

**First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany**  
**TOWARD A SAFE CONGREGATION**

A Policy for the Prevention of Unsafe Behaviors and Response when They Occur

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

A. As Unitarian Universalists, our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and in justice, equity and compassion in human relationships inspires us to promote and support right relations among members and friends of and visitors to the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany (FUUSA).

B. We embrace the challenges inherent in sustaining a religious community, offering support and compassion in the face of the inevitable shortcomings of individuals at FUUSA and of our community as a whole. Among those shortcomings, behavior that is deemed inappropriate, disruptive or harmful may also occur.

C. This document describes FUUSA's approach to both preventing and responding to such behaviors, especially as they are directed toward children, youth and vulnerable adults.

D. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just those in leadership or teaching positions, to create and sustain a supportive community that promotes safety, respect and right relations, with special consideration for the unique needs and challenges faced by children, youth and vulnerable adults.

## II. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

A. Commonly used terms for inappropriate behavior have both vernacular and legal meanings. This document will not attempt to list the whole range of possible behaviors that can be directed towards another person nor will it provide all the legal definitions or reiterate relevant sections of NYS law. Rather than provide a list purporting to be exhaustive, our goal is to provide a basis for understanding and discourse about the kinds of behavior that can be considered inappropriate, harassing or abusive.

B. Additionally, not all behavior commonly understood to be inappropriate, harassing or abusive is actually against the law. They are however, behaviors antithetical to the well-being of individuals in our religious community and to our religious values.

CONSENT: Generally speaking, the definitions listed in this section do not apply to adult consensual behaviors. Persons unable to consent include minors and certain vulnerable adults by reason of mental, emotional or physical capacities.

### C. Inappropriate Behavior

1. Behavior threatening another's emotional well-being or freedom to express safely their beliefs or opinions
2. Disruption of church activities

### D. Harassing Behavior

1. Threats – verbal, written or by gesture, implicit or explicit
2. Intimidation – bullying
3. Name-calling, belittling
4. Extreme and repeated annoyance

### E. Physically Abusive Behavior

1. Pushing, hitting, biting
2. Assault

### F. Coercive Behavior

1. By threat or force, causing another to engage in conduct in which they would not otherwise engage
2. Physical restraint

### G. Non-consensual Sexualized Behavior

1. Exposing of private anatomy
2. Showing or taking of sexual pictures
3. Unwelcome sexual conversation or questioning

### H. Sexually Abusive Behavior

1. Non-consensual sexual touching, forcing another to engage in sexual touching
2. Repeated sexual advances despite indications that such advances are unwelcome
3. Assault, molestation or rape

### III. PREVENTION

A. Prevention is the foundation of the FUUSA Toward a Safe Congregation policy. Education and awareness, shared responsibility and a commitment to following well-advertised procedures are key to promoting safety, respect and right relations in our religious community. These are described below.

#### B. Education

Ideally, everyone in the FUUSA community needs ongoing education and support regarding Toward a Safe Congregation, and strategies and skills for its successful implementation. Specific and implementable programs will be developed for the congregation, leadership, Religious Education (RE) teachers and youth group leaders, parents/guardians, and children and youth in order to impart:

1. Familiarity with the policy
2. Knowledge about different types of problematic behaviors and the potential impact of those behaviors upon the safety and well-being of individuals of different ages and circumstances
3. Strategies for safety for individuals of all ages and circumstances
4. Language for how to identify and talk about concerns, experiences and observations
5. Clarity regarding shared responsibilities and designated roles within the congregation, including awareness of specific individuals associated with the roles described within the policy with whom they can discuss their concerns, experiences and observations

#### C. Education Plan

##### 1. Congregation

a. Prevention education could include: a sermon about child sexual abuse; an educational flyer available in print and on-line; an insert in the order of service; a Windows article; on-line tutorials

##### 2. Leadership

a. Each year, the members of the Board of Trustees, of the SCRT and appropriate staff should complete the New England Adolescent Research Institute (NEARI) tutorial: Balancing Acts: Keeping children safe in congregations developed by Rev Debra Haffner (<http://training-center.neari.com/training-center/form/course-tem.aspx?targetCourseId=6>). It is also available as a PDF from the UUA. This should be done by the first in-gathering Sunday and documentation of completion should be sent to the SCRT convener. The SCRT may also invite an outside consultant to present information of a timely nature

##### 3. RE Teachers/Youth Group Leaders

a. The DRE will determine appropriate education materials for this group

##### 4. Parents/Guardians

Soon after parents/guardians enroll their child in RE, the Safe Congregation policy will be mailed to them by the DRE or his/her representative. When appropriate, other materials will be shared with them from the SCRT in conjunction with the DRE.

