

# THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF RIDGEWOOD

## TOWARD A SAFE CONGREGATION:

### Policies for Congregational and Child/Youth Safety and for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct, Physical Abuse, and Harassment

#### Table of Contents

I.	Safe Congregation Committee Philosophy .....	2
II.	Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sexual Ethics .....	3
III.	Definitions .....	4
IV.	Special Relationship Between Minister and Congregants .....	5
V.	Special Relationship Between Professional Religious Educator and Congregants .....	5
VI.	Preventing Sexual Misconduct, Physical Abuse and Harassment .....	6
	A. Education and Training .....	6
	B. Hiring .....	6
VII.	Religious Education Safety Procedures .....	7
	A. Adult Volunteers .....	7
	B. Working with Children and Youth .....	7
	C. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery-12 <sup>th</sup> Grade) .....	7
	D. General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming) .....	8
	E. General Sleep-Over Guidelines .....	8
	F. Transportation To and From The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood Sanctioned Events .....	8
	G. RE Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process .....	9
	H. Fire and Electrical Safety .....	9
	I. First Aid and Incident Reporting .....	9
VIII.	Emergency Evacuation Policy .....	10
IX	Responding to Complaints of Sexual or Physical Abuse or Harassment .....	11
X.	Reporting Child Abuse to Community Authorities .....	11
XI.	Safe Congregation Response Team .....	12
XII	Safety Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse .....	12
XIII.	Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse .....	13
XIV.	Safety and Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Harassment .....	14
XV.	Guidelines Involving Sex Offenders .....	14
XVI.	Guidelines for Including a Child or Adolescent Who has Sexually Abused .....	15
XVII.	Disruptive Behavior .....	16
XVIII.	Management of Possible Risk and Hazards .....	17
XIX.	Appendices .....	18
	A. Adult Sponsor Responsibilities .....	19
	B. Application Form for Volunteers and Employees Who Work with Children and Youth .....	20
	C. Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth .....	23
	D. Coming of Age-Mentor Responsibilities and Agreement .....	24
	E. Limited Access Agreement .....	25
	F. Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release Form .....	26
	G. Medical Information Form .....	27
	H. Agreement to Teach .....	28
	I. Volunteer Reference Form .....	29
	J. Youth Code of Ethics .....	30
	K. Reporting Child Abuse in New Jersey .....	31
	L. Child Care Policy .....	32
	M. Procedures for Overnight Trips with Youth .....	34
	N. Rationale and Guidelines for Including Sex Offenders (Balancing Acts) .....	35
	O. Youth Who May be Abusers (Balancing Acts) .....	39
XX.	Resources .....	40
XXI.	References .....	42
XXII.	Footnotes .....	43

## **I. SAFE CONGREGATION COMMITTEE PHILOSOPHY**

Recent events and societal trends have prompted more questions and concerns about safety policies and risk management procedures to protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, friends and all members of our congregation. It is prudent for us to look at resources and establish guidelines around this broad and multifaceted subject called a Safe Congregation.

A variety of potential dangers are inherent in operating a congregation. These include physical site (including buildings and grounds), operation of the Religious Education (RE) program, transportation and supervision of children off-site, and instances of disruptive behavior involving members, friends, and/or staff of the congregation.

In the past few years, the issue of making our congregations safe places has become more prominent. Congregations are carefully and intentionally putting into place policies around all kinds of safety issues. Openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles. However, when any person's physical, sexual, emotional well-being, or freedom to safely express their beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly.

Our commitment, as Unitarian Universalists, to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion, compel us to create a safe and nurturing environment that protects children and adults from harm and promotes their spiritual growth while part of our community. Additionally, we affirm our commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, or sexual/affectional orientation. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner which conveys mutual respect and consideration.

If we are to be a caring community, we must ensure that everyone who comes here feels valued, safe, and secure. This congregation accepts responsibility to educate ourselves and our children about sexual misconduct, abuse, molestation, harassment, and exploitation. We pledge to do our best to protect and support those who come to us either at risk or in crisis.

We want everyone associated with the Society to treat this as a "living document" that may need to be amended to reflect changing needs. Requests for amendments should be made through the Board of Trustees.

## II. UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES AND SEXUAL ETHICS

One of the *Leader Resources in Creating Safe Congregations* restates our Principles in terms of sexual ethics, and appears in every age level of *Sexuality and Our Faith*, the companion volume to *Our Whole Lives*<sup>1</sup>.

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person.  
*Every person's sexuality is sacred and is worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated.*
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relationships.  
*We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence is wrong.*
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation.  
*Accepting each other, as we are, means doing no harm and fostering well-being in one's self and others.*
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.  
*In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is as important as the responsibility for it.*
- The right to conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large.  
*As a community and as an institution, we are responsible for creating a secure and safe environment.*
- The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.  
*We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty and justice in human sexuality, and we can become a model for the rest of society.*
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.  
*When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence.*

### III. DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this document will have the following meanings:

- A. **Abuse** includes non-accidental conduct that involves bodily injury or impairment; offensive physical or sexual contact, including physical or sexual abuse; physical or sexual harassment; physical or sexual molestation; or physical or sexual exploitation.
- B. **Physical abuse** includes offensive physical contact or activity that causes bodily injury.
- C. **Sexual abuse** means any sexual touching of a child or any activity that causes a person to engage in any sexual act or conduct without that person's consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- D. **Physical harassment or molestation or exploitation** means activity that places a person in fear of bodily injury by such acts as threatening or tormenting behavior, compelling a person by force or threat of force to engage in conduct from which the person has a right to abstain, knowingly restricting substantially the movements of another person without that other person's consent, communicating to a person a threat to commit an act against that person or another person or entity where the natural consequence of the threat is to place that person in fear or cause that person to engage in conduct in which that person otherwise would not engage, or similar repeated offensive physical or verbal conduct.
- E. **Sexual molestation and sexual exploitation** means activity that places another person in a situation where that person feels compelled to engage in sexual conduct to which that person would not voluntarily consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- F. **Sexual harassment** means making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors to another person, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, where the other person by words or conduct has indicated that such words or conduct are not desired, or where a reasonable person would expect that such words or conduct would not be desired. **Note:** This is also covered in the Personnel Handbook of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood<sup>2</sup>.

#### IV. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINISTER AND CONGREGANTS

*"Congregations confer powers upon their ministers through roles which the minister is expected to assume-worship leader, teacher, counsel or representative in the larger community...The powers of ministry have a great potential for good if they are used responsibly, and with potential for damage if they are abused...Ministers need to be fully aware of those powers and use them responsibly for the building of spiritual community, not for personal gratification. Exploiting ministerial powers for personal advantage abuses those congregants who become the inappropriate sexual objects of a minister's personal interest. Such abuse damages the religious community of which the abuser is minister."*

~ Excerpted from Thomas Mikelson, *Reflections Toward a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Clergy Misconduct through Sexual Abuse*, December, 1992<sup>3</sup>

We as a community expect the Minister to abide by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association's (UUMA) Code of Professional Practice which acknowledges that ministers are the recipients of automatic trust, and comments directly on the issues of clergy sexual misconduct and the abuse of the trust congregations place in their ministers. In subscribing to this code, ministers agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the code is published in the UUMA Guidelines which is available in the Society library and/or office, from the UUMA, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108, or the UUMA website (Log on to [www.uuma.org](http://www.uuma.org), click onto Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice]<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of violation of this code, the Response Team will contact the Metro District Executive and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) who will initiate an investigation. The Safe Congregation Response Team will then work with the Board of Trustees to establish the most appropriate methods of communicating, counseling and responding to reactions within the congregation and the community.

#### V. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR AND CONGREGANTS

*"I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am both morally and legally in a professional relationship to which I am called to be faithful...I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs, which may include, but are not restricted to, sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; with any adult in another committed relationship; with interns or with youth advisors. Nor will I engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to be aware of, to advocate, and to live by this Code of Professional Practices,...Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct."*

~ Excerpted from the *Religious Educator's Code of Professional Practices*

We as a community, expect the Religious Educator and other professional religious education staff, to abide by the Liberal Religious Educators Association's (LREDA) Code of Professional Practice, which acknowledges that religious educators are also the recipients of special trust. In subscribing to this code, professional religious educators agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the Code is published in the LREDA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practices which is available in the Society library and/or office, from LREDA, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108, or the LREDA website ([www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html](http://www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html))<sup>5</sup>.

In the case of violation of this code, procedures as outlined in this policy will be used.

## VI. PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, PHYSICAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

We acknowledge that preventing sexual misconduct, physical abuse, and harassment in our religious communities and in society is a complex goal. Prevention education, training, careful hiring, and safety procedures are concrete steps toward creating a safer environment for all concerned.

