

Safe Congregation Procedures

Section:	Board
Policy Number:	2
Effective Date:	January 2013
Revision Number:	
Revisions:	
Approval:	

PURPOSE

- It is important to take necessary and reasonable steps to provide for the safety of our Congregation. This includes protecting members, particularly the children, from abuse.
- Protecting the children is the task of the adults in the church. The RE Committee has established procedure to screen RE Teachers for this goal (See below).
- Adults are seen as being responsible for themselves and we encourage recognition of our First Principle - the recognition of the inherent worth of all people - in relationships within our community. It is each adult's responsibility to make informed choices.
- The Safe Congregation Procedures outlined below are a continuation of our church's long-standing practice of being an Open Forum. As such, we do not necessarily endorse all positions expressed by groups within our organization or facility. It is our intent to provide as open a forum as possible and these safety procedures are not, therefore, intended to be administered in any way that editorializes, restricts, or censors the expression of ideas. The goal is to limit actions of those who intend to take advantage of others and thereby cause them harm.
- Safety concerns may be related to the Board directly to Board members, or through the Minister, DRE, or Ministerial Relations Committee members.

PERSONS AFFECTED

Staff, church members, volunteers and vendors of the Cheyenne UU

POLICY

DEFINITIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES

PROCEDURES

I. General Procedures:

1. The Church, through the agency of its Board, should know which groups are using the Church

facilities. Groups wishing to use the building or operate on behalf of the Church, shall present their request to the Board for review and approval. Groups may be approved for General Use or Rental Use.

2. Approval for General Use constitutes a waiver of the requirement to provide Proof of Insurance and Rental Payments required of Rental Groups.
3. Standing Committees of UUCC and Church related activities of UUCC are approved for building use subject to scheduling availability. Activities are to be scheduled with the Church Administrator.
4. The Board reserves the right to terminate General Use Approval status of any group in violation of these policies.
5. General Use Approval:
 - a. Approval for General Use refers to eligibility to use the building and does not constitute Endorsement or sponsorship of that Group's agenda.
 - b. New Groups requesting approval for General Use of the building or individual church members wishing to use the building for private functions shall:
 - i. Express a desire for such approval. Included is a statement of intent and activities as well as Name, Phone and Address of a contact person.
 - ii. Sign a statement of willingness to comply with Building Use Policies.
 - iii. Be identified by the Church Board as a group which the Church wishes to support. As a general practice, member-sponsored private functions will be approved on a space available basis except when such functions are counter to the UU Principles.
 - c. If the Board becomes aware of a Safety Concern, the Board shall investigate these factors. The investigation shall be reasonable, show respect and concern for all parties involved.
 - d. Groups approved for General Use are approved until the annual Board Organizational Meeting during the summer of each year unless a Review becomes necessary during the year.
 - e. The Board shall appoint a Liaison for Groups Approved for General Use. The Liaison shall be responsible:
 - i. For communication between Board and Group regarding general building use,
 - ii. Review at the Annual Board Organizational Meeting.
 - f. Group Responsibilities
 - i. Comply with Building Use Policies.
 - ii. Provide the Group Liaison with current contact person information.
 - iii. Request review at the annual Board Organizational meeting.
 - g. Scheduling - Groups approved for General Use are responsible for scheduling their meetings with the Church Administrator.
6. Rental Approval: Groups which simply wish to use the facility on a limited basis, or which are not approved for General Use may rent the building from the Church. Rental procedures include:

- a. Applying for rental approval to the Board. The application should include a statement of intent and activities as well as Name, Phone and Address of a contact person.
 - b. Complete a lease.
 - c. Agree to the Building Use Policies.
 - d. Provide evidence of Liability Insurance protection for the Church in minimum amounts of \$100,000 per incident with an annual limit of \$300,000.
7. Improper activity: If allegations of improper activities are made regarding members/leaders of General Groups or Rental Groups, those allegations are to be brought to the Board's attention for investigation and corrective actions as needed. The investigation will follow the guidelines outlined above.
8. All decisions made regarding building use, whether Executive Committee or full Board actions, will be made in consultation with the Minister.

II. RE Committee screening procedures are as follows: Sexual Abuse Policy for Children's Religious Education.(Religious Education Committee Recommendations)

1. All leaders and facilitators of religious education programs will complete an application process. This process includes an application (Appendix I), two references (Appendix II), signing a code of ethics (Appendix III), and agreeing to the guidelines of religious education volunteers (Appendix IV) In addition each volunteer would be involved in either a group or individual interview process. These policies will be retroactive to include those working with the religious education classes during the remainder of the year.
2. Those individuals working with youth groups will use the above process with the addition of a police records check (Appendix V).
3. Finally, the Religious Education Committee recommends that all paid employees of the church working over 5 hours per month provide further references, agree to a police check, and participate in a more involved interview process. The Director of Religious Education has discretionary rights in hiring and terminating volunteers. Disputed decisions can be taken to the Religious Education Committee and then, if needed to the board of directors.
4. For the safety of the teachers and the youth, all church activities will be supervised by two adults. Should an adult find themselves in a situation in which there is a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, they must have verbal parental permission. In a situation where one adult is supervising a group of children, immediate action should be taken to find another adult.
5. By Wyoming State Law everyone is a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Each teacher shall be made aware of the State statutes and receive a reporting kit which contains information regarding symptoms of abuse and the methods. The Director of Religious Education should be notified of any reports of child abuse.

