

Safety Policy for Children and Youth at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

All of us, children, youth and adults, members and friends, are called to conduct ourselves responsibly and caringly for the benefit of each and every one of us. Recognizing the need for a consistently safe environment for children, youth and adults, the UUCSF has developed the following guidelines.

1. Child protection and safety.

- Adults working with children and youth in any capacity must agree to comply with our Code of Ethics prior to accepting any responsibility.
- There must be a minimum of two adults present at any class, meeting, program or event involving children and youth.
- Adults working with children and youth should be aware of precautions needed to protect minors from the adverse affects of allergic reactions and spread of infectious diseases.
- Adults must be aware of other UUCSF policies that may affect programs and events where children and youth are in attendance. These include particularly the UUCSF policies on alcohol, animals
- There will be a first aid kit available in all classrooms.
- There will be a hard-wired working telephone available in or near to all classrooms.

2. Sexual harassment and abuse

The following behaviors are unacceptable for adults working with children and youth:

- Off-color jokes, sexual remarks or use of profane language
- Unsolicited, unwelcome, or otherwise inappropriate physical contact

The word “no” shall be recognized as a signal to others to cease any behavior that may cause a child or youth to become uncomfortable.

Any child, youth or adult who suspects or is made aware of child abuse, has a concern about a child’s safety and well-being, or witnesses behaviors that might be construed or perceived to be a form of sexual abuse must notify the Minister and/or the Religious Exploration Co-Chairs as soon as possible.

3. Field Trips

Parents or guardians must sign a permission form whenever children or youth are planning to leave the congregation’s premises and are not accompanied by their parents or guardians. The field trip leaders must compile a list of names, emergency contact numbers and medical conditions to bring on the trip.

All travelers, inclusive of children and adults, must obey all relevant laws for automobile liability insurance, proper restraints and car seats. All drivers must be at least 21 years old. No driver may consume any substance – prescription or over-the-counter medication, alcohol, etc. – that carries a warning about use while driving.

4. Childcare

The UUSSF is a community of families. We understand that families have many forms, and we welcome the many types of families that join our community. As a community we encourage groups and committees planning events for adults to make their events accessible to parents by providing safe, age-appropriate childcare.

When planning an event, including all-congregational meetings but excluding rentals, please determine whether the event will be intergenerational. If not, appropriate childcare is recommended so that all parents and guardians may fully participate in the event. If a committee or group responsible for planning a special event, the committee is responsible for ensuring childcare according to the following guidelines:

- When planning the event, the group, in a congregation-wide e-mail or newsletter posting, will ask that those with childcare needs to contact a designated person from the committee with the number and ages of children attending. The Religious Educator and RE Co-chairs are available to give supportive guidance for age-appropriate activities and childcare, but it is each committee's responsibility to ensure childcare for its event.
- The designated person must contact the congregation's building use coordinator to reserve space for childcare and children's activities.
- The entire Safety Policy for Children and Youth applies to all events.
- A primary sitter must be an adult 21 or older. A secondary sitter should ideally be 18 or older. Teenagers may be approved to be secondary childcare providers if there is a need.
- Since each committee is responsible for planning childcare for its event, payment, if any, should come from that committee.

Code of Ethics

I understand that adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both the individual 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.

I further understand that two especially important areas of growth are self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Wisdom dictates that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders act abusively. Therefore, leaders, teachers and adult volunteers will avoid any verbal, emotional, sexual or physical abuse of children and youth.

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I certify that I have read and understand the Safety Policy for Children and Youth. I further certify that I have read and understand the above Code of Ethics. I understand that these guidelines are expected behavior for me as a leader and/or teacher of children and/or youth at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork, and that appropriate action may be taken in cases of violation of this code.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____