### A. Education and Training:

1. Education and training is critical to the creation of a safer congregational environment. Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthy relationships based on self-esteem and respect for others. Greater understanding of sexuality and abuse will make us better able to avoid situations that could lead to abuse, and to move more effectively toward justice and healing for us all. To this end we believe it is important to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility among our children, our members, and friends. We will provide programs as follows:
  - a. The Religious Educator and Religious Education (RE) Committee are responsible for:
    - i. Offering age-appropriate information about development and sexuality for our children, youth, and adults on a regular basis, including clarification and understanding of the complex aspects of sexuality, as well as focusing on sexual abuse prevention and
    - ii. Keeping employees, advisors, and parents informed of this policy and reviewing as necessary through the use of the following: the Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth, herein identified as the Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix D) and RE Safety Procedures (Section VII).
  2. The Safe Congregation Response Team will be responsible for:
    - a. Promoting congregational awareness about this policy. As part of this we will insure that all Society members are aware of the Code of Ethics at The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.
    - b. Informing Society members and attendees regarding resources that address the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

### B. Hiring

1. Incidents of abuse and harassment often take place in the context of ongoing relationships. Therefore it is essential that recruitment and hiring procedures protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, members and friends from injury as well as from unfounded accusations, and protect The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood (USR) from ethical and legal liability.
2. All persons seeking paid employment at USR, including (but not limited to) the Minister, the Religious Educator, the Administrator, the Secretary, the Music Director, the Choral Director, and the cleaning staff, will sign the Code of Ethics. They will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee, which will contact references (at least one of whom has known the applicant for a minimum of five years), record the contact, and conduct both a criminal history record check plus a formal interview with the candidate. The employment application and reference material will be confidential and will be available only as required by law and to those responsible for screening, hiring, or participating in the Safe Congregation Response Team. The Administrator is responsible for collecting these signed forms and filing them in a secure place<sup>6</sup>.

The prevention methods listed below are intended to protect the children and youth of our community and to provide guidelines for employees and staff in their interactions with children and youth.

## VII. RE SAFETY PROCEDURES

### A. Adult Volunteers

1. Volunteers in the Religious Education (RE) programs at The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood (USR) must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Prior to participating in the RE and Youth Group programs, all volunteers will agree to a background check which includes two references. After the initial background check and review of references, a background check will be done every three years. They will be asked to complete an Application Form for Volunteers and Employees Who Work With Children and Youth (Section XVII, Appendix C) and the Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix D). In addition, volunteer teachers will attend a yearly teacher training session to be scheduled by the Religious Educator.
2. Various supervisory methods are listed below. They will help Society leaders avoid setting up situations in which personal boundary issues can become a problem. Some of these methods will help leaders and teachers decrease the risk of misunderstandings and offer some support for handling various concerns.
  - a. Regular consultations with the Religious Educator
  - b. On-going training
  - c. Parental permission whenever necessary
  - d. Visible classroom activity
  - e. Support for following the behavior guidelines of the Safe Congregation Policy.

### B. Working with Children and Youth

1. It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just those in leadership and teaching positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth. We encourage all Society members and friends to read and abide by the Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix D). However, those working with young people in the context of our Unitarian Universalist movement have a crucial and privileged role, one which carries with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone, childcare worker, teacher, or in any other role, the volunteer has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to all involved.
2. While it is important that volunteers be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, they must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth, and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with people older than themselves, and may find it difficult to speak out about any inappropriate behavior of their leaders, teachers, and caregivers.
3. Teachers, helpers, or youth group leaders who have gained the trust of young people, are in a unique situation to observe behavior or be party to a conversation in which a possible abusive situation (either within or outside the Society) is revealed. In this situation, it is the adult's responsibility to report any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse to legal authorities as required (See Section XVII, Appendix L). The Minister or Religious Educator shall then be notified. The RE Committee will provide regular training on dealing with suspected abuse or neglect.
4. Any participating adult may not consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her responsibilities.

### C. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery – 12th Grade)

1. All classes including the nursery must be taught by a minimum of a two person teaching team. The two teachers must be unrelated. This requirement applies to off-site USR RE activity as well as on-site classes. Teams should consist of at least one person who has been an active participant at USR for at least one year or after six

months if they have had previous teaching experience in a UU setting. Parents may serve as classroom aides and/or visit classes at any time. Teachers are subject to the approval of the RE Committee. One individual may be briefly alone with a group when the other must leave as dictated by common sense and necessity for such purposes as bathroom breaks and escorting individual children away from the group.

2. For nursery (infant - 3 years old), the two person team must include two adults. Youth age 14 or older may volunteer in the nursery under the supervision of two unrelated adults. Efforts should be made to maintain a caregiver/child ratio of 1 to 4 at all times. All nursery staff must have child abuse prevention training. All youth volunteering in the nursery must also be interviewed by the DRE, individually or in a group with other volunteering youth. It is also strongly recommended that all nursery volunteers have CPR/AED training and that all youths take a babysitting course.
3. For grades 7-12, the youth group teachers must be at least twenty-five years of age.  
(Revised by SCRT 3/22/16, Approved by BOT 4/4/2016)

#### **D. General Supervision Guidelines (Sunday Morning Programming)**

1. Each child will have a registration form on file that includes information about special needs and permission to accompany their RE class and teachers on walks around the Society or neighborhood on Sunday mornings. All personal information is held confidential.
2. Parents are responsible for their children before the service begins and after the RE program has ended.
3. During services and classes, children must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the Religious Educator.
4. Parents, teachers, volunteers and children are the only people allowed in the downstairs RE space during services and while RE classes are in sessions including classrooms in the Reeb administration building.
5. To assure the safety of the RE space downstairs, the door to the outside (down the set of stairs facing the driveway, below the kitchen) will be locked before and during RE classes. Locking the door to the outside will not have any effect on our ability to exit the RE space in an emergency.
6. The Religious Educator, or designated supervisor, will do a walk through of all RE spaces to check in with teachers during classes.
7. Nursery through third Grade parents (or designee) must pick up their child(ren) from the RE program at the end of the service. The Religious Educator or appropriate designee will locate parents (or designee) who fail to comply.

#### **E. RE and CON Sleepover Guidelines**

1. Adults supervising youth sleepovers must be active participants at USR for at least one year or after six months if they have had previous youth group experience in a UU setting before volunteering. Parents who are staying over with their own youth need not have been active participants.
2. There will always be a minimum of two unrelated adults present during sleeping hours regardless of the numbers of youth attending. Two unrelated adults must remain awake during these sleeping hours. During a sleepover at USR, there should be a minimum ratio of one adult to eight youth with one additional adult required for each additional four youth.
3. During sleepovers at the Society, all outside doors will be locked against entry once the last youth has arrived, and will remain locked until parents arrive for pick-up in the morning.
4. A Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release Form and a Medical Information Form (Section XVII, Appendix G and H) will be required for each youth at the sleepover.
5. Each youth will be required to complete and sign the Youth Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix K) for each sleepover event.
6. The adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees.
7. Youth will sleep only in areas equipped with a functioning smoke detector.
8. Adults will be trained in fire safety procedures and youth will be made aware of fire safety guidelines (Section



VII, G).

#### **F. Transportation To and From USR Sanctioned Events**

1. It is the responsibility of the USR RE Program, or the parents, to provide safe transportation to and from USR sanctioned events. The USR RE Program requires the following:
  - a. When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings, and other Society activities, a parent/guardian signed permission slip is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an off-site activity. In addition, each youth must sign the Youth Code of Ethics (Section XVII, Appendix K) and each adult must sign an Adult Sponsor Responsibilities Form (Section XVII, Appendix B).
  - b. Drivers must be at least 25 years old.
  - c. Every person in the car will have a seatbelt and age appropriate seating arranged in reference to airbag safety rules.
  - d. A minimum of two unrelated adults must accompany a group going off-site. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may only be made by the primary on-site adult leader.
  - e. Each driver must show proof of license, registration, and insurance coverage upon request.
  - f. There will be a phone chain for parents of children on trips at the discretion of the Religious Educator for arriving at destination and when leaving to return to home site.

#### **G. RE Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process**

1. In the event of fire or other emergency evacuation, infants and toddlers in the nursery will be taken to the kitchen next to the nursery and exit the building through the windows in the kitchen. Parents of nursery children only who are upstairs at the time, should exit the building as quickly as possible, go down the OUTSIDE stairs, and proceed to the area just outside the window of the RE kitchen to assist in the evacuation process of the nursery. They will then go with their children to the Reeb driveway.
2. In the event of an emergency evacuation, all children (with the exception of the nursery) will be escorted out of the building by their teachers.
3. If an emergency in the main building is the cause of the evacuation, teachers will take the children to the Reeb driveway and assemble by the garage. The Religious Educator will send an adult to notify the teachers in Reeb of the evacuation.
4. If an emergency in the Reeb building is the cause of the evacuation, the teachers and children will assemble on the driveway of the main building, closest to the fence that borders King's. One of the teachers from Reeb should notify the Minister and the Religious Educator of the evacuation.
5. For purposes of a fire drill, and in order to avoid traumatizing the nursery children, they will not be passed out the windows. Rather, they will exit the building with their teachers.
6. Once a year a fire drill is required to be conducted in both buildings during both Sunday services to ensure the safety of our congregation.
7. The Buildings and Grounds Committee Chair will be accountable for executing the Emergency Evacuation policy.

#### **H. Fire and Electrical Safety**

1. Childproof plugs are to be placed in unused electrical outlets in the RE Space.
2. Smoke Detectors are hard-wired and checked yearly by the Ridgewood Fire Department.
3. Fire Extinguishers are located on all floors of the Society and Reeb.
4. Emergence Information Signs are posted in the following rooms in the main building: all RE rooms and in the main kitchen. They are also posted in the following rooms in Reeb House: upstairs meeting rooms, kitchen, and the reception area.
5. The Buildings and Grounds Committee will conduct a Sunday morning fire drill annually for all Sunday Religious Education classes and coordinate with adult services.
6. Fire evacuation plans as well as the location of Fire Extinguishers and Smoke Detectors at USR and Reeb will

be provided at the time of teacher training.