III. RE Recommendations for Volunteer Policies and Guidelines

1. Volunteers shall have knowledge of and respect for the Unitarian Universalist Principles.
2. Volunteers shall model Unitarian Universalist values and maintain an atmosphere of respect and love in the classroom and during church activities.
3. Volunteers shall put the safety and needs of the children and youth first.
4. Volunteers shall create an atmosphere in which children and youth can feel safe, loved and emotionally comfortable, and are learning Unitarian Universalist values.
5. Volunteers shall be honest and reliable.
6. Volunteers shall be alcohol/drug-free while at church or a church functions where they are – responsible for children or youth during Religions Education Program sponsored activities. If a person wishes to volunteer in the Religious Education Program and is on any medication which could impair judgment or ability, the DRE must be informed and will make a determination jointly with the RE Committee at the appropriate placement of that volunteer in the program. This information will in the strictest confidence.
7. If, while volunteering in the Religious Education Program, a volunteer's circumstances change and they feel the need to alter their commitment, they can feel free to contact the Director of Religious Education at any time.
8. Mandatory Reporting. According to Wyoming state law, Every person, private citizen or professional, in Wyoming who has reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship with the child or family, is immune from reporting suspected abuse. A person making the report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability. Included is a reporting kit which contains further information.
9. Job Descriptions. Include job descriptions for teachers here.

IV. Procedure for filing a complaint of verbal or nonverbal sexual abuse against a member of the church staff, either paid or volunteer.

1. If a parent or guardian of a child in our Religious Education Program has reason to believe that his or her child has been sexually molested either by a teacher or by anyone else working in any capacity for the church; he or she should meet with the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and/or the President of the Board to discuss the incident(s). They shall inform parent or guardian of the procedures for filing of a complaint. A report shall be filed with the appropriate state agency according to state law. They shall also assist the parents, the child, and the family to receive whatever counseling and other services that are appropriate and needed. The volunteer or staff will not continue working until a review has been completed. All complaints shall be solved with the least amount of organizational involvement possible.
2. Upon hearing the complaint, the President and the Committee shall meet as soon as possible with the Minister, the DRE, or ether staff member against whom the complaint has been brought to hear his or her version of the incident(s).
3. Upon hearing both sides of the issue, the Committee may do any of the following:

- a. find that the complaint has no merit and dismiss it
- b. find that the complaint has merit and continue its investigation.

The Committee shall issue a written finding to both parties within 24 hours.

APPENDIX I Volunteer and Staff Application

This application is to be completed by all volunteer or staff applicants for any position involving the supervision or custody minors. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Personal Data

Date _____

Name _____
Last First Middle

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (daytime) _____ (evening) _____

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded or pleaded guilty to a crime (misdemeanor or felony exclusive of parking tickets)?

- yes (if yes, please explain) _____
 no

Do you have a valid driver's license?

- yes (# _____)
 no

If you will be working with the youth group, please attach proof of insurance.

Please initial

- _____ I have read, understood and signed the volunteer policies
_____ I have read and signed the authorization for a criminal records check
(youth advisor and staff applicants only).

References

Name _____ Name _____

Address _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Phone _____

Please list any previous work with youth or children in a paid or volunteer capacity:

Application – Page 2
Staff applicants only

Please list work history including names of supervisors, names of organizations, and addresses. Begin with most recent and move backwards through time.

APPENDIX II

Reference Contact Form-Confidential

Name of Applicant _____

Reference Contacted (identify both name and organization, if applicable)

Date and time of contact _____

Person making contact _____

Method of contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation) _____ Summary of contact

(attach written communications)

Legible Signature

_____ date _____

Position _____

Reference Contacted (identify both name and organization, if applicable)

~~Date and time of contact~~ _____

Person making contact _____

Method of contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation) _____

Summary of contact (attach written communications) Legible Signature

date

APPENDIX III

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth

Adult and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of leadership 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 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 children and youth in these area of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; there fore 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 which 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 the code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand the above code of ethics. Further, with my signature below, I agree to be bound by this code in my dealings with the children and youth of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX IV

Applicant’s Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including youth organizations, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application. If any information provided on this application proves to be false I understand that any arrangements between the Unitarian Universalist Church Of Cheyenne and myself are subject to review and possible termination.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release as my own Free Act. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant’s Signature _____ date:_____

Witness’ Signature_____date:_____

Request for Criminal Records Check and Authorization

I hereby request the Cheyenne Police Department to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release said Police Department from any all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature _____

_____ Print Name

Maiden Name (if applicable)

Print All Aliases

Date of Birth

Place of Birth

_____ Social Security Number (if required)

Today's Date

Record sent to:

Director of Religious Education
Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne
PO Box 2331
Cheyenne, WY 82003