?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Where did the incident occur?

List all people who were present and/or involved:

If anyone was injured, please complete the “Notice of Injury” form below and attach a copy.

Description of Incident:

(continue on back, if needed)

Was a report filed with the Police? _____
(yes or no)

If yes, please attach.

Report written by:

Printed Name

Title

Signature

Date

Phone

Email

Is there a suggestion for a way this incident/injury could have been avoided?

Report received by:

Signature, Administrative & Facilities Coordinator

Date

Notice of Injury

Time and Place of Injury

Date of Injury _____ Time _____

Where did the injury occur? _____

Person Injured

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Name of parents/guardians (if a minor) _____

Injuries sustained _____

Where was injured taken? (hospital/doctor) _____

Relationship to USS (member, visitor, employee, student, other)

If injury occurred on premises, for what purpose was injured on premises?

Who was responsible for supervision at the time of injury?

If injury occurred elsewhere, what connection did it have with USS operations or activities?

Does the injured party have personal medical insurance that could apply? Yes or no.

If so, name of medical insurance company _____

Full Description of Incident

Witnesses

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Signature _____

Date of report _____