

UU CHURCH OF SPOKANE

Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

as of 1 November 2016

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The Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane (UUCS) recognizes the importance of creating an environment where children, youth and vulnerable adults are safe.

Educating Children

A high quality sexuality education program, such as Our Whole Lives (OWL) is one of the best methods for sexual abuse prevention. Children who learn that their bodies are good, that their sexuality is a gift, how to make good decisions, and the language to communicate accurately and effectively about sexuality are also being prepared to respond appropriately when faced with abusive behaviors, to assert their right to control their own bodies, and to tell an adult if such behaviors occur.

The UUCS has a well-established OWL program at all grade levels, with strong support from the congregation. We encourage parents to become acquainted with the OWL program and enroll their children.

In addition, education about child sexual abuse prevention will be part of the Children and Family Ministries (CFM) program to be offered twice during elementary grades, and once during middle and high school.

Screening

All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth will complete a screening form that asks directly about histories of criminal offenses. Background checks will be conducted.

Religious educators and youth group leaders will sign a code of ethics statement and agreement to teach.

Teachers or youth advisors must be a member or friend in good standing of this or another UU congregation for a minimum of three months, or be a professional employee of the church.

Advisors for high school youth must be at least 25 years old, advisors for middle school must be at least 21 years old, and all other teachers must be at least 16 years old. Caregivers supervising children at UUCS events must be at least 13 years old.

Training

Every person who works with children and youth will attend an annual training on child sexual abuse prevention and reporting requirements.

This training will include:

- Definition of child abuse and reportable situations
- Safety beyond the church
- Sexual and physical abuse symptoms
- Congregation policies
- Reporting procedures

While some may see annual training as burdensome when they are familiar with the topic, their experience brings a valuable perspective to newer volunteers and communicates our church's commitment to safety.

Policies

Alcohol Use

No alcohol will be allowed at Children and Family Ministry-sponsored events unless an exception has been granted by the Management Team.

Supervision requirements

These ratios are the maximum, and it is recommended a "floating adult", usually the Director of Children and Family Ministries (DCFM), be available to step in and assist with activities if necessary.

- Pre-school care (Children aged 3-5 years. Ratio 6:1)
- Primary group care (Children aged 6-8 years. Ratio 6:1)
- Elementary group care (Children aged 9-11 years. Ratio 12:1)
- Junior High group care (Children aged 12-14 years. Ratio 14:1)
- Senior high group care (Children aged 15+ years. Ratio 16:1)
- Childcare during other UUCS events (Ratio 6:1)

All Religious Education (RE) classes must have two adults present.

UUCS provides childcare on request for school-aged children at many events.

The DCFM will maintain a list of care-givers who are at least 13, and who are recommended by a member or friend of the church.

Off-site events and transportation

A minimum of two adults must accompany any group of children going off-site. It is the responsibility of parents to provide or organize safe transportation to and from UUCS events. If a child is riding in a vehicle other than the parent's vehicle, a permission slip must be signed by the parent(s) and be collected by the event organizer.

Procedures for reporting, response and removal of a teacher, leader, employee or disruptive child

Any person with concern about an adult shall immediately contact the UUCS Director of Children and Family Ministries or the UUCS Minister who will assess the situation and take immediate, precautionary measures to protect the safety of the child(ren) when he or she believes a volunteer, caregiver or staff member may have engaged in behavior harmful to children. Precautionary measures may include promptly relieving the affected worker from his or her work to the extent that it involves interaction with children. This removal will be done, pending a fair hearing as outlined below.

The Director of Children and Family Ministries (DCFM) will provide the affected worker or volunteer with an opportunity to know the charges against him or her. Whenever possible and without risk of further harm occurring, the affected worker or volunteer will be given an opportunity to know the evidence, and source thereof, supporting such charges, and the right to reply to or rebut such charges. After assessing the situation, the DCFM will consult with the minister, the RE Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees. It is understood that such action will be handled with due caution and discretion. Because of potential exposure to charges of discrimination or other legal hazard, the UU District staff should be promptly advised of the circumstances surrounding any removal action under this policy.

Procedures for managing disruptive or dangerous behavior

In the event that any child in the UUCS classes or events is exhibiting behavior that is, in the opinion of the teachers or caregivers, endangering the child or any other child and cannot be reasonably controlled, the teachers or caregivers shall immediately send for the DCFM. The situation will be assessed with an option of asking the child's parent to immediately remove the child from the class or activity.