D. Responsibility: Responsibility for the successful promotion of safety, respect and right relations is to be shared broadly within the FUUSA community. Shared responsibility does not shift fault from the “actor” to the “acted upon” in the event of an incident. Rather, this shared responsibility is a principle of prevention and a call to FUUSA as a religious community to prioritize and facilitate safety, respect and right relations among our members, friends and visitors. In this, we each have a role:

1. Congregation
2. Leadership
3. RE Teachers/Youth Group Leaders

4. Parents/Guardians
5. Youth
6. Children

E. Trust: Successful implementation of Toward a Safe Congregation requires trust in the leadership of the Society, in general, and in those entrusted with its implementation. Confidentiality, consistency and transparency regarding processes of implementation and safeguards for privacy are keys to promoting that trust. To guide implementation of Toward a Safe Congregation, the Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT) will be permanently established. The role and composition of the SCRT is described in detail in Section IV SAFE

#### CONGREGATION RESPONSE TEAM.

1. Confidentiality – All communications regarding concerns, experiences and observations brought to the attention of the SCRT, Board of Trustees or Personnel Committee will be confidential, whether verbal or written, except as specifically described herein and as is required for the implementation of this policy. All deliberations and communications among those entities, as well as any resulting records, will also be kept confidential. Records or written communications will be kept in a secure and locked file cabinet in the locked supply closet adjacent to Room B-8. It is accessible only to the SCRT and the President of the Congregation, and used only for that purpose.
2. Consistency – Toward a Safe Congregation will be implemented fairly and consistently, prioritizing both safety and respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all parties.
3. Transparency - Toward a Safe Congregation will be implemented faithfully without favor or discrimination. We acknowledge the possibility that persons in positions of leadership and trust may be the source of problematic behaviors that compromise safety and well-being. They will be subject to the processes of this policy in the same manner as others whose behavior may be in violation of this policy:
  - a. Minister: If an allegation involves the Minister, the SCRT will initiate the investigation and contact the St. Lawrence District Executive and Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The SCRT and the Board of Trustees will determine the most appropriate methods of communicating with, counseling and responding to the congregation and the community, including providing support for the continued participation of the complainant(s) within the life of the congregation.
  - b. If an allegation involves a member or members of the Minister's family, the President or Vice-President will participate on the SCRT in the Minister's stead.
  - c. Director of Religious Education: If an allegation involves the Director of Religious Education (DRE), either as subject or complainant, at least two members of the Personnel Committee, including the Chair, and President of the Congregation will join the SCRT for the purposes of those deliberations. The DRE will not participate as a member of the SCRT. Additional members of the Personnel Committee may be added at the discretion of the President and the Chair of the Personnel Committee.
  - d. If an allegation involves a member or members of the DRE's family, the President or Vice-President will participate on the SCRT in his/her stead.
  - e. Staff: If an allegation involves another member of FUUSA staff, at least two members of the Personnel Committee, including the Chair, and the President of the Congregation will join the SCRT for the purposes of those deliberations.
  - f. SCRT: If an allegation involves a member of the SCRT, or his or her family, the President of the Congregation will participate on the SCRT in his/her stead. That member of the SCRT would not participate.

g. President of the Congregation: If an allegation involves the President of the Congregation, the Vice-President will join the SCRT for the purposes of those deliberations. The President would not participate.

h. Vice-President of the Congregation: If an allegation involves the Vice-President, the President will join the SCRT for the purposes of those deliberations. The Vice-President would not participate.

