

APPENDIX 7

UUCT SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVED

1.0 Purpose

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee (UUCT) is committed to protecting children, youth, and adults in the church community from any form of sexual or other abuse or harm while on church property or engaged in church sponsored activities. These Safety Policies and Procedures outline the steps UUCT has taken to ensure the safety of our children and youth during church activities. This document guides parents, volunteers, staff, and leaders in providing church programs and activities that are safe and free from abuse. If followed, these procedures will also help protect adults from unwarranted or false accusations of abuse or harm.

2.0 Structure

These policies are divided into the following sections:

- 3.0 Definitions
- 4.0 Notification and Response Procedures
- 5.0 Safety Requirements for UUCT activities
- 6.0 Worker Recruitment and Screening
- 7.0 Worker Supervision and Training
- 8.0 Safety Calendar

3.0 Definitions

Abuse: “Any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions” (Section 39.01 *Florida Statutes*).

Adult: A person over 18 years of age.

Corporal Punishment: The moderate use of physical force or physical contact to maintain discipline.

Mental Injury: “[A]n injury to the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by a discernible and substantial impairment in the ability to function within the normal range of performance and behavior” (Section 39.01 *Florida Statutes*).

Non-Mandatory Infractions: Violations of UUCT policies or procedures that do not require reporting under Section 39.201 *Florida Statutes*.

Operational Risk Management (ORM): Understanding that risk is a part of life and can never be completely eliminated from any activity, ORM is the process of carefully considering the specific risks that are associated with a given activity and taking steps to mitigate those risks. Using ORM ensures that all that can be done will be done to ensure safety but recognizes that some risks will still remain and makes the participants in the activity aware of those risks and responsible for accepting these risks in order to participate.

OWL (Our Whole Lives): A series of sexuality education curricula for children, youth, and adults offered through UUCT's Lifespan Religious Education Program. The program covers many areas of human sexuality and offers a proactive means to protect children from sexual abuse as well as the harmful effects of the often negative sexually oriented material that is so much a part of our society.

Physical Injury: "Death, permanent or temporary disfigurement, or impairment of any bodily part" (Section 39.01 *Florida Statutes*).

Primary Volunteer: An adult volunteer with regularly scheduled duties or activities within the Lifespan Religious Education program, such as a teacher, nursery worker, or attendant, who has been a documented Member or Supporting Friend of UUCT for at least 6 months and has successfully completed a background investigation (including a criminal background check).

Registered Sexual Offender: Any person who is listed as a sexual offender by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Registered Sexual Predator: Any person convicted of a capital, life, or first-degree felony sex offense who is listed as a sexual predator by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Religious Education (RE) Volunteer: A person performing unpaid services on a regular basis for the Lifespan Religious Education Program assisting a Primary Volunteer.

Safety Hazard: Any condition, activity, or circumstance that constitutes a threat to the health or well-being of participants in UUCT programs.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual molestation, touching, contact, exposure, suggestions, or other incidents of a sexually oriented nature as detailed in Section 39.01 *Florida Statutes*.

Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART): Comprising the Minister, Director of Religious Education, President of the Executive Board, and a designated member of the Committee on the Ministry.

Sponsor: An adult Member or Supporting Friend of the congregation who agrees to accompany a Registered Sex Offender at UUCT activities and programs where children or youth may be present.

4.0 Notification Procedures

4.1 Sexual or Other Abuse Notification: As required under Section 39.201 *Florida Statutes*, the first obligation of any adult in Florida is to immediately report any incidence of known or suspected sexual or other abuse to the Department of Children and Families' central abuse hotline on the single statewide toll-free telephone number, 800-962-2873. Any adult who discovers any such incident in the course of any UUCT program or activity shall immediately complete a UUCT Incident/Injury Report (see Attachment 1) and promptly notify the DRE, Minister, or President who shall receive the report, begin and maintain an action log (see Attachment 2), and implement the procedures in Section 4.2.

4.1.1 Department of Children and Families (DCF) Investigation: The notification procedure in 4.1, above, will initiate an investigation by DCF who will provide guidance per their procedures.

4.2 Convening of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART): The DRE, Minister, or President shall immediately convene the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team when abuse is reported or when a Registered Sexual Offender or Registered Sexual Predator is discovered or self-identifies.

4.2.1 Persons Reported Under Section 4.1: SMART shall schedule a meeting with the person to notify him or her of the report and the procedures to be followed by the Team.

4.2.1.1 The Team shall prepare a letter of agreement signed by the person, the Minister, and the President that defines the restrictions on the person's involvement with UUCT. The letter shall stipulate that the person shall have no contact with children and youth, shall avoid the classrooms and playgrounds when children or youth are present, and shall not volunteer for children's or youth events. Additional requirements may be agreed to by all signatories. The Minister shall keep a copy of the letter in the Minister's confidential file.

4.2.1.2 It is the responsibility of the person accused or under suspicion to notify the Minister and President and to furnish supportive verification of the results of the DCF investigation if the

investigation reveals no wrongdoing; otherwise the restrictions stand permanently.

4.2.1.3 Where SMART becomes aware of an apparent violation of any of the provisions of a letter of agreement signed under Section 4.2.1.1, the Team shall conduct a review to determine if a violation has occurred. If SMART determines that a violation has occurred the Team shall contact DCF for further guidance.

4.2.2 Persons Identified as Registered Sexual Offenders: When it is discovered or determined that a person is a Registered Sexual Offender, SMART shall schedule a meeting with the person to determine the level of restriction that should be imposed on their involvement with UUCT.

4.2.2.1 SMART shall request the person to sign a release form authorizing the church to contact his or her sex offender treatment provider, current therapist, and parole officer. If after conferring with these individuals SMART determines it is possible to ensure the safety of children, youth, and the person at UUCT, SMART shall prepare a letter of agreement signed by the person, the Minister, and the President, that defines the restrictions on the person's involvement with UUCT. If the safety of the children, youth, and/or person cannot be assured, SMART shall prepare a letter signed by the Minister and the President barring him or her from all UUCT programs and activities and, if the person is a member, revoking their membership.

4.2.2.2 Where a letter is prepared it shall stipulate that the person shall have no contact with children and youth, shall avoid the classrooms and playgrounds when children or youth are present, shall not volunteer for children's or youth events, and shall remain in the presence of a Sponsor at all times when children or youth are in the sanctuary and other multi-use spaces, including restrooms. Additional requirements may be agreed to by all signatories. The Minister shall keep a copy of the letter in the Minister's confidential file.

4.2.2.3 Where SMART becomes aware of an apparent violation of any of the provisions of a letter of agreement signed under Section 4.2.2.2, the Team shall conduct a review to determine if a violation has occurred. If SMART determines that a violation has occurred and the safety of the children, youth, and/or person cannot be assured, SMART shall prepare a letter signed by the Minister and the President barring him or her from all UUCT programs and activities and, if the person is a member, revoking their membership. In addition, SMART shall notify his or her sex

offender treatment provider, current therapist, and parole officer.

4.2.2.4 After a period of at least two years separation, a Registered Sexual Offender who has been barred from all UUCT programs and activities, and if a member has had their membership revoked, may request that SMART review their status based on affidavits supporting such a review provided by any two of the following: the person's sex offender treatment provider, current therapist, or parole officer.

4.2.3 Persons Identified as Registered Sexual Predators: When it is discovered or determined that a person is a Registered Sexual Predator, SMART shall prepare a letter signed by the Minister and the President barring him or her from all UUCT programs and activities and, if the person is a member, revoking their membership.

4.2.4 Where a Registered Sexual Offender or Registered Sexual Predator is barred from all UUCT programs and activities, the President shall immediately inform the other members of the Executive Board and the Chair of the Membership Committee.

4.3 Safety Hazard Notification: Anyone who discovers or suspects a safety hazard should report the hazard to the DRE as soon as possible, or to the Minister if the DRE is unavailable, or to the President if the Minister is unavailable. Building or grounds hazards also should be reported to the Vice President for Management.

RE Volunteers and Primary Volunteers are encouraged to take immediate action, if possible and appropriate, to eliminate any safety hazards – for example, an unsafe piece of playground equipment can be placed “off limits” and the DRE notified as soon as possible of the problem. If the safety hazard relates to an activity, any person may stop the activity at any time to avoid a safety problem.

4.4 Injury or Safety Incident Notification: Any adult who witnesses or becomes aware of an incident that could have or did result in an injury shall immediately complete a UUCT Incident/Injury Report (see Attachment 1) and shall promptly notify the DRE, Minister, or President who shall receive the report. The DRE, Minister, or President shall notify the Vice President for Management of any injuries requiring medical attention so that she or he can notify the congregation's insurer.

4.5 Non-Mandatory Infractions by Volunteers or RE Staff: Where an RE Volunteer, Primary Volunteer, or staff person commits a non-mandatory infraction, such as a violation of the Discipline Policy (Section 5.5), the DRE shall provide correction and training as needed.

- 4.5.1 If serious violations by a volunteer continue, the DRE shall ask the volunteer to step down. The DRE shall place a formal letter indicating the reason for removal in the volunteer's confidential file.
- 4.5.2 If serious violations by a RE staff member continue, the DRE shall place the individual on unpaid leave and consult with the Minister concerning appropriate remedies, including further training or recommending termination of employment to the Executive Board.

5.0 Safety Requirements for UUCT Activities

- 5.1 Operational Risk Management (ORM): Primary Volunteers and staff shall apply ORM at all UUCT activities to identify and mitigate to the extent possible the associated risks. Risks that are inherent to the activity but that cannot be mitigated shall be identified for the participants. For example, youth participating on a canoe trip outing shall be required to wear Primary Flotation Devices (PFDs) to mitigate the risk of drowning, but PFDs cannot prevent drowning in some circumstances. ORM would dictate that the participants in the activity be informed of the drowning risk associated with the activity of canoeing so they can take appropriate measures to reduce personal risk (e.g., limiting horseplay, using care in maneuvering the canoes, choosing routes appropriate for their skill level, etc.) An activity such as a canoe trip would have a longer list of ORM considerations than, for instance, a Sunday morning RE class in a classroom. The DRE shall train Primary Volunteers and staff annually in ORM procedures.
- 5.2 Proper Repair and Function of Equipment and Facilities: The VP for Management shall ensure that equipment and facilities used in UUCT activities are in proper condition for their intended use. Equipment and facilities shall not be used for other than their intended purpose. Staff or Primary Volunteers shall report equipment that is out of repair or unsafe as described under 4.3 "Safety Hazard Notification."
- 5.3 Supervision of Activities: Any UUCT activity or class where children or youth are present shall be supervised by two or more adults including at least one Primary Volunteer or staff person. Under no circumstances shall a child or youth be left unsupervised with an adult who is not a Primary Volunteer or staff person. Each child and youth shall remain under the supervision of the adults in charge until a parent or guardian takes custody of the child or youth.

In the event that an RE class cannot be supervised by two adults per this policy, the DRE shall be notified and one of the following three options shall be initiated:

- 1. The DRE shall make random classroom checks and be available at all times via cell phone or intercom should assistance be needed; or
- 2. Two classes shall be combined to provide for supervision by two adults; or

3. The children shall be returned to their parents or guardians if the DRE determines this to be the best course of action for the classes and the children.

The following addendums apply:

1. If the Explorers class (pre-school) cannot be supervised by two adults the children shall be returned to their parents or guardians.
 2. On the DRE's Sundays off the Acting DRE shall carry out the above duties.
- 5.4 Nursery Child Sign In: To ensure the safety of children in the nursery, a parent or guardian shall sign in and sign out each child. The parent or guardian who signs a child into the nursery shall sign the child out, unless the parent or guardian provides other instructions at the time of signing in.
- 5.5 Discipline Policy: Corporal punishment shall not be used or tolerated under any circumstances at UUCT. UUCT's discipline practice follows a continuum of minimum to maximum exercise of teacher intervention:
1. Visually looking on
 2. Non-directive statement
 3. Questions
 4. Directive statement
 5. Physical intervention.

6.0 Worker Recruitment and Screening

- 6.1 Volunteer Application: All Primary and RE Volunteers shall sign copies of the UUCT Code of Ethics for Leadership Roles in Youth Religious Education (see Attachment 3) and the UUCT Youth RE Teacher Expectations (see Attachment 4). Volunteers also shall complete an Application for Volunteer Service to Work with Children or Youth (available from the DRE) prior to the start of their designated duties. The DRE shall keep the "Volunteer Application" on file for as long as the volunteer serves in that position, and for an additional five-year period.
- 6.2 Primary Volunteer Interviews and Background Investigations: All applicants for a Primary Volunteer position shall participate in a personal interview, provide at least two references, and agree to undergo a background investigation (including a criminal background check). The DRE shall conduct the interview, check all references, and initiate the background investigation.
- 6.3 Staff and Minister Background Investigations: As required under Section A.3.4 of the *Manual of Policies and Procedures*, all staff and ministerial candidates shall agree to undergo a background investigation (including a criminal background check). The chair of the ad hoc search committee or other designated person

shall initiate the background investigation for staff candidates. The chair of the interim or settled ministerial search committee shall initiate the background investigation for ministerial candidates.

- 6.4 Additional/Repeat Screening: Primary Volunteers and staff shall undergo repeat background investigations (including criminal background checks) if absent from the church community for a period of more than one year. Background investigations (including criminal background checks) for Primary Volunteers, staff, and the Minister shall be repeated every five years.
- 6.5 Submitting Background Investigation Requests: Background investigations are initiated by contacting the Office Administrator. The Office Administrator will be a user of and the primary contact for the background investigation company account and will maintain the username, password, and other login information. The Personnel Committee Chair and Minister will also be registered users of the background investigation company account. Any of the users may submit a background investigation request.
- 6.6 Receiving Background Investigation Results: The Office Administrator or Minister may be the recipient of results consisting solely of an "all clear" from the background investigation company. The Minister will be the recipient of any sensitive results (i.e., any information other than an "all clear" from the background investigation company).
- 6.7 Reviewing Background Investigation Results:
 - 6.7.1 Results from background investigations for all Primary Volunteer applicants, for nursery-staff, and for other limited-hours or temporary staff working directly with children shall be reviewed ONLY by the Minister or the DRE.
 - 6.7.2 Results from background investigations for other professional staff and for limited-hours or temporary staff who do not work directly with children shall be reviewed ONLY by the Minister.
 - 6.7.3 Results from background investigations for hiring a minister shall be reviewed by the President of the Executive Board and the Chair of the ministerial search committee before the candidate is announced to the Executive Board by the search committee. Results shall be held in the strictest confidence. If a concern is identified, the Ministerial Search Committee will conduct further investigation and report their findings to the Executive Board.
- 6.8 The reviewers of results from a background investigation shall determine whether an applicant is suitable for a position working with children. The person initiating

the background investigation may provide additional guidance regarding suitability. However, applicants who have been convicted of or have pled guilty to any sexual offense involving a minor, incest, rape, assault involving a minor, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, the physical abuse of a minor, or any other crime that may put children at risk, including those listed in Section 435.04(2) and (3) *Florida Statutes*, shall not be eligible for work with children of the Youth RE Program.

7.0 Worker Supervision and Training

- 7.1 Any RE volunteer who has undergone the application and screening process described above, shall work under the supervision of a Primary Volunteer or paid staff member.
- 7.2 Drivers for field trips shall provide a photocopy of their driver's license and car insurance to the DRE and shall be a staff member, Primary Volunteer, or RE Volunteer.
- 7.3 Safety Training: Safety training for Primary Volunteers and staff shall be provided by the DRE and will cover the follow items at a minimum:
 1. Purpose and Mission of the RE Program
 2. UUCT Safety Policies and Procedures (this document)
 3. Types of sexual, mental, and physical injury
 4. Signs/indicators of sexual, mental, and physical injury
 5. Reporting procedures
 6. Role playing "what if" scenarios dealing with sexual, mental, and physical injury scenarios
 7. Operational Risk Management
 8. Role playing "what if" scenarios dealing with supervision and risk management.

8.0 Safety Calendar

Recognizing that church safety extends beyond the Lifespan Religious Education Program, UUCT shall conduct the following safety activities using the indicated schedule:

1. Fire Drill – at least twice per year. Exact scheduling is the responsibility of the VP for Management.
2. Safety Training per Section 7.3 – at least once per year (may include optional CPR and First Aid Training open to non-RE persons). Scheduling is the responsibility of the DRE.
3. Inspection of Building and Grounds for Safety Hazards – whenever an activity is conducted at the church. The person or group responsible for the activity is responsible for the inspection; the DRE is responsible for Sunday morning inspection.

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