After observing the child's behavior the DCFM should consult the parents and RE teachers about effective strategies to manage the child's behavior in the RE classes. If, after behavior strategies are implemented, the child continues to behave in a disruptive manner, the DCFM should ask the child's parents to attend the RE classes alongside the child, in order to manage their behavior. If the child continues to behave in a disruptive manner, the DCFM will explore the possibility of meeting the child's religious education needs in another manner. If this proves impractical, the DCFM, in consultation with the RE Leadership Team Chair, should tell the parents that the child can no longer attend RE sessions.

Code of conduct for adults working with children and youth

Adults and teens working with children and youth at UUCS events and activities are expected to have the best interests of children and youth at heart. People working with children and youth are expected to nurture the physical, emotional and spiritual growth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respect and fun. People working with children and youth are expected to follow this code of conduct.

Managing behavior issues: Ask for support from the RE Leadership Team Chair if you are facing serious behavior issues with a child or group of children. Corporal punishment may NOT be used under any circumstances.

Teachers and caregivers of children of all ages are NOT responsible for:

- Changing infant's diapers
- Assisting a child in the bathroom
- Caring for seriously distressed children
- Caring for disruptive infants, children or youth
- Caring for sick or injured infants, children or youth
- Caring for children whose special needs mean the caregiver cannot satisfactorily care for other children present
- Caring for children who are endangering themselves or other children and cannot be reasonably controlled

Teachers and caregivers must immediately send for the RE Leadership Team Chair or the child's parents should any of the above issues arise.

Parental handovers for under-fives: At the end of classes or activities, teachers of children five years or under must ensure that the children are either picked up from the classroom by their parent or caregiver, or taken by an adult or responsible older child to their parents.

Release of over fives from classes: Children over the age of five may be released at the end of class to join their parents.

Friendship with children and youth: Although UUCS hopes that youth and adults will have a genuine fondness for one another, adults working with children should not develop "friendships" with children and youth. In the adult/youth relationship the adult must assume primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries in the relationship.

Appendices

Appendix I: Training

Every person who works with children and youth will attend an annual training on child sexual abuse prevention and reporting requirements.

Definition of child abuse and reportable situations

Washington statute defines child abuse or neglect:

“Abuse or neglect” means sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or injury of a child by any person under circumstances which cause harm to the child’s health, welfare, or safety, or the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for providing care to the child.”

Physical abuse means the non-accidental infliction of physical injury, including:

- Throwing, kicking, burning, or cutting a child
- Striking a child with a closed fist
- Shaking a child under age three
- Interfering with a child’s breathing
- Threatening a child with a deadly weapon
- Doing any other act that is likely to cause bodily harm greater than transient pain or minor temporary marks or which is injurious to the child’s health welfare, and safety.

Sexual abuse:

Sexual abuse means committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child defined in the criminal code. The intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or allowing, permitting, compelling, encouraging, aiding, or otherwise causing a child to engage in touching the sexual or other intimate parts of another for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of the person touching the child, the child or a third party. A parent or guardian of a child, a person authorized by the parent or guardian to provide childcare for the child, or a person providing medically recognized services for the child may touch a child in the sexual or other intimate parts for the purposes of providing hygiene, child care and medical treatment or diagnosis.

Age of consent violations occur when there is consensual sexual behavior but the age of the younger person and the age difference between the people is illegal. In most situations, once a young person is 16 years old, they are legally able to consent to sexual activity and a significant age difference between the parties is not reportable.

Consensual sexual activity must be reported with these ages and age differences:

- 14 or 15 and their partner is 48+ months older
- 12 or 13 and their partner is 36+ months older
- 11 or younger and their partner is 24+ months older

The law does not recognize gender in these cases, for example, younger male and older female, or partners of the same gender.

The law attempts to protect younger, less sophisticated children and youth from older people who may manipulate them while at the same time protecting children of similar ages and maturity where there is no coercion, from being prosecuted as sex offenders.

Rape or non-consensual sexual contact of people 17 and younger and vulnerable adults must always be reported.

Sexual Exploitation:

Includes, but is not limited to:

- Prostitution
- Sexually explicit obscene or pornographic photography filming or electronic transmission
- Sexually explicit obscene or pornographic activity as part of a live performance

Negligent Treatment or Maltreatment

Maltreatment with a serious disregard creating a clear and present danger to the child's health welfare or safety.