**I. First Aid and Incident Reporting**

1. First aid kits are maintained by the Religious Educator. One is located on the wall in the RE kitchen of the main building and one is in the Religious Educator office at Reeb House.
2. In case of serious injury, 911 will be called for emergency assistance. A land phone is located in the RE kitchen and the main kitchen at the Society. Phones are also located in the offices in Reeb. Parents and/or guardians will be notified as soon as possible and an incident report shall be completed and submitted to the Religious Educator.
3. In case of minor injury, appropriate first aid will be applied, the parent/guardian notified, and an incident report completed and turned over to the Religious Educator.
4. A file is maintained in office of Religious Educator for all incident/accident reports.

**J. Note: Any exceptions to the RE Safety Procedures (*Sections VII*) must be approved by the Religious Educator.**

## **VIII. EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY**

When the fire alarm sounds please do the following:

1. Immediately leave the building through the nearest exit (do not go to the cloak room!). **Walk briskly away from the building and assemble on the lawn in front of Reeb House.** If there is a person near you who might need assistance, please offer such assistance or get additional help if necessary.
2. The people who brought somebody in a wheelchair are to locate another person for help, then proceed with the wheelchair bound person to the front steps. Turn the wheelchair backwards and with one person in the front and the other in the rear, guide the wheelchair down the front steps.
3. In the event of fire or other emergency evacuation, infants and toddlers in the nursery will be taken to the kitchen next to the nursery and exit the building through the windows in the kitchen. Parents of nursery children only who are upstairs at the time, should exit the building as quickly as possible, go down the OUTSIDE stairs, and proceed to the area just outside the window of the RE kitchen to assist in the evacuation process of the nursery. They will then go with their children to the blacktop by the garage at Reeb.
4. **In the event of an emergency evacuation, all children (with the exception of the nursery) will be escorted out of the building by their teachers. For purposes of a fire drill and in order to avoid traumatization of the children, the children will not be passed out the windows. Rather, they will exit the building with their teachers.**
5. If the building is being evacuated for a real emergency, parents should find their children in the appointed place and inform their teachers that they are taking them. All others should locate their family members and/or significant others. All should go home as quickly as possible.
  - a. If the main building is the cause of the evacuation, teachers will take the children to the Reeb driveway and assemble by the garage. The Religious Educator will send an adult to notify the teachers in Reeb of the evacuation.
  - b. If the Reeb building is the cause for evacuation, the teachers and children will assemble on the driveway of the main building, closest to the fence that borders King's. One of the teachers from Reeb should notify the minister and the Religious Educator of the evacuation.

Once a year a fire drill is required to be conducted in both buildings during Sunday service to ensure the safety of our congregation. Children in RE classes should return to their respective rooms after the drill. Nursery through third grade parents or guardians (or designee) will then pick up their children at the end of the service.

The Buildings and Grounds will be accountable for executing the Emergency Evacuation Policy.

(revised on 8/28/19)

## **IX. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE OR HARASSMENT**

- A. There are several situations which may prompt a response regarding a complaint or concern about sexual or physical abuse, including but not limited to:
1. A child, youth or adult reports possible abuse by a Society official, member, attendee, friend or anyone affiliated to USR;
  2. Society official, member, friend, or attendee suspects that a child or youth is being abused;
  3. Child or youth reports possible abuse by a family member or other individual; or
  4. Society officials learn that a Society member, friend, or attendee (child, youth or adult) is under investigation for allegedly abusing others.
- B. Because child abuse is addressed directly in New Jersey state law, such cases require that reporting laws be followed (Reporting Child Abuse in New Jersey: Section XVII, Appendix K). When any of the situations described above is reported, the procedures outlined in Section X will be utilized.

## **X. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE TO COMMUNITY AUTHORITIES**

- A. It is not the function of the Minister, Religious Educator or President of the Board of Trustees to conduct an investigation into accusations of child abuse. Rather it is both New Jersey law and the policy of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood to immediately report any situation in which any person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected. Such a report must be made to the NJ Dept. of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) at 1-877-652-2873 (Section XVII, Appendix K).
- B. Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, the Society will rely on the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint. It is also the Society's responsibility under these guidelines to develop an appropriate plan of response to the allegations.
- C. In all cases, the Minister will also notify the President of the Board and the CERG Executive, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Minister will notify the Society's insurance company. The SCRT will also be notified.
- D. In the event the accused abuser is the Minister, reports will be filed by, and the notifications referenced above will be the responsibility of, the President of the Board of Trustees.

## **XI. SAFE CONGREGATION RESPONSE TEAM**

- A. In order to ensure continuity, the Safe Congregation Response Team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood (USR). This Team will be composed of the Minister, Professional Religious Educator, the President of the Board of Trustees and three members of the Society (appointed annually by the Board of Trustees). It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise to include but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, human resources, and legal issues.
- B. In cases of a conflict of interest, a Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Guided by the Philosophy Statement, their function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The Safe Congregation Response Team will generally have the following responsibilities:
1. Know about community resources for child abuse, treatment for sex offenders, and support groups for survivors.
  2. Know about state laws regarding reporting.
  3. Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
  4. Evaluate applications for Religious Education (RE) teachers and youth group leaders that are flagged by the Minister or Religious Educator as needing more information or follow up. Facilitate annual training for RE staff and teachers on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse.
  5. Work with the RE Committee to assure that the sex abuse education sections of the *Our Whole Lives* curricula are offered at K - 1 and 7 - 9 grade level.
  6. Receive all allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
  7. Meet with convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in Society activities
- C. All activities of the response team will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the Response Team.

## **XII. SAFETY NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF ABUSE**

1. Interim Safety Plan: When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child and the suspected abuser is a church employee, member or attendee, the Response Team will develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of abuse. This plan may include, but not be limited to implementation of a draft Limited Access Agreement. The purpose of this plan is not only to safeguard our children, but also to provide protection to the accused abuser from further complaints. If the accused abuser is another youth, the plan must be developed with input from both sets of parents or guardians. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser or, if a minor, his or her parents or guardians, by the Response Team. The Minister and/or Religious Educator may implement similar steps while awaiting initial action of the Response Team.
2. Permanent Safety Plan: Upon final disposition by appropriate authorities, a permanent Limited Access Agreement will be developed by the Response Team. A disposition requiring a response would be substantiation by the Division of Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) or conviction by a Court of Law.
3. In all cases, the Response Team, Minister, Religious Educator or President of the Board of Trustees may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Limited Access Agreement.

### **XIII. PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF ABUSE**

- A. Following a report of suspected abuse, the Safe Congregation Response Team will also develop a plan to address the pastoral needs of our congregation, including:
1. The person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused: This may include providing information about or referrals to appropriate professional, community, and Society or UU resources, as needed. Additionally the Safe Congregation Response Team may assist in dealing with the Division of Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the Prosecutor's Office or the Police Department.
  2. Other members and friends of our congregation:
    - a. members, friends, or attendees immediately affected by the incident (such as family members or partners) whose needs we can help meet, either directly or indirectly;
    - b. the Minister (or other members of the Society staff) to aid in dealing with the pastoral needs of the victim or accused person;
    - c. other members and friends of the congregation who witnessed one or more incidents or, who having heard about them, are reminded of their own concerns; and
    - d. other congregation members and friends who are relied on to a great degree by the person/child who has allegedly been sexually abused or accused offender (or those connected to them).
  3. The accused person: Support may include helping the accused person access the appropriate professional, community, and spiritual resources. While there may be feelings of ill-will toward the accused person, if that individual is a part of our community, he or she also deserves our support; withdrawing it at this critical point in that person's life might have severe detrimental long-term effects on his or her behavior in the future. It remains the mission of this congregation to recognize and support the integrity and inherent worth and dignity of that person even though we do not condone inappropriate behaviors, and to treat him or her with compassion.
  4. Other persons/children who have allegedly been sexually abused and who have been reluctant to come forward: If warranted, the response plan will include a way of reaching out to these individuals in a manner that is non-threatening.
- B. The plan established will be such that other individuals are not put at risk for further incidents<sup>6</sup>.

#### **XIV. SAFETY AND PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF HARASSMENT**

- A. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of minors which do not warrant involvement of the Division of Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) and or law enforcement, after reporting, shall be referred to the Religious Educator and Minister. They may request that the Safe Congregation Response Team investigate such allegations. A plan shall be developed to address and resolve these complaints which shall make clear to the accused person that this Society will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resources for both the child being harassed and the alleged offender. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the minor(s) shall also be informed of this plan and involved, as appropriate, in its development.
- B. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of minors which are not accepted for investigation by DCP&P shall be referred to the Religious Educator and Minister and SCRT as appropriate. They may request that the Safe Congregation Response Team meet to review such allegations. A plan shall be developed to address and resolve these complaints which shall make clear to the accused person that this congregation will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resources for both the child who has allegedly been harassed and the alleged offender. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the minor(s) shall also be informed of this plan and involved, as appropriate, in its development.
- C. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of adults will be referred to the Religious Educator and Minister. These allegations will also be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team who will then make clear to the accused person that this congregation will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resource for both the adult who has allegedly been harassed and the alleged offender. The Safe Congregation Response Team would also be available to discuss concerns regarding situations that have felt uncomfortable but may not constitute abuse or harassment as defined in this Policy. The function of the Safe Congregation Response Team would be to help individuals clarify the source of their discomfort, brainstorm effective means of resolving the problem, and share information about appropriate resources.
- D. Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of staff are handled in the Harassment Policy.

#### **XV. GUIDELINES INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS**

- A. Situations may occur involving individual accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior. Those situations will be addressed as follows:
  - 1. An individual who has been convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of sexual misconduct or who has been determined to have engaged in any form of child abuse in any civil, criminal, administrative or ecclesiastical forum will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved.
  - 2. If an individual has been legally accused of sexual misconduct and is currently involved in civil or criminal litigation of such a charge, that individual will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved until there is final disposition of the case (resolution).
  - 3. In the event that a person has been convicted of a sexual offense and completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, the Response Team will meet to make a determination as to whether or not and the ways in which the individual may be safely involved in the life of the congregation. If it is determined that the person can participate in congregation life, a Limited Access Plan will be developed.
  - 4. In all cases, the Response Team, Minister, Religious Educator or President of the Board of Trustees may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Limited Access Agreement.

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood (USR) has enjoyed a long tradition of peace, fellowship, and civility within its congregation. Each Sunday we affirm our commitment to be a free and open Society where differences are respected. In order to secure our tradition of civility and tolerance, we recognize the need to address the potential for behavior that may challenge our sense of individual and communal safety and well-being. Therefore, the following shall be the policy of the Society if and when such a challenge may arise:

## **XVI. Guidelines for Including a Child or Adolescent Who has Sexually Abused**

**(For the Purposes of this policy, Religious Educator is the Director of Religious Education)**

One of the most difficult situations USR may have to face is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of inappropriately sexually touching a child in the congregation. After such an incident comes to the attention of the Minister or the DRE, one of them should consult with the Response Team for appropriate resources. Depending upon the allegation and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to call the Division of Child Protection and Permanency. The Minister or DRE should also initiate contact individually with the parents/guardians of both children to discuss the allegation and next steps. It is important that the same person initiates contact with both families. If there is nothing to report or the DCP&P decides it cannot take action in the situation, the Minister or DRE may still want to encourage the parents of the child who has claimed he/she was sexually touched to seek an evaluation or counseling for this child. Some children may seem unchanged by the incident. However, a child who has allegedly been sexually abused may need specialized help and attention to heal from this abuse.

The parents of the child who initiated the alleged sexual contact should be engaged more thoroughly in discussions about next steps. Regardless of whether the allegation is founded, the child or teen who allegedly initiated the sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual behaviors should not be allowed to continue activities with the same child until a safety plan can be developed. It may make sense to remove the child or teen from religious education during this time. It would certainly be prudent for the child or teen to not be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete. The Response Team will help craft a safety plan that is appropriate for the situation. The safety plan may include that the accused not be in the same classroom with the alleged victim.

In all of these cases, the Minister's and DRE's care to both families is crucial. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential as is the ongoing offer of support.

Draft 1: January 26, 2016, Revised March 22, 2016, Approved by BOT 4/4/2016

## XVII. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- A. Situations involving disruptive behavior will be brought to the attention of the President of the Board of Trustees and the Minister who may refer the situation to the Safe Congregation Response Team **(Section XI)**. The Board of Trustees will be notified of this action.
- B. The Safe Congregation Response Team will investigate the matter using this policy for guidance. This team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. The team will be composed of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, the President of the Board of Trustees and three members of the Society (appointed annually by the Board of Trustees). In cases of a conflict of interest, a team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Members of the team will be educated in the Policy and will become knowledgeable about available resources for adults and children. Guided by the Philosophy Statement, their function individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved.
- C. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister, if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Any time any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister being present, the Minister and the President of the Board of Trustees must be notified. All plans for follow up steps will be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team.
- D. Persons identified as being disruptive will be responded to as individuals of dignity and worth.
- E. Information concerning the alleged incident(s) that led to concern will be systematically collected from the concerned parties by delegated Response Team members and documented before any action is taken.
- F. The Response Team will meet to assess the findings and decide on a course of action, with the following four levels of response recommended to them.
  - 1. Level One: A Response Team member or members contacts the person named as the source of the disruption and informs them of the nature of the concern. The person's viewpoint of the matter will be elicited, valued, and documented. Response Team members will then assess the situation.
  - 2. Level Two: If the basis of the original concern is determined to be valid, this finding will be clearly communicated to the person in question and a contract for clearly defined behavior change will be negotiated. Such communication and contract will be documented.
  - 3. Level Three: If the person in question refuses to negotiate a contract, refuses to abide by a contract or is engaging in behavior of sufficient severity, he or she may be excluded from the Society for a specified period of time, with reasons for such action, and conditions for return, clearly communicated and documented.
  - 4. Level Four: The person in question is permanently excluded from the Society and the Society premises with steps taken as needed to enforce the integrity of this decision.
- G. Should the Safe Congregation Response Team decide that exclusion or expulsion from the Society is necessary, they will consult the Board of Trustees prior to action being taken.
- H. The four levels of response recommended by this policy may be applied in the order determined by the Safe Congregation Response Team and the Board of Trustees in their judgement.
- I. If appropriate, the Safe Congregation Response Team may offer referrals for professional services.
- J. All documentation developed in the course of investigating and resolving allegations of disruptive behavior will be kept confidential. The President of the Board of Trustees will be responsible for determining access to such documentation and for ensuring its security.
- K. To aid in evaluating the problem and determining the appropriate response, the following points will be used in assessing the nature and severity of referred problems.



1. **Dangerousness:** Is the individual a source of threat or harm to persons or property?
2. **Disruptiveness:** What is the extent of disruption to Society functions?
3. **Congregational Integrity:** How likely is it that existing or prospective Society members will be driven away by the alleged behavior?
4. **Causes:** Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the Society? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
5. **Probability of Change:** How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
6. **History:** What has been the frequency and the degree of disruption caused by the individual in the past?<sup>7</sup>

## XVIII. MANAGEMENT OF POSSIBLE RISK AND HAZARDS

### A. Firearms

1. No firearms are allowed on the premises.
2. If a person possesses a gun on the premises, the person will be asked to leave immediately.
3. If the person refuses to leave, the Ridgewood Police Department will be called.

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

A. Adult Sponsor Responsibilities .....	18
B. Application Form for Volunteers and Employees who Work with Children and Youth .....	19
C. Code of Ethics for those Working with Children and Youth .....	22
D. Coming of Age-Mentor Responsibilities and Agreement .....	23
E. Limited Access Agreement .....	24
F. Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release Form .....	25
G. Medical Information Form .....	26
H. Teacher Training and Safety Policy Agreement .....	27
I. Volunteer Reference Form .....	28
J. Youth Code of Ethics .....	29
K. Reporting Child Abuse in New Jersey .....	30
L. Child Care Policy .....	31
M. Procedures for Overnight Trips with Youth .....	32
N. Rationale and Guidelines for Including Sex Offenders (Balancing Acts) .....	33
O. Youth Who May be Abusers (Balancing Acts) .....	37

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **A. ADULT SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(sponsor name)  
am attending \_\_\_\_\_  
(name of event)  
on \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)  
and will sponsor \_\_\_\_\_  
(youth name/s)

Sponsorship means that I take responsibility for the well-being, safety, and best interests of this youth/s during this event. While attending this event:

- I will work out a system of communication with this youth during this event, which is mutually satisfying to the youth, sponsor and parents. I recognize that this youth has agreed to abide by all federal, state and local laws while attending this event and has signed a Youth Code of Ethics indicating that he/she is responsible for his/her own behavior.
- If the youth does not act accordingly, I understand I will be responsible for the consequences of her/his actions.
- I understand the code of ethics includes no alcohol or illegal drug use during the event and that both the youth and I are bound by this code. I pledge not to arrive under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. I pledge to use no alcohol or illegal drugs during this event.
- I am not sponsoring more than a total of 8 Youth at this event.
- I have read and signed the Code of Ethics included with this form.

#### **The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood Code of Ethics**

All volunteers play a key role in fostering the spiritual growth and character development of our youth. It is therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable our youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Therefore, those who teach and/or lead our youth will:

- Provide nurturing care and support to all youth.
- Work to help youth develop a positive sense of self and spirit of independence.
- Respect the selfhood of each young person, including the absolute right to privacy of his or her own mind and body.
- Not engage in any behavior with young people, which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- Not engage in behavior or language, which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- Not engage in any sexually harassing behavior, nor any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with youth.
- Not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of youth.

Volunteer's Statement:

I have read the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of volunteers working with young people at The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

(Revised on 12/06/04.)

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **B. APPLICATION FORM FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

#### **CONFIDENTIAL**

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any volunteer position involving the supervision of minors, excluding occasional volunteers as defined in the Safety Policy of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. The purpose of this form is to help The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth that participate in programs sponsored by the congregation. Any information you provide here will be used solely for the purpose of determining your qualifications for working with minors.

#### **Personal Data**

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Have you ever used a different name? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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.

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

In what states have you lived in since you were 18 years old? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

#### **Congregational History and Prior Work with Children/Youth**

List congregations you have attended regularly during the past five years, starting with USR.

<b>NAME OF CONGREGATION</b>	<b>CITY, STATE</b>	<b>DATE OF MEMBERSHIP/ATTENDANCE</b>
-----------------------------	--------------------	--------------------------------------

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood	Ridgewood, NJ	
------------------------------------	---------------	--

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List previous congregational and community work involving children/youth: (please include name of religious institution or organization and your role or duties, and person to whom you were responsible)

---

---

**References**

May we call your current employer for a character reference? \_\_\_\_\_

If not, please tell us why: \_\_\_\_\_

---

List two personal references who you have known for 3 or more years (not former employers or relatives):

1) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information**

Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense? \_\_\_\_\_

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? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

Has any civil judgment ever been made against you for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by an employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide details (attach a separate piece of paper if necessary):

---

---

Other than 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 or youth? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please provide details: \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Driving Information**

Please provide the following:

1. Driver's License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please attach a copy of your current Driver's License.

If you will be driving children and/or youth:

1. Please attach a copy of your certificate of insurance. We recommend personal injury liability insurance of \$100,000 minimum.

2. Have you ever been convicted of a moving violation or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

YES NO (If *yes*, please state date and nature of conviction) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Applicant's Statement and Release**

I authorize the congregation to contact references and other religious institutions listed in this application to obtain information about my background regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. I authorize references to provide such information (including opinions) 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 person responsible for screening staff or volunteers will conduct a background check which may include the sex offender registry and/or contact with the local police. This may be waived by USR by my providing proof of having successfully passed a comparable background check **within two years of the date below**.

I understand that any information obtained about me through this application process will be kept in the strictest confidentiality and will be available only to those responsible for screening staff or volunteers or participating in a response team, or as required by law.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the policies of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood regarding child care and youth workers. Any information obtained through this process may be used, at the sole discretion of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, to deny this application.

I attest that the above information is true and correct.

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

(Revised 3/10/05.)

#### **For use by The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood only:**

Application Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Placed? YES NO Position Assigned : \_\_\_\_\_

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **C. CODE OF ETHICS FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Those who teach and/or lead our children and youth play a key role in fostering the spiritual growth and character development of our children and youth. It is therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable our children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Therefore, those who teach and/or lead our children/youth will:

- Provide nurturing care and support to all children/youth.
- Work to help children/youth develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence.
- Respect the selfhood of each young person, including the absolute right to privacy of his or her own mind and body.
- Not engage in any behavior with young people, which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- Not engage in behavior or language, which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- Not engage in any sexually harassing behavior, nor any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children/youth.
- Not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of children/youth.
- Not consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her responsibilities.

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 the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of those working with the children and youth at The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_

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

(Revised on 3/3/2014)

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **D. COMING OF AGE MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND AGREEMENT**

Mentor responsibilities include:

- Mentor should answer, or help the participant find answers to any questions the participant may have about the program.
- Mentor should discuss with participant any fears and concerns about fulfilling any of the requirements and help the participant over the rough spots.
- Mentor must show interest in the participant's progress and keep informed about the program. Updates and information will be provided via email and telephone by the Religious Educator.
- Mentor must show enthusiasm for the program and the Society and generally encourage the participant to value what he or she is doing.
- Mentor should work to provide an open relationship one in which teen issues such as drugs, alcohol and sex can be discussed confidentially and free of parental judgment.
- Mentor is encouraged to find ways in which to have social time with the participant. For instance, it can be particularly rewarding to have lunch with your participant along with another mentor and their participant. Please note that all "one on one" time must be spent in the presence of other adults (i.e. at a restaurant, sporting event, or before/after class at The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.)
- Mentor is encouraged to find ways to participate in some part of the participant's social justice project if their schedule allows.
- Mentor is expected to communicate weekly with their participant starting on or around \_\_\_\_\_.  
(date)
- Mentor is expected to develop and present their own Credo Statement to the class during one of the scheduled class times.
- Mentor must be present at the Coming of Age Service on Affirmation Sunday on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(date)

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

(Revised 4/14/05.)



## XIX. APPENDICES

### E. LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

#### 1. Introductory Paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:

- a. The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping (being among us) with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.
- b. Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:
  - i. Please do not talk with children.
  - ii. Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
  - iii. Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.
  - iv. If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at the Society or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
  - v. Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care:


I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future Society functions and Society property. I agree this can be revoked at any time upon consideration of the SCRT.

I understand that this covenant will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature:	Date
Witness:	Date
Minister:	Date
DRE/MRE:	Date
Board Chair:	Date

(Revised 3/9/05.)

## XIX. APPENDICES

### F. PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT AND MEDICAL RELEASE FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_, am the parent or legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_  
(parent/guardian name) (youth name)

I give consent for him/her to attend \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
(event) (date)

*(Insert specifics of trip such as where they will leave from and what time and when and where they will return to.)*

I hereby give my consent and authority for the designated adult(s) to take action to help insure the safety, health and welfare of my son/daughter/ward. I understand that if he/she breaks any federal, state, or local laws that I will be informed. I also request and empower my child's sponsor to authorize medical personnel and hospitals to provide all medical care, including but not limited to hospital tests, emergency surgical care, pathology, radiology and anesthesia, surgery and prescriptive drugs for the health of my child.

Designated adult(s) for the event specified above: \_\_\_\_\_

#### The child covered by this authorization is:

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

#### In Case of Emergency Contact:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

#### Parent Attendance information:

\_\_\_\_\_ I **will attend** the event.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **will not be attending** the event.

- ☐ I have submitted medical information when child/youth was registered for the RE Program.
- ☐ There are no changes to the medical information on file with the RE Program
- ☐ Changes to the medical information for my child/youth are attached.

The Undersigned, on his/her own behalf, and on behalf of her/his minor child/ward, does hereby RELEASE, discharge and covenant to hold harmless The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, its officers, employees and volunteers, from any and all claims, causes of action, and liability of any kind or nature, including personal injuries or death, and including any claim based on the negligence of the said Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, its officers, employees or volunteers.

**PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

(Revised 2/19/07.)

**XIX. APPENDICES**

**G. MEDICAL INFORMATION FORM**

Name of child/youth \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Dentist/Orthodontist \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Do you carry family medical/hospital Insurance?    YES    NO

Name of parent/person with insurance policy:

\_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_

Policy # \_\_\_\_\_ Group # \_\_\_\_\_

Medications currently taking:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Allergies/Medical conditions:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of last Tetanus shot? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your child under the care of a physician for:

Epilepsy?    YES    NO                  Diabetes?    YES    NO

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME** (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

(Revised 8/1/05.)

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **H. AGREEMENT TO TEACH**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

I have attended a teacher training session. I have read the Religious Education Program Safety Policy and attached forms. I have received all training as outlined in the safety policy and understand all procedures.

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 Religious Educator.

Further, I agree to notify the Minister and the Religious Educator 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/or youth in this congregation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

(Revised on 2/28/05.)

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **I. VOLUNTEER REFERENCE FORM**

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

Volunteer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Reference name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference address: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference phone: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your relationship to the volunteer applicant?
2. How long have you known the volunteer applicant?
3. How well do you know the volunteer applicant? What are their strengths?
4. How would you describe the volunteer applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?
5. How would you feel about having him/her as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?
6. Do you know of any facts or characteristics that would negatively affect the volunteer applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.
7. Please list any other comments you would like to make:

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **J. YOUTH CODE OF ETHICS**

I am attending the \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
(name of event) (date of event)

I understand that this event is coordinated by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
( name of person, persons, or committee)

I understand my behavior will affect the Youth community of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. While attending this event:

- I will act in ways that encourage the well-being, safety, and the best interests of everyone attending this event.
- I will follow all federal, state and local laws.
- I will work out a system of communication with my sponsor during this event.
- I understand that I am encouraged to express myself in healthy ways and to respect each other's boundaries.
- I understand that behavior that breaks down the community, including sexual activity and sexual harassment, is inappropriate and therefore, not permitted in this setting.
- I will not consume any alcohol or illegal drugs.
- I understand that my sponsor has also agreed to refrain from any use of alcohol or illegal drugs during this event.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the Youth Code of Ethics. I agree to abide by these guidelines for the duration of the event. I understand that if I break this agreement, my parents/guardians will be contacted and that I may be prohibited from attending any future events sponsored by The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(youth signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

(Revised on 2/28/05.)

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **K. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE IN NEW JERSEY**

#### **1. Reporting Child Abuse in New Jersey**

- a. Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse shall report this information immediately to the New Jersey Child Abuse Hotline (State Central Registry).
- b. The NJ Dept. of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) operates a 24 hour, 7 day a week toll-free hotline (1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873); TDD: 1-800-835-5510) to receive reports of child abuse and neglect. The workers decide if the callers' allegations merit state intervention or referrals to other child advocacy groups. Calls received during normal working hours that require investigation are immediately referred to the appropriate district office and calls received after hours are referred to the Special Response Unit (SPRU).
- c. DCP&P accepts allegations of child abuse and neglect by telephone and in person from all sources including identified sources, anonymous sources, sources which have incomplete information and referrals educators, from the child or parent themselves.
- d. Upon receiving a report of child abuse or neglect, a DCP&P caseworker shall investigate the allegations and take such action as is necessary to insure the safety of the child.

#### **2. Immunity from Civil or Criminal Liability**

- a. Any person who, pursuant to the law, reports abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action.

#### **3. Penalty for Failure to Report**

- a. Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect pursuant to the law or to comply with the provisions of the law is a disorderly person and subject to a fine up to \$1,000.00 or up to six months imprisonment, or both.

## **XIX. APPENDICES**

### **L. CHILD CARE POLICY**

#### **Purpose**

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood welcomes and supports families with young children. In order to facilitate the participation of parents in USR activities, child care will be provided in accord with the guidelines below.

Our goal is to create a safe and engaging environment for children while their parents or guardians are participating in USR meetings, programs, or events.

#### **General Policies for Childcare**

Publicity for USR events should include the notice that child care is available. All event publicity shall request that anyone seeking child care for an event notify the office at least two weeks prior to the event.

Implementation of these child care policies are the shared responsibility of the USR Child Care Coordinator (CCC), the parents of the children being cared for, the event liaison, and the hired caregivers.

As per the safety policy, a minimum of 2 unrelated adults must be present in the same room at all times. If more than one room is in use (e.g., nursery & main RE space), then the number of sitters should be increased to maintain this quota. The number and age of children needing babysitting will also determine the number of babysitters needed. In general, the desired ratio will be two caregivers to six children. The adult representative of the sponsoring USR group is not assigned to a particular room, but is responsible for coordinating and supporting the babysitters in each room. Youth age 14 or older may volunteer in the nursery under the supervision of two adults. All child care staff must have child abuse prevention training. All youth volunteering in the nursery must also be interviewed by the DRE, individually or in a group with other volunteering youth. It is also strongly recommended that all nursery volunteers have CPR/AED training and that all youths take a babysitting course.

Parents should be informed that USR is not an allergen-free environment, especially not a nut-free facility.

At larger events, food may be provided. It will be the responsibility of the adult representative to purchase the food and be reimbursed through the Finance Administrator.

The event liaison is present at the event, greets the caregivers or the CCC adult assigned, and is available for any questions or emergencies throughout the duration of the event. A back-up person for the event liaison must be assigned in case the event liaison cannot be present at the event.

The CCC communicates the rules of the USR Safety Policy and general babysitting guidelines to all babysitters and event coordinators prior to the event and makes sure a copy is available at all events.

Off-site Events: USR is not responsible for arranging babysitting for off-site Society events.

#### **Parent Responsibility**

Parents of children being cared for must have an up-to-date Religious Education Registration form on file. It is the parent's responsibility to notify caregivers of any allergies, concerns, or limitations. An information card must be completed for each child, each time they are cared for at an event. Guest parents must complete a more extensive registration form in advance of the event and be pre-approved for participation.

Parents are required to stay on USR grounds and be available for any concerns the caregivers may have.

#### **Caregiver Responsibility**

- \* Respect and care for each child in accordance with each child's needs
- \* Report any problems or concerns promptly to the designated adult liaison and follow-up with the Child Care Coordinator as necessary.
- \* Coordinate child care with each other to ensure that two are in the same room at the same time (except for bathroom or parent visiting).
- \* Will use sign-in sheet to record the children and parents participating.

#### **Childcare at Congregation-wide Events**

Child care will be offered at the annual meeting and all special meetings called by the Board. The USR budget will cover these costs.

#### **Childcare at Committee Sponsored Events**

All committees sponsoring an event are encouraged to provide child care whether to be paid from the USR Budget,



the committee's budget, or from proceeds of the event. All committees sponsoring an event are encouraged to offer child care with two weeks' parental notice prior to the event. Child Care costs are a USR, not parental responsibility. Event sponsors should contact the CCC at least two weeks before the event to obtain and discuss child care policies. The sponsoring committee will have the responsibility of managing their child care in accordance with the Policies and Guidelines in this document.

#### Guidelines for Childcare Event Management

The Childcare Coordinator or his/her designee (for ex. the sponsor or committee member) will be responsible for the following tasks for their event:

- \* hire the caregivers
- \* reserve a room
- \* oversee the childcare including greeting the caregivers and be available for any questions or concerns during the event.
- \* at events of long duration, the liaison periodically checks on the children and caregivers
- \* arrange for prompt payment
- \* ensure the room is left in good order

#### Guidelines for Child Care Providers

- \* All children shall be signed in and out by the adult who brings them using the USR sign-in sheet (attached).
- \* All children must have permission to leave the room for any reason.
- \* Only one child at a time may leave the room to go to the bathroom.
- \* Children under eight years should be escorted to the bathroom.
- \* Children should never be left unattended in the childcare room.
- \* At least two caregivers are needed at all times. Efforts should be made to maintain a caregiver/child ratio of 2 to 6 for all events.

#### Payment for Childcare

The rates (to be reviewed annually) are \$25/h for adult overseer, \$20/h for senior youth, \$10/h for junior youth. Once engaged caregivers will be paid for one hour even if no children show up and their services are not utilized.

(Adapted from policy of Albany NY UU)

Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees January 29, 2015, November 4 2015, January 4, 2016.  
Revised by SCRT March 22, 2016. Approved by BOT 4/4/2016

## XIX. APPENDICES

### M. PROCEDURES FOR OVERNIGHT TRIPS WITH YOUTH

- These procedures are to cover the following trips and environments: hotels, motels, Bed and Breakfasts, and other church sites.
- These procedures, based on Safe Congregation RE Policies, are in descending order of preference. Whenever possible, trip arrangements should be made in advance to adhere to the most stringent of these procedures.
- **As part of trip preparations, sleeping arrangements should be discussed with the youth so that all are comfortable with the plan. In the spirit of community building and inclusion, it is preferable for overnight space to accommodate all youth with correct adult ratio in the same room. The next preferable accommodation is single beds. If double beds are the only option, then youth need to bring sleeping bags.**
- One adult on each trip will be responsible for assuring adherence to these procedures. Prior to each trip, the DRE shall review and approve the specific procedure to be employed as set forth herein.

The preferred arrangement is for two adults to remain awake in close proximity to where the youth are sleeping. They are to monitor all issues related to safety and/or inappropriate behavior.

1. For group accommodations: If there are not enough adults on the trip to accommodate the above arrangement, the next preferred arrangement is to have two adults sleep in the same quarters as the youth as a presence to ensure safety. If either adult is awakened due to any disturbance, inappropriate behavior or by a youth who wishes to report same, that adult is to immediately awaken the other adult before proceeding further.
2. For hotel, motel, and Bed and Breakfast type accommodations: The next preferred arrangement is that one adult must randomly spot check the sleeping quarters of the youth at least once during the night. The adults on the trip may divide this duty among themselves in order to ensure that they are alert and responsible throughout the trip. Note that room monitoring may include placing tape on the outside of the youths' doors in order to assure that no one has left his or her room.
3. All trip attendees must be made aware of pertinent fire safety information at the site(s) of the overnight.
4. The adult in charge of each trip shall review the specific safety procedures for the trip with all attendees.

(5/27/09)

## XIX. APPENDICES

### N. RATIONALE AND GUIDELINES FOR INCLUDING SEX OFFENDERS (BALANCING ACTS)

From **Balancing Acts, Keeping Children Safe in Congregations**, Reverend Debra W. Haffner ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))

According to the federal Center for Sex Offender Management, “the criminal justice system manages most convicted sex offenders with some combination of incarceration, community supervision, and specialized treatment...the majority are released at some point on probation or parole (either following sentencing or after a period of incarceration in prison or jail.) About 60% of offenders managed by the U.S. correctional system are under some form of conditional supervision in the community.”<sup>[xiii]</sup> And many of them want to attend worship and participate in the life of a faith community. In fact, attendance and membership in a local congregation may be encouraged by their treatment provider and parole supervisor, often to cut down on their social isolation.

There are those who believe that a convicted sex offender never belongs in one of our communities. In fact, one of the ministers I interviewed for this manual was quite clear about this: “I told the Board that they could have the minister or the pedophile. Not both.” A former Director of Ministry for the UUA, took this position in a 1991 article, “my own bias is this, based on what I know now – that an identified pedophile should not be part of congregational life. They must cease any physical presence.”<sup>[xiv]</sup>

This manual offers information and guidance for congregations wishing to consider including a person with a history (or an accusation) of sexual abuse. This manual also offers resources for inclusion such as a sample Limited Access Agreement. A review of the literature on sex offenders, interviews with congregations that have successfully integrated a convicted sex offender into adult worship and education, and a theological commitment to the dignity and worth of all people, even those that have committed morally repugnant acts, suggest that inclusion is possible. And each congregation faced with this situation will make its own decision about what is right given the particular facts and circumstances.

**Peer reviewed literature suggests that, depending on the nature of the offense and assuming successful completion of treatment, most treated sex offenders do not recidivate.** As religious communities, we can provide compassion, support, and reconciliation to those who truly have indicated that they have changed and have taken responsibility for their actions. We believe in the healing power of involvement in a spiritual home, and in the words of one affirmation heard in many Unitarian Universalist congregations, “to seek the truth in love and help one another.” Sex offenders who have completed prison sentences and mandated treatment as well as registered with the state have according to the court system complied with their punishments. As faith-based communities, we can provide support and compassion with awareness and vigilance so that all are safe as those who have sexually offended return to or join our church community. A Case Study: A Sex Offender in Church discusses how one congregation has faced these issues and is follows the list of Resources at the end of this document.

In many ways, the person with a history of sex offenses has the same needs for a faith community as the rest of us. But the sex offender needs more to assure that his involvement doesn’t pose risks to the congregation and that standards are in place for protection against false allegations and suspicions. “Such involvement needs to include helping him manage his behavior and not get into situations which in the past led to offences...an offender who truly wishes to participate in the life of the church, who realizes the extent of his crime and the difficulty his presence may cause to survivors, and who is truly committed to a new life will understand and accept the need for the imposition of restrictions...”

But in order to do so safely, we must assure that the convicted sex offender does not have the opportunity in our congregations to re-offend again. This includes avoiding situations where they can be accused falsely. The fact is that a person with a history of sex offense against children should never be allowed to be with children, work with children and youth, or socialize with children at the congregation. **No person who has been convicted of, or with an unresolved accusation of, any sexual misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any religious education or youth group activities.**

**The core response of the congregation to a convicted or accused sex offender is a Limited Access Agreement.** This agreement invites the person with a history of sex offenses to participate in certain aspects of congregational life, setting clear

boundaries including what the individual will not do. Typically a Limited Access Agreement will specify participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all-adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events as acceptable. It asks the person to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes not talking with children, volunteering or chaperoning children's events, including children's religious education classes, talks with children during worship, and children's activities during intergenerational events. It generally requires the person to remain in the presence of an adult who knows their situation at all times when children are present, including in some cases, asking the person to suggest a group of people to act as companions at church events where children may be present. It denies the person access to keys to the building and asks them to avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group. The sample Limited Access Agreement that can be modified based on the feedback of the committee and the individual circumstances of the offender, can be found in the Appendix of this document. It includes two introductory paragraphs: one for a person who has been accused of a sexual offense, the other for someone who has been convicted. It's available in check list format as well. **The message to the sex offender should be that they are both welcome to participate in adult worship, adult social, and adult educational activities and that they must covenant with the congregation to avoid all contact with children.**

Many congregations already have policies on how to deal with disruptive behaviors including

- perceived threats to the safety of other members
- disruption of church activities
- diminishing appeal of the church to its current and potential members

In general, these policies first ask the minister to meet with the offending individual to address the concern. If the behavior continues, the offending individual may be asked to leave the congregation for a period of time, with reasons for suspension and conditions of return made clear. Individuals are generally not excluded from the congregation completely except by agreement of the Board of Trustees and the Minister, who will communicate the decision.

In the words of one policy, we strive "to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. However, concern 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 the disruption compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as a people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security."

If your congregation already has a policy for dealing with disruptive behavior it can be amended to include a section addressing the inclusion of sex offenders as many of the same conditions apply. It is good practice for a congregation to develop a draft of a Limited Access Agreement or check list that can be a template when a situation arises.

There are generally a few ways that the presence of a convicted sex offender becomes known in a congregation. In an ideal world, a person with this background would come to the minister before they started coming to the congregation to discuss limits on their participation. Sex offender treatment specialists often encourage their clients to do just that. One community facing this issue wrote, "The Board's response to this situation would have been made easier if, before becoming so deeply involved in church activities, the individual had approached our church, explained his situation, asked whether there was some arrangement under which he could participate, and then awaited our response."

This is probably not often the case. In some cases, people reveal their backgrounds to the ministers. In other circumstances, another congregant may discover a congregant's history of sexual offenses. Congregants should know that in these cases they should make their concern known to the minister. In other cases, someone may see a familiar name on the sex offender registry. Or, perhaps it becomes known that a long standing member of the congregation has been accused of a sexual offense.

## Steps to Take

1. No matter how the situation is revealed, the minister as quickly as possible should meet privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The minister may want to check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. (If the minister is the one being accused, this manual and these steps do not apply. Instead, the President of the Board should be contacted immediately and the president should contact the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA and/or the District Executive serving the congregation.) If the person is a member of the congregation and has a partner who also attends the church, then the minister should reach out to the partner as well.
2. If the minister determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, the person should then be asked to meet with the

hopefully pre-existing Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (hereinto referred to as the Response Team). If such a team does not exist, the Minister in consultation with the President of the Board of Trustees, should convene such a group, consisting of the minister, the Religious Educator, and if possible at least three members of the congregation who have professional expertise with this issue.

3. The individual should be asked to sign a release form so that the minister can contact his/her sex offender treatment provider and/or current therapist. Ask if those people are members of ATSA, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. The therapist and, if applicable, the parole officer should be asked for their professional assessment of the likelihood that the sex offender will re-offend and whether additional restrictions beyond the standard Limited Access Agreement ought to be placed on the person's participation. It will be helpful to know the number, timing and nature of offenses. Such information allows consideration of different situations. For example, an 18 year old male who had sex with his 16 year old girlfriend and against whom her parents pressed charges or the person who has served time in jail for sex offenses against neighborhood children. In the second scenario, if the person has been in the community for some time and has previously completed mandated treatment, the committee would be wise to ask the person to go for a professional assessment with a therapist who specializes in working with sex offenders. The congregation may choose to provide the funding for this assessment. If the offender refuses permission to contact the therapist or refuses to go for an assessment, the congregation would be right to refuse participation in any congregation activity. For more information on this issue, go to Reasons for Excluding a Person from All Congregation Activities.

It is beyond the scope and experience of congregations to assess the risk or probability that a sex offender will re-offend. According to the Center for Sex Offender Management, even therapists with special training in treating sex offenders can be wrong. They write, "There are no absolutes or magic bullets in identifying these risk factors. Rather, this process is an exercise in isolating factors that are associated with specific behaviors. While this association reflects likelihood, it does not say that all individuals who possess certain characteristics will behave in a certain manner. Some offenders will inevitably commit subsequent sex offenses...likewise not all sex offenders who have re-offense characteristics will recidivate."<sup>xvii</sup>

The question the Response Team (or other responsible entity in the congregation) must be able to answer is this: given what professionals have advised you, will this person sign and obey a Limited Access Agreement that they can maintain with the leadership in order to assure the safety of children and youth?

4. If the assessment indicates that the person has completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is not at high risk for recidivism, the Response Team may choose to develop a Limited Access Agreement. If the professional assessment indicates that the person is at high risk for re-offending, it is appropriate to deny that person involvement in the faith community until treatment is successful at reducing the risk. One denomination that has developed a resource for assisting congregations in making these decisions recommends that "a small group should be set up, consisting of approximately five persons, including the minister, persons who have agreed to offer pastoral support for the offender, and accompany them in worship and other church activities, someone with expertise or experience in this field, and someone to represent the wider church community. The group should acquaint itself with any therapeutic program the offender has undergone or will continue to be part of. The group should meet the offender, their probation officer, and other appropriate people so that clear boundaries can be established for the protection of children and youth and to reduce the likelihood of false allegations or suspicions. This group will, at best, operate alongside other agencies in a multi-agency approach to the offender's rehabilitation." Meeting with the other support people in the offender's life – their family, therapist, probation officer – can powerfully demonstrate the faith community's desire to support the person and hold them accountable. If the person has a partner in the community, that person should be involved in developing the Limited Access Agreement as well.

It is important to point out that a person with a commitment to avoiding future abuses will welcome the opportunity for controls on their behaviors. Stop It Now! writes, "You can show your support of the abuser's willingness to live a different life that keeps children safe. Your support and watchfulness can help in his or her recovery. It is also a chance to let the abuser know that you are aware of the past and are watching his or her actions today."

All persons with past histories of sexual offenses should be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement or Check List. Upon entry into the congregation and depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to sign one annually. If the offender refuses to do so, it is then appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property. An offender who refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement should know that if they enter the congregation or its property, they will be asked to leave by a member of the Response Team or the Board of Trustees. If the person further refuses, the local police will be called for assistance.

5. The Response Team should meet at least quarterly with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If the minister or the Religious Educator changes, as well as the chair of the Board of Trustees, it is important that the departing person inform the new person of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved. Copies of files including Limited Access Agreement information should be treated with care, and kept in a secure file drawer.

6. If and when legal questions arise, the minister and/or Board President should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice informed by local and state statutes that apply.

7. Decide who needs to know. One of the very important and difficult questions is who needs to know that a congregant has a history of sex offense. Clearly, key people, including the Minister, the Religious Educator, the Chair of the Board and the Response Team need to know that the person is attending church, that he or she has agreed not to have contact with children, has signed a Limited Access Agreement or check list, and that he or she should never be alone with children and adolescents.

According to the Methodist Church of the United Kingdom, “there is much to be said for explaining the circumstances to the whole congregation, to promote understanding and support for the individual but also to ensure that church members do not unwittingly allow children contact with the individual concerned. However, this needs to be weighed against any need for confidentiality or pastoral sensitivity...the need to know must be balanced with the danger that the offender may be hounded out of the community (to his detriment and to the greater danger of the other children if he decides to maintain a low profile next time around.)<sup>[ix]</sup> One congregation has devised a policy in between: the congregation knows the policies that have been developed to keep children safe. The name of a particular person with a history of sexual offending is known to the minister and the Religious Educator. The minister will share that name with any parent who requests it in a private meeting. The Board of Trustees, in grappling with the issue of sex offenders in the congregation, will want to make the decision about how confidentiality will be handled, and it is that decision that should be communicated to the entire congregation.

### **Reasons for Excluding a Person from All Congregation Activities**

- Refusal for the minister to contact the treatment provider and parole officer.
- Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism.
- Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

Once an individual decides that they can comply with these conditions, the process would begin again to reassess the individual and see if they could be welcomed into the life of the congregation anew.

## XIX. APPENDICES

### O. YOUTH WHO MAY BE ABUSERS (BALANCING ACTS)

From **Balancing Acts, Keeping Children Safe in Congregations**, by Reverend Debra W. Haffner ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))

One of the most difficult possible situations is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of inappropriately sexually touching a child in the congregation. The difficulty is that in some cases these children may simply be acting on their sexual feelings impulsively, not quite understanding the importance of boundaries, whereas in other cases, youth and children who engage in sexual activity with younger children may become future adult offenders. If an older child forces sex on a younger child or exposes his or her genitals to a younger child, both of these children will need professional help. If an older child demonstrates inappropriate sexual interest in younger children that doesn't extend to these behaviors, there may or may not be cause for congregational involvement. However, "any child who engages in sex play with a much younger child, or children who coerce or force someone to engage in sex, is beyond normal sexual exploration. If a child is being used in any way to meet the sexual needs of another, then it is sexual abuse."<sup>[xxi]</sup> And some children who behave this way are acting out their own history of sexual abuse.

After such an incident comes to the attention of the minister or other staff member, the minister should initiate contact individually with the parents of both children to discuss the allegation and next steps. In both of the congregations that I spoke to where this had happened, the ministers reported that the parents had simply stopped coming to the congregation rather than seeking help for their children and support from the faith community during what is surely a difficult time.

The minister should encourage the parents of the child who was touched to seek an evaluation for this child. Some children may seem unchanged by the incident. However, a child who has been sexually abused, according to Stop It Now!, "needs specialized help and attention to heal from this abuse" through treatment with a specialist, "otherwise he or she might be at risk for further abuse or for showing abusing behaviors." However, with treatment and support, the risk of either further abuse or for abusing is dramatically decreased. Contact the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) or the Safer Society Foundation for referrals if you don't have a local list of therapists with expertise in this area.<sup>[xxii]</sup>

The parents of the child who initiated the sexual contact need to be engaged more thoroughly in discussions about next steps. Depending on the state law and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to call Child Protective Services. Regardless, before the initiator is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive an extensive assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist with experience with children with sexual behavior problems. It is NOT the responsibility of the minister or the response team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place.

While this review is occurring, it is important that the child's religious education teacher be informed of the allegation and for the parents to agree to closely monitor their child before and after the religious education program. It may make sense to remove the child from religious education during this time. It would certainly be prudent for the child not to be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete.

The minister will need to decide if the situation warrants the involvement of the entire Response Team and at what point. If the evaluation finds that this was simply a case of inappropriate boundaries or impulsive behavior, and with the recommendation of the therapist that the child can safely attend church functions with other children, the minister and the parents can meet with the child to discuss the importance of never repeating the behavior, the harm it can do to other children, and the consequences should such a situation occur again.

On the other hand, if the treatment provider reports that the child has a sexual behavior problem that is likely to be repetitive, the minister, the Religious Educator, the response team, and the parents need to meet to decide how and if the child can safely be involved with the Religious Education or Youth Group program. A modified Limited Access Agreement should be developed and signed by both the child and the parents. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the young person continued involvement with other children until treatment is completed and to consider alternative ways to provide religious education, such as through individual sessions with a Religious Educator or home schooling.

In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for sexual offenses back into the congregation after treatment is completed. In such cases, the steps for involving an adult offender can be followed, including a Limited Access Agreement signed by both the youth and their parents.

In any of these cases, pastoral care and support for the families involved is crucial. This will be very difficult for the parents involved, and they will need the support of their church community, especially the minister and the Religious Educator. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential, as is the ongoing offer of ministry.

## **XX. RESOURCES**

### **UUA Resources**

UUA website-articles, links to outside resources, videos and more. Type “trauma response resources” into the search box on [www.usua.org](http://www.usua.org)

UU Trauma Response Team-provides multi-faith and culturally sensitive spiritual care to survivors of mass disasters and other significant trauma. Toll Free Emergency Number (888) 760-3332.

Website: [www.traumaministry.org](http://www.traumaministry.org)

### **Bergen County Resources**

ywHealingSPACE: A Sexual Violence Resource Center (formerly Rape Crisis Center) Support and resources for child, adolescent and adult survivors of sexual assault and their significant others

Hotline (24 hrs/7 days): 201-487-2227; Office: 201-881-1700

Center for Hope and Healing (formerly Shelter Our Sisters) - Dedicated to assisting victims, and their children, of domestic violence Hotline (7days/24hrs: 201-944-9600; Office: 201-836-1075

Alternatives to Domestic Violence

Hotline (7days/24hrs) and office: 201-336-7575

### **Passaic County Resources**

Passaic County Women’s Center: Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence Services  
973 881-0725

### **New Jersey Resources**

Division of Protection and Permanency - Toll free hotline (7 days/24hrs) to report child abuse and neglect: 1-877-NJ ABUSE(652-2873)

New Jersey Battered Women’s Coalition  
609-584-8107

New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJ CASA)  
Hotline: 1-800-601-7200; Office: 609-631-4450

### **General Information about Child Sexual Abuse**

ChildHelp USA - National Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-4-A Child  
Hotline is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week.  
[www.childhelpusa.org](http://www.childhelpusa.org)

Prevent Child Abuse America  
1800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373)  
[www.childabuse.org](http://www.childabuse.org)

STOP IT NOW!!  
Helpline: 1-888-Prevent; Office:1-413-587-3500;  
[www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)

The Kempe Center for the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect  
303-864-5300  
[www.kemp.org](http://www.kemp.org)



**Information about Sex Offenders and Assessment/Treatment Resources**

Center for Sex Offender Management

301-589-9383

[www.csom.org](http://www.csom.org)

Safer Society Foundation, Inc.

802-247-3132

[www.saferociety.org](http://www.saferociety.org)

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA)

503-643-1023

[www.atsa.com](http://www.atsa.com)

**Support for Parents and Survivors**

Parents Anonymous

909-621-6184

[www.parentsanonymous.org](http://www.parentsanonymous.org)

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network

800-656-HOPE

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

Survivors of Incest Anonymous

410-893-3322

[www.siaawso.org](http://www.siaawso.org)

Voices in Action (Support for victims of incest and child sexual abuse)

8041 Hosbrook Rd. Suite 236, Cincinnati, OH 45236

513-745-9555

[www.voices-action.org](http://www.voices-action.org)

## XXI. REFERENCES

This policy was developed after consulting many sources within the UUA as well as utilizing materials/policies from UUA and Metro District workshops. Many materials did not indicate what congregation developed the policies.. This list is therefore as complete as possible.

### CONGREGATIONAL POLICY RESOURCES

**Policy of Child Safety and Child Abuse Prevention**, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas, June 20, 1995.

**Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior**, West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, Rocky River, OH, August 29, 1996.

**Religious Education Program**, Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester, NH, 2003-2004.

**Safe Congregation Policy for the Congregation**, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton, NJ, January 20, 2005

**Safe Congregation Policies**, First Universalist Church of Yarmouth Maine.

**Safety Policy, Religious Education Council, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, NY**, May 13, 2000

**Safety Policies – Religious Education Programs**, Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Andover, MA.

### OTHER RESOURCES:

**Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations**, ([www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/index.html](http://www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/index.html)) Debra W. Haffner, M.Div., M.P.H., 2006

**A Time To Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities**, Debra W. Haffner, M.Div., M.P.H., Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing, 2002.

**Creating Safe Congregations: Toward an Ethic of Right Relations - A Workbook for Unitarian Universalists**, Edited by Patricia Hoerdoerfer and William Sinkford, UUA, Boston, 1997.

**Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Guidelines and Code of Professional Practices** ([www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html](http://www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html)), 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA

**Reflections Toward A Unitarian Universalist Theology of Clergy Misconduct through Sexual Abuse**, Thomas Mikelson, December, 1992.

**Reducing The Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church: A complete and practical guidebook for prevention and risk reduction**, Richard R. Hammar, Steven W. Klipowicz & James F. Cobble, Jr., Church Law & Tax Report. 1993.

**A PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS: SEXUAL HARASSMENT**, UUA Department of Ministry & Professional Leadership, Office of Church Staff Finances, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA

**Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice** ([www.uuma.org](http://www.uuma.org)), 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA, 1998

## XXII. FOOTNOTES

1. Creating Safe Congregations: Toward An Ethic of Right Relations; Hoertdoerfer and Sinkford, editors, Unitarian Universalist Principles, p. 4
2. Safe Congregation Policies, First Universalist Church of Yarmouth ME, p. 2
3. Reflections Toward a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Clergy Misconduct through Sexual Abuse, December, 1992
4. Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice
5. Liberal Religious Educators Association, (LREDA) Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice
6. Safe Congregations Policies, Yarmouth ME, p. 3.
7. Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior, West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, Rocky River, OH, p. 1-3
8. Limited Access Agreement (Appendix F.) from Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations, Debra W. Haffner, M.Div., M.P.H.