



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SALEM
Safer Congregation Policy

| Status | Board/Committee | Status Date |
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| Approved | Board of Directors | June 1, 2017 |
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Introduction

As Unitarian Universalists each of us is called to enter into covenantal relations with awareness of the impact we have upon one another and continually strive to embody the values we share. To this end the board of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem (UUCS) has adopted these Safer Congregations policies.

UUCS maintains a standing Safer Congregation Committee. Membership of this committee includes one of the ministers, the Director of Religious Education, a member of the board, and at least two members of the congregation appointed by the chair of the committee. The congregation is advised annually of the members of the committee. The committee meets quarterly at a minimum. The names of the committee members appear in the newsletter and on the website.

These policies will be posted on the web site and will be conveyed at the annual meeting. New policies will be presented in the annual report to the congregation. All policies will be reviewed annually by the Safer Congregation Committee.

Sexual harassment

UUCS is committed to being a congregation and a workplace free of sexual harassment of any kind. Any person who has a concern or knowledge of

sexual harassment within our UUCS community involving a congregant or staff member is urged to contact a member of the Safer Congregation Committee. The Safer Congregation Committee will investigate the concern as per the Harassment Free Environment Policy and Safer Congregation procedures.

Concerns about professional sexual misconduct by one of the ministers should be brought to the attention of the committee and the Chair of the Board who will contact the appropriate association staff.

The Safer Congregation Committee, in conjunction with the Committee on Human Resources, offers a training on Harassment Free Environment for UUCS staff, and to the congregation, every other year.

In addition, ministers and other appropriate staff will have training on sexual misconduct prevention, handling sexual attractions and boundaries, and offering pastoral responses to disclosure of past and present abuse.

Criminal background checks

In any community, the health and safety of the children, youth, and adults is, and should be, one of the most important facets of that community. We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, while recognizing that there are times when an individual's actions or behavior are not in keeping with Unitarian Universalist values.

The Safer Congregation Committee is responsible for performing background checks in accordance with the Criminal Background Check Policy. All new staff are subject to background checks, completion of the screening form and signing the Code of Ethics Policy, as part of the hiring process, as per Personnel Policies. A criminal background check will be completed for all staff, including ministers, every three years. For new employees, employment is contingent acceptable reports regarding sexual offenses. The Safer Congregation Committee will review all background checks and make a determination of a person's suitability to serve.

Criminal background checks will be done at the start of service for all adults or youth over age 18 who work with children, youth or vulnerable populations. Criminal background checks will be done on those in leadership positions who have access to church funds or personal

confidential information. The Safer Congregation Committee will review all criminal background checks and determine a person's suitability to serve.

Criminal background checks will be repeated every three years thereafter.

Training in child abuse prevention

Training in child abuse prevention is to be provided each year for Religious Exploration (RE) volunteers and every two years for members of the congregation.

Information for children on child abuse prevention will be included in K-2 and 5th-6th grade classes. Information will be included in the 8th grade program and at least every other year in high school.

Lifelines Lay Minsters will receive training on abuse prevention every two years.

Religious Exploration

All adult RE staff and volunteers will have a background check and sign the Code of Ethics Policy before beginning to teach.

All RE staff and volunteers must follow the RE Children and Youth Volunteer Handbook and Safety Policies and Procedures.

All volunteers for the RE program must attend UUCS for at least one year prior to their RE service, unless prior experience and recommendations allow the DRE, in consultation with the chair of the Safer Congregation Committee, to determine otherwise.

Minors who volunteer in RE must sign the Code of Ethics Policy, attend child abuse prevention training and be supervised by an adult.

Rule of three

Adults must always have three people in a group for the safety of children and youth. They must never be with one child alone. There must always be another child or adult present.

Youth

Middle school and high school groups associated with the UUCS will follow Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) guidelines for safety at such

events, including a group covenant that intimate sexual behaviors are not to occur at such events. The Youth Advisors will work with the youth group each year in establishing a covenant that includes guidelines on romantic and sexual relationships within the group, physical displays of affection, and exclusive relationships within the youth group.

Child care providers

All approved child care providers will attend training on child abuse prevention, sign the Code of Ethics Policy for Working with Children and Youth, and complete a background check. Only child care providers on the approved list will be used by the congregation. Child care providers will also be encouraged to take a community babysitting course (i.e. Red Cross).

Social media

UUCS RE Guidelines for Social Media Communication with Children and Youth will be followed.

When the congregation has an official presence on any social media, that venue is open only to ages 14 and above. Any youth group social media space will be moderated by an adult Youth Advisor and no sexual content will be allowed.

Adult staff and volunteers will not have one on one media contact with youth. Prior to accepting a “friend” request from a minor, permission must be given by the parent or guardian. It is recommended the parent or guardians also be “friended.”

Parents must give written permission for use or posting of any minor’s photos in any venue; adult tagging of minor’s photos is not allowed in any public venue. Photographing of minors at congregation events is only by parental permission.

Drivers

All drivers for Lifeline Lay Ministers and RE activities must provide copies of driver’s licenses and insurance. Two unrelated adults must be in any car transporting unrelated minors. If this is not possible, there will be at least two children unrelated to the driver in a single driver’s car, and rest stops will be coordinated with other drivers.

Disruptive behavior

The UUUCS strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences of culture, faith and points of view. However, concerns for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on well-being and security. As requested the Safer Congregation Committee will provide assistance carrying out the Disruptive Behavior policy.

Sexual abuse allegations

Any adult, adolescent or child **accused** of a sexual offense of any kind will be asked not to attend or participate in any programs or services of the congregation until a Limited Access Agreement without prejudice is established. The Safer Congregation Committee response team will be convened within ten days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or member of the Safer Congregations Committee to develop the agreement. The agreement may subsequently be revised upon receipt of more information. The Limited Access Agreement will remain in effect until all charges are dropped or resolved and approval for participation is given by the Safer Congregation Committee. In cases where the allegations are confirmed by the Oregon Department of Human Services, or there is a conviction, the procedures described in Convicted sexual offenses (below) will be followed.

Convicted sexual offenses

It is expected that members of the congregation, staff, visitors, renters or any other adults using the building with a history of sexual misconduct/abuse/sexual offense, will make that history known to the minister or member of the Safer Congregation Committee. New members will be asked to report this information. When it becomes known the Safer Congregation Committee will follow the procedures below.

Any person **convicted** of a sexual offense or with a history of known sexual offenses will be placed on a Limited Access Agreement. The Safer Congregation Committee response team will be convened within ten days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or member of the Safer Congregation Committee in order to develop a Limited Access Agreement. This may be done upon consultation with the person's

probation or parole officer and/or treatment provider so it may be determined that they can safely participate in the adult life of the congregation.

Any person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses who will not sign the Limited Access Agreement will be denied access to any programs or services of the congregation.

For further procedures on responding to a person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses, the congregation will follow the procedures outlined in [Balancing Acts](#) by the UUA.