#### F. Safety Procedures for FUUSA Religious Education Programs

1. Adult Volunteers (18 and older) in the RE and Youth Group programs agree to:
  - a. Complete all application forms for Religious Educators and Group Leaders (see Appendix A)
  - b. An annual national and 50 state Sex Offender Registry Check by the Director of Religious Education (DRE) for Levels 2 and 3 sex offenses  
The DRE may consult with the SCRT to determine if an additional Sex Offender Registry Check for Level 1 sex offenses would better inform a decision regarding a specific volunteer application. Upon that determination, any additional check may proceed only after informing the applicant of the intent to do so. Should the applicant withdraw the application, no further checks are warranted, unless and until the individual subsequently volunteers or submits an application to volunteer for activities involving children or youth.
  - c. Annually attend a teacher training given by the DRE
2. Working with Children and Youth
  - a. Children and youth are vulnerable when dealing with adults, not only because of the natural trust and deference generally given to adult caregivers, but also because they may find it difficult to speak out about inappropriate behavior by their leaders, teachers and caregivers.
  - b. We encourage adults to examine their motives and needs concerning their interest in working with children and youth, seeking counsel when appropriate, and determine whether teaching RE or leading Youth Group is the best context for pursuing those motives or needs.
  - c. Children and youth are often uniquely situated to observe inappropriate behavior or to overhear a conversation in which inappropriate behavior is revealed. Reports of these revelations should be taken seriously and communicated to the DRE or Minister.
3. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery-12th Grade)
  - a. All classes/programs/activities, whether at FUUSA or off-site, must be taught by a minimum of a two-person teaching team.
  - b. Teams must have at least one adult who has been an active participant at FUUSA for at least one year.
  - c. Youth who are five grades above the grade of students in the class may assist the two-person team in the Nursery through Sixth Grade classrooms. The youth must be at least one year older than the grade of the class they are assisting.
  - d. For grades 7-12, teachers/leaders must be at least 25 years of age.
  - e. Young adults age 24 who are well known to the congregation may submit their application to teach RE grades 7-12 to the DRE for a case-by-case consideration by the DRE and the Religious Education Council (REC) of the appropriateness of their candidacy.
  - f. Input from the Senior High Youth Group must factor into selection of Senior High Youth Group advisors by the DRE and the REC.

g. Volunteers may meet privately with a child or youth only with the prior approval of the parents and with notification of the DRE. If prior notification is impossible, the DRE must be notified subsequently.

4. Rite of Passage

a. Prospective mentors must submit the FUUSA Application for Religious Educators and Youth Group Leaders and sign the FUUSA Code of Ethics for Religious Educators and Youth Group Leaders. They must also attend a program on safety and on Toward a Safe Congregation designed specifically for Rite of Passage mentors and given by the DRE or the Minister.

b. Rite of Passage youth must attend a program on safety and on Toward a Safe Congregation designed specifically for Rite of Passage mentees and given by the DRE or the Minister.

c. Rite of Passage youth, their parents/guardians and mentors must complete and sign the FUUSA Rite of Passage Agreement of Association outlining the parameters for contact and face-to-face meeting between mentors and youth. Each Rite of Passage Agreement of Association will be reviewed by the DRE for consistency with the principles of Toward a Safe Congregation. While deference will be given to the parameters deemed allowable by parents/guardians, the DRE may consult with the SCRT regarding any concerns over a specific agreement, and follow up with the parents/guardians accordingly.

5. Family Responsibility

a. All required registration forms must be provided for each child enrolled in RE.

b. Parents, or other designated adults, are responsible for their children before service begins and after Sunday school ends and before and after other RE programming

c. During services and classes, children and youth must have a parent or other designated adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the DRE. Arrangements for youth aged 16 and over may be made to cover the RE sessions in its entirety, for example, it might be typical for a youth to drive him/herself each Sunday morning, be dropped off/picked up at FUUSA or accompany another family to FUUSA.

6. General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming)

a. The DRE, or designated supervisor, will do a walk-through of all RE spaces to check in with teachers during classes.

b. Nursery through Third Grade parents or designee must pick up their children from the RE program at the end of the RE program.

7. Childcare for Congregational Events

a. The Childcare Coordinator will maintain an up-to-date list of childcare providers approved by the DRE and/or RE Council. If other childcare workers are needed, they must be approved by the DRE.

b. Teens and adults seeking to be childcare providers must be active participants at FUUSA for at least one year. The paid nursery staff may also be hired as childcare providers for congregational events.

c. Two childcare providers will be utilized for each event. Additional provider(s) will be scheduled when more than 10 children are anticipated.

d. Childcare providers may not be related by birth, marriage or adoption or in a committed relationship. Exceptions are made when three or more providers are scheduled for a specific event.

8. General Sleepover Guidelines

- a. Adults supervising youth sleepovers must be active participants at FUUSA for at least one year, regardless of whether the FUUSA sanctioned event is held at FUUSA, in a private home, or held elsewhere.
  - b. A Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release form is required for each sleepover, to be kept on file at FUUSA for a minimum of one year.
  - c. Each youth will be required to sign the Youth Code of Ethics for each sleepover event.
  - d. A designated event coordinator among adult leaders will produce and keep a list of attendees, including supervisors/assistants, to be kept on file at FUUSA for a minimum of one year.
  - e. Youth Group sleepovers require two (2) adults present during sleeping hours, regardless of the number of youth attending or the venue for the sleepover. One adult should remain awake during sleeping hours or rest in the same area that youth are congregating or sleeping.
  - f. Sleepovers at FUUSA require a minimum ratio of one adult to seven youth. Outside doors will be locked against entry after last arrival until parents/designees arrive for pick-up in the morning.
9. Transportation to and from FUUSA Sanctioned RE/Youth Events
- a. A Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release form is required for each child/youth participating in or being driven to an off-site activity, to be kept on file at FUUSA for at least one year. Each youth will be required to sign the Youth Code of Ethics.
  - b. Drivers must be at least 25 years old, sign the Code of Ethics and provide proof of license, registration and insurance coverage, copies of which to be kept on file at FUUSA for at least one year.
  - c. High school students may not drive themselves or others to RE/Youth Events. This restriction does not apply to other FUUSA events or services.
  - d. All laws regarding seatbelts, age appropriate seating and alcohol consumption must be observed by drivers and passengers.
  - e. With parental approval it is acceptable to have only one adult in a vehicle en route to an event, but at the event a minimum of two adults will be present, and a 1:7 ratio of adults to youths, is required.

#### **IV. SAFE CONGREGATION RESPONSE TEAM**

A Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT) will be permanently established to support the implementation of Toward a Safe Congregation. This policy sets forth the framework for an ethical response to complaints of inappropriate behavior.

A. The members of the SCRT will be: the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and four members of FUUSA to be appointed by the Board of Trustees. Terms will be three years and staggered so that no more than 2 members of the team will leave in any given year. The SCRT will consist of:

1. One member of the RE Council
2. One member of the Board of Trustees
3. Two additional FUUSA members, one of whom must be neither on the Board nor on the RE Council
4. There shall be at least two SCRT members of each gender at all times

B. SCRT Responsibilities:

1. Act as resource for members, friends and visitors of the congregation
2. Assist the DRE and RE Council with planning and implementing training and incorporating information into the RE curriculum regarding this policy and the issues therein
3. Meet formally at least twice a year
  - a. The first meeting will be by the third Sunday after in-gathering Sunday to determine the annual education plan.
  - b. At the first meeting, the SCRT will name a Convenor. The responsibilities of the Convenor are: to convene meetings, especially should a complaint be submitted; facilitate communication by maintaining the listserve; and to ensure that the annual report is submitted to the congregation. In addition, the Convenor will collect the documentation of training specified in the Educational Plan portion of this document.
  - c. Another meeting will be held near the end of the church year for the purpose of developing the annual report and to conduct other business as deemed necessary.
4. Maintain familiarity with community resources for victims and perpetrators of abuse, as well as for their respective loved ones, and attending annual training on Toward a Safe Congregation and related issues, regardless of their tenure on the SCRT
5. Follow response procedures when a sex offender registry check indicates a history, when an individual discloses his or her past violations and when allegations are made or concerns are raised concerning specific individuals
6. Meet with individuals with past offenses and/or current allegations against them to develop a Limited Access Agreement (LAA) for participation at FUUSA, where appropriate
7. Determine whether/when outside authorities should be notified, including the FUUSA insurance carrier
8. Assist the Minister and DRE in executing their respective roles in the implementation of Toward a Safe Congregation.

C. Responding to Complaints

1. Complaints may be made to any FUUSA staff member, member of the Board of Trustees or member of the SCRT. While it is preferable that the complaint be made in person and in writing, this may not always be possible. Any oral complaints, whether in person or by phone, should be written down as soon as possible.
2. All complaints should include the following information\
  - a. The name of the person allegedly acting inappropriately
  - b. The name of the person receiving the inappropriate action

- c. The date and time of the activity
  - d. The location of the activity
  - e. The names of any witnesses
  - f. A short description of the activity
  - g. The complaint will be forwarded to the SCRT as soon as possible, no later than 48 hours
3. The SCRT will respond to complaints of inappropriate behavior as identified in the Definition Section of this policy.
4. The SCRT will follow this course of action for a complaint and proceed as quickly as practical. The course of action will include some or all of the following actions to be taken, discreetly, by the SCRT:
- a. Meet with the complainant or person on whose behalf the complaint was made to get an account of the complaint and the incident(s) leading to the complaint. In case of children or youth, their parent/guardian should be present for this interview, unless that person is the subject of the complaint
  - b. Meet with the person(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint to get an account of the incident(s) leading to the complaint
  - c. Meet with person(s) identified as observing the behavior.
  - d. Review the case in light of information obtained.
  - e. Seek input from complainant to decide whether an SCRT-facilitated meeting between the complainant and person(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint would be helpful. This should never happen with children or youth.
  - f. Make notifications deemed necessary (see Reporting to Authority sections below)
1. In instances of abuse of a child/youth:
- a. The Minister will notify the President of the Congregation and the St. Lawrence District Executive.
  - b. The President of the Congregation, or his/her designee, will notify the Society's insurance company.
  - c. When the offending adult is related to the child by blood or marriage, the SCRT will determine whether a report should be made to the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.
  - g. Determine whether a Limited Access Agreement is necessary to restrict the activities of the person(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint, both pending and upon resolution of the complaint.

#### D. Reporting to Authorities

1. Offenses against children/youth are delineated in two ways:
  - a. Offenses perpetrated by adults who are LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE for their ongoing care, i.e., parents/guardians and proximate relatives: RE teachers and other non-related adults interacting with children/youth at FUUSA DO NOT fall in this category.
  - b. Instances of this type of abuse ARE reportable to the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. While the SCRT will interpret this policy in light of those criteria, and other individuals in the FUUSA community will follow their conscience in this regard, it is not likely that anyone in his or her official capacity at FUUSA, volunteer or otherwise, is actually a NYS Mandated Reporter.
2. Offenses perpetrated by any other adult(s): RE teachers and other non-related adults interacting with children/youth at FUUSA WOULD fall in this category.

a. Instances of this type of abuse are NOT reportable to the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Offenses by non-familial adults can be reported to the police, as deemed necessary. While the SCRT will interpret this policy in light of those criteria, and other individuals will follow their conscience in this regard, there are no mandated reporters for this type of abuse.

b. Not all offenses against children/youth require reporting to authorities, and, in many instances, children/youth can be adequately protected without contacting the authorities. While there will be occasions which clearly require intervention by authorities, many others will likely represent a grey area requiring careful discernment about next steps among the SCRT and other individuals involved in the case, especially the injured party and his/her family.

### REPORTING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT TO THE AUTHORITIES

Offense against child/youth perpetrated by:	Reportable to NYS Central Register of Child Abuse & Maltreatment	Reportable to Police/Law Enforcement Against NYS Law	Against NYS Law
Adult LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE for their ongoing care, i.e., parents/guardians and proximate relatives	YES, but not mandated unless person with knowledge of abuse is a NYS Mandated Reporter	YES, but not mandated	MAYBE, but not necessarily
Any unrelated adult NOT LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE for their ongoing care, i.e., RE teachers, other FUUSA adults interacting with children/youth	NO	YES, but not mandated	MAYBE, but not necessarily

## V. ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF ADULTS

Abuse and/or neglect of adults present unique challenges to our religious community in that the abuse may not come to our attention. There is no application to submit or code of ethics to sign, and the abuse may never represent a disturbance to a FUUSA event. Nonetheless, our commitment to promote and support right relations within our congregation extends to all members, friends and visitors of FUUSA of any age. We can best accomplish this by being familiar with different kinds of abuse and the options and resources available under those circumstances.

A. Domestic Violence: An offense against an individual by a spouse or significant other is domestic violence. Domestic violence is a pattern of acts and behaviors committed with the goal of controlling the spouse or significant other. Not all domestic violence acts or behaviors are physical. Not all acts of domestic violence or behaviors are against the law.

1. Domestic violence can include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Shoving, kicking, scratching, hitting
  - b. Belittling, undermining self-esteem, threatening
  - c. Stalking, coercing, interfering with employment and/or child care
  - d. Controlling access to money, transportation, friends and family, medical care
  - e. Assault, coercion, sexual abuse
2. Not all behaviors that constitute domestic violence are against the law. There is no mandatory reporting of domestic violence in New York. However, New York is a pro-arrest state regarding domestic violence and once contacted, law enforcement may determine that an arrest must be made, regardless of the wishes of the victim/survivor.
3. For FUUSA's purposes, the wishes of the victim/survivor regarding contacting authorities or seeking medical care should be given priority.
4. IMPORTANTLY, the victim/survivor of domestic violence may or may not wish to leave the abuser. As often as not, they just want the abuse to stop.
  - a. Common reasons for staying with an abusive partner:
    1. Love and attachment
    2. Economic dependence
    3. Fear for safety of self and/or children upon separation
    4. Cultural, family pressures to stay
    5. Threats against leaving

B. Elder Abuse: An offense against a vulnerable adult (by virtue of mental, emotional or physical capacity) by a spouse or significant other, relative or caregiver is elder abuse. Elder abuse is a pattern of acts and behaviors committed with the goal of controlling the spouse or significant other. Not all elder abuse acts or behaviors are physical. Not all elder abuse acts or behaviors are against the law.

1. Elder abuse, like domestic violence, can include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Shoving, kicking, scratching, hitting
  - b. Belittling, undermining self-esteem, threatening
  - c. Stalking, coercing, interfering with employment and/or child care
  - d. Assault, coercion, sexual abuse
  - e. BUT, controlling access to money, transportation, friends and family and medical care, medication and assistive devices carries additional implications when the adult being abused is not able to be fully independent.
2. Common examples of coercion in elder abuse include:
  - a. Requiring Social Security checks to be signed over
  - b. Insisting upon joint financial accounts requiring only one signature

- c. Insisting upon power of attorney
  - d. Withholding medication
  - e. Hiding/breaking assistive devices
3. There is no mandatory reporting of adult/elder abuse in NYS, outside of residential settings for professionals working in connection with them. Barring the commission of a serious assault or destruction of property, when contacted about adult/elder abuse, law enforcement generally refers parties to Protective Services for Adults.
4. For FUUSA's purposes, the wishes of the victim/survivor regarding contacting authorities or seeking medical care should be given priority.

**REPORTING ABUSE/NEGLECT AGAINST AN ADULT TO THE AUTHORITIES:**

Offense against adult perpetrated by:	Reportable to Adult Protective Services	Reportable to Police/Law Enforcement	Against NYS Law
Spouse or significant other is domestic violence	NO	YES, but not mandated	MAYBE, but not necessarily
Spouse, significant other, relative or caregiver, if victim is considered vulnerable adult by virtue of mental, emotional or physical capacity, is adult or elder abuse	YES, but not mandated outside residential settings for professionals working in connection with them	YES, but not mandated	MAYBE, but not necessarily

## **VI. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and explicit in our Unitarian Universalist principles. We affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain an atmosphere where such openness can exist. However, disruptions that threaten the safety of any individual using FUUSA's facilities or the Society activities are unacceptable and will be handled by the SCRT.

### **A. Situations Requiring an Immediate Response**

1. Concerns should be promptly communicated to the Minister or President of the Congregation if available, or other leader of the group involved. Actions might include:
  - a. Asking the disruptive person(s) to leave
  - b. Suspending the meeting or activity until the disruption has been alleviated
  - c. Contacting the Police Department
2. Any time these, or other, actions are taken without the Minister or President of the Congregation being present, they must be notified as soon as practical.
3. The SCRT will be notified and will determine if follow-up is required.

### **B. Situations Not Requiring an Immediate Response**

1. Concerns should be forwarded to the SCRT, which will promptly:
  - a. Contact parents/guardians when the situation involves their child or children
  - b. Meet with the person(s) describing and/or observing the disruption to get an account of events and circumstances
  - c. Meet with the person who is the subject of the complaint
  - d. Determine whether the behavior in question is acceptable within the parameters of the Society. If determined to be unacceptable, any of the following actions may be taken:
    1. Determine a course of action with the person responsible for the disruption
    2. If that person is unwilling to comply or engages in additional behavior of sufficient severity, he or she may be excluded from the Society for a specific period of time.
      - a. Should this outcome be determined, the SCRT would consult with the Board of Trustees prior to taking action.
    3. Should the initial disruption be of sufficient severity, or additional disruptive behaviors or non-compliance with the determination of the SCRT results, he or she may be permanently excluded from the Society's premises and from all congregational activities.
      - a. Should this outcome be determined, the SCRT will consult with the Board of Trustees before taking action.
  - e. Meet separately with the complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint to inform them of the outcome of their deliberation.
  - f. Document the findings and store in the locked safe, or similar device, to be used solely for the purposes of storing confidential information and reports associated with the implementation of this policy.

## **VII. RESPONDING AS A COMMUNITY**

### **A. Pastoral Care**

1. We seek to support our members, friends and visitors in their honest and forthright participation in the implementation of Toward a Safe Congregation.
2. Following the review of a complaint of inappropriate behavior, and distinct from any other actions deemed necessary upon that review, the SCRT will:
  - a. Determine whether a plan needs to be developed to address the pastoral needs of those involved, and of the congregation, if necessary, and then develop and implement that plan.
  - b. Determine whether the person(s) who made the complaint have suffered in support and/or status within the congregation as a result of making that complaint.
  - c. Determine whether the person(s) who were the subject of the complaint, but were deemed not to have acted inappropriately, have suffered in support and status within the congregation as a result of that complaint.
  - d. Determine whether the person(s) who were the subject of the complaint and faithfully abided by the guidance and/or contract negotiated with the SCRT, have unduly suffered in support and status within the congregation, despite their cooperation.
3. According to the outcomes of the above determinations, the SCRT will develop and implement a plan to address those pastoral needs.

### **B. Embracing Responsibility**

1. Embracing responsibility for promoting safety, respect and right relations means that all individuals in the congregation must accept responsibility for their various roles in the successful implementation of this policy. For many, there may be multiple roles, as a parent, RE teacher, member of the Board of Trustees, etc., and perhaps, at some point, as a complainant or observer of behavior that would need to be addressed by this policy.
2. These responsibilities include the commitment to:
  - a. Attend education and awareness opportunities regarding Toward a Safe Congregation, including supporting members of your family to attend those same opportunities, according to their need, roles and age
  - b. Be attentive for opportunities to support safety, respect and right relations
  - c. Support the confidentiality guidelines outlined for the SCRT by not repeating information intended for limited consumption and refusing to listen to such confidential information
  - d. Refrain from judgments regarding parties involved in allegations
  - e. Support the embodiment in others, of our Unitarian Universalist belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and in justice, equity and compassion in human relationships.

**VIII. APPENDIX A**

**FUUSA APPLICATION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS & YOUTH GROUP LEADERS**

Thank you for your interest in working with the children/youth at FUUSA. Our congregation takes seriously our responsibility to promote the safety of minors in our community.

Please complete this form and return it to the Director of Religious Education. Thank you for your support in promoting a safe environment for the congregation's children and youth.

Name:

First: \_\_\_\_\_

Middle: \_\_\_\_\_

Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever used a different name (including a different name when you were single)?

No ( ) Yes ( )

If yes, please list with dates: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have security concerns over sharing information about use of a different name, please mark this space \_\_\_\_ and someone on the Safe Congregation Response Team will contact you.

Length of time attending FUUSA:

Under 6 Months ( )

6-12 Months ( )

1-2 Years ( )

2-5 Years ( )

5-10 Years ( )

Over 10 Years ( )

Please list any other congregations you may have attended regularly during the past five years

Contact Information:

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years at current address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have not lived at this address for at least five years, please list the other addresses you have lived at in the last five years on the back of this form.

History

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to any criminal offense against a minor?

No ( ) Yes ( ) If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list two references, who are not relatives who have known you for at least three years, especially regarding your experience with children and youth:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Attestation:

My signature below indicates that I attest to the following:

1. The above information is true and correct.
  
2. I authorize the congregation to contact references and other congregations to obtain information about my background. I authorize references to provide information about me. I hereby release and hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information. I also agree to release and hold harmless this congregation, its trustees, employees and volunteers.
  
3. I understand FUUSA will conduct national sex offender registry check for Level Two and Level Three offenses using the information I've provided herein.
  
4. I may be asked to provide additional information and that, while it is my right to decline to provide such information, failure to do so may render me ineligible to teach RE or lead Youth Group.
  
5. I understand that this information will be held in confidence and will only be available to those responsible for screening staff or volunteers or participating on the response team.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VIII. APPENDIX B**

**FUUSA RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CODE OF ETHICS**

Thank you for being a volunteer in our Religious Education Program. The contribution of your time and talents is much appreciated. Please read both the attached FUUSA Toward a Safe Congregation Policy and the Code of Ethics and then sign below indicating that you have done so and agree to their provisions.

Adults and older youth in leadership roles are essential to the fostering of spiritual and ethical development of children and youth at FUUSA. Individuals accepting this stewardship role must be well qualified to provide the special nurturing, care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Maturity is especially important to understanding the unique nature of the adult/minor relationship in our congregational setting. Leaders must understand the potential magnitude of their influence upon minors in their care, as well as the necessity for boundaries between the adult and minor to ensure that that influence is a positive one. While we support the education of children and youth regarding dealing with adults at FUUSA, ultimate responsibility for establishing and maintaining these boundaries lies with adults.

1. I agree to keep the best interests of children and youth at FUUSA paramount in all my interactions with them.
2. I will not allow my personal relationship needs to influence my interactions with children and youth.
3. At FUUSA I agree to promote the individual search for truth and meaning by the children and youth at FUUSA.
4. I will not impose my beliefs or unique avenues of inquiry upon children and youth at FUUSA.
5. I agree to honor the emotional and mental integrity of the children and youth at FUUSA.
6. I will not exploit the affection and deference offered by the children and youth at FUUSA for my own purposes or needs.
7. I agree to honor the bodily integrity of the children and youth at FUUSA.
8. I will not exploit the affection and deference offered by the children and youth at FUUSA for my own purposes or needs for physical or sexual contact.
9. I agree to transparency in all my interactions with the children and youth at FUUSA.
10. I will not independently contact children or youth at FUUSA outside of normal channels for FUUSA events or processes without prior knowledge and permission of parents or guardians.
11. I will abide by parent or guardian parameters for the mode, timing and frequency of any contact with their children.
12. I will allow a mentoring relationship to progress only with the prior knowledge and consent of parents or guardians, and will notify the DRE, Minister or Board President of said parental consent.
13. I understand and agree that it is imperative that my behavior both be and appear to be above reproach.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand both the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany Toward a Safe Congregation Policy and Code of Ethics, and will comply with them in all regards.

NAME (PRINTED):

---

SIGNATURE:

---

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## IX. APPENDIX C

### TOWARD A SAFE CONGREGATION: A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Specific and implementable programs need to be developed for the congregation, leadership, Religious Education (RE) teachers and youth group leaders, parents/guardians, and children and youth to meet the needs defined in Section III. Prevention, under Education.

Who will develop?

Who will implement?

How often will these programs be given?

Under Trust, Confidentiality

Need a dedicated, secure and locked safe that is accessible only by the SCRT and the President of the Congregation

Under Safety Procedures for Adult Volunteers

DRE keeps all application forms on file

Who is responsible for annually checking the Sex Offender Registry for Levels 2 and 3?

What criteria might be used to determine if a Level 1 check needs to be done?

Is FUUSA teacher training already done? How is participation recorded?

All requirements listed in Requirements for RE Classes must be met

Who is responsible for seeing that all requirements are met?

Must there be a record that these criteria were met each Sunday?

Rite of Passage

DRE keeps all applications of mentors on file

ROP youth must attend the program on safety

Who is going to develop this program?

DRE will keep a record that all youth attended this program each year

Family Responsibility

Registration forms kept on file by DRE

Who will be sure that every child has a parent on premises, or that another arrangement has been made?

DRE will record that youth 16+ may bring self to RE without parent on premises

General Supervision

Checklist that records that DRE or other did a walk-through each Sunday and that all criteria were met

Childcare for Congregational Events

Up-to-date list of approved childcare providers

What are criteria to approve them, except that everyone must have been active participants in FUUSA for one year? What defines active participation?

This is to be kept by the Childcare Coordinator – where will it be kept?

All guidelines must be kept

Sleep-over guidelines

Approval of adult volunteers – how are they approved? By whom?

DRE maintains file of Consent and Medical Release forms

DRE will maintain file of signed Code of Ethics for each event  
DRE will keep the list of attendees for each event including the number of adults  
Record of when door was locked and unlocked kept by DRE

Transportation to and from events  
DRE maintains Consent forms from parents of youth  
DRE maintains code of ethics signed by drivers as well as proof of license, registration and insurance

#### IV. SCRT

DRE maintains record of members of SCRT, including terms; ensures that gender requirements are met

What are requirements for SCRT members given their responsibilities?

How will SCRT members assist the DRE and RE Council in planning and implementing training?

How will SCRT members maintain familiarity with community resources?

DRE will maintain records that SCRT attended training.

Has a Limited Access Agreement been developed?

What are the response procedures that need to be followed when someone is revealed to have a Sex Offender record?

SCRT members will follow the requirements in this section