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing supervision or health care
- Actions or omissions that result in injury or risk to physical, emotional and/or cognitive development of a child
- Chronic failure to perform basic parental functions resulting in injury or risk of injury

Abandonment

Abandonment of a child by a parent may be established by conduct on the part of a parent or guardian that demonstrates a substantial lack of regard for health, welfare, and safety of the child.

Recognizing child abuse and neglect

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

● **THE CHILD:**

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, or does not want to go home.

● **THE PARENT:**

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

● **THE PARENT & CHILD:**

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.



Consider the possibility of *PHYSICAL ABUSE* when:

● **THE CHILD:**

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Offers conflicting explanations as to how the injury occurred.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school.
- Is frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

● **THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

Consider the possibility of *NEGLECT* when:

● **THE CHILD:**

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Beggars or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

● **THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Consider the possibility of *SEXUAL ABUSE* when:

● **THE CHILD:**

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

● **THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

Consider the possibility of **EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT** when:

Emotional Maltreatment is not specifically defined in Washington State law. However, emotional maltreatment may occur at the same time with other forms of maltreatment.

● **THE CHILD:**

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is inappropriately acting like an adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example).
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

● **THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.

Confidentiality

Youth have real concerns about confidentiality, particularly in matters related to sexuality. OWL teachers, youth group advisors, and Religious Education volunteers may confront this issue when teaching. Teachers should always give a disclaimer at the beginning of the class to set the tone.

Groups often make covenants to keep discussion within the group confidential and they have every right to expect that adult facilitators will respect those agreements. This creates a safe environment to have discussion on difficult topics. There is however, an important caveat that needs to be clearly stated. ***“If we learn that someone is at risk of harming themselves or another person, or if they’re being hurt by someone, we will share that information in order to get help for them.”***

In our church community, we care for, help and support one another. Obviously, if a situation falls into the categories defined by the law as child abuse or neglect, we report to Child Protective Services. But situations often fall into a gray area. In general, the areas described below will require action. Our goal is to help the individual and family by connecting them with appropriate resources so problems can be addressed.

- **Self-harm.** Examples of this include talk or evidence of cutting, talk of suicide or serious depression, eating disorders.
- **Harm to others or victimization.** Examples of this include bullying, harassment (electronic or real life), threats of violence, or unhealthy dating relationships that are physically or emotionally abusive.
In these situations, the teaching team should discuss with the DRE. The minister should be made aware. Together the group should make a plan on how to inform the parents. Resources in the community should be offered.

- Age of consent violations. Consensual sexual activity involving one party 15 or younger may be an age of consent violation depending on the age difference between the partners. This might be that the young person is either the victim or the abuser. If you suspect there is a violation, discuss with the DCFM and as appropriate, report to Child Protective Services.

What should be kept confidential? A young person may feel safe to share information with a teacher or advisor that while not illegal or dangerous, is not in their best interests. In this case, confidences should be kept. The young person has recognized you as a caring adult they trust and feel safe to confide in. Keep the lines of communication open and, as appropriate, help them navigate their way. Offer community resources, as appropriate. The DCFM can help you sort through difficult issues.

Appendix II: Child Protective Services Report Form

Today's date

Child's full name

Physical abuse Neglect Sexual abuse

Nature and extent

Any additional information that may be helpful

Identity of the alleged perpetrator

Parent 1

Home address

Parent 2

Home address

Call Child Protective Services to make a report 1-866-363-4276

Name of person making the report

Name of person to whom the report was made

Summary of conversation

Appendix III:

Screening form for Religious Educators, Youth Group Staff and Volunteers

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

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

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 this congregation?

Address

Street:

City 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

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 congregations you have attended during the past five years:

Name of congregation:

City, State:

When did attend:

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

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 pertain to your experience with children or youth:

1) Name:

Phone:

Address:

Relationship to you:

2) Name:

Phone:

Address:

Relationship to you:

I authorize the congregation 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.

Signature: _____

Date:

Appendix IV:

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

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

Name (signed): _____

Date:

Appendix V:

Agreement to Teach Form for Religious Educators and Youth Group Leaders

Name:

Address:

City:

Phone:

Cell phone:

Email:

I have read and understand our congregation's policies on keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe.

I have attended training to learn what must be reported to child protective services and how our church responds to issues of safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

I agree to uphold these principles in my work with UUCS 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 other 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 Director of Children and Family Ministry (DCFM).

Further, I agree to notify the Minister and the DCFM 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.

Signature: _____

Date: