

UUCP Safe Congregation Policy

Updated September 2024

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Palouse takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all who come to it. We recognize that we are in a unique position to learn of circumstances in the lives of children and adults where there may be a need for intervention and healing. Therefore, we will strive to ensure a caring religious community free of violence and abuse of all kinds, including intimidation, coercion, sexual harassment or verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

To provide a safe and nurturing environment, it is important to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility in all our religious education programs. Age appropriate information about development and sexuality, as well as abuse prevention should be provided to our children and youth. Our religious educators, youth leaders, and volunteers should have training and support in the areas of growth and development, parenting skills, sexuality and related issues.

The Safe Congregation Policy is designed to achieve these goals, and consists of three parts:

1.0 Policies developed and implemented for keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse during church activities.

2.0 Education of the entire congregation about child sexual abuse and prevention.

3.0 Policies for responding when a person is accused of sexual abuse, or the report of an incident on church property/or during activities associated with or sponsored by UUCP.

1.0 Policies developed and implemented for keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse.

1.1 Adults who work with children and youth are required to sign both a “Code of Ethics” and a form indicating that they have read and understand the Safe Congregation Policy (See Appendix A).

1.2 There must always be a minimum of two adults assigned to any group of children or youth, and all classrooms must have an open door policy. A single adult is allowed to drive a group of children or youth provided there is a second adult in an accompanying vehicle. **A group is defined as more than one child or youth. Two adults is defined as two people over the age of 18 who are not related by marriage or close family.**

1.3 A background check will be obtained for paid church staff, paid childcare providers, and adults who volunteer as regular religious exploration facilitators/teachers. If an issue is reported in the background check the DFM, Minister and/or RE Chair will confer

and take appropriate action. Background checks need to be repeated every four years on all individuals.

1.4 Educators will be informed of the Idaho statute (Child Protective Act 16-1619) which requires mandatory reporting of cases of abuse, abandonment or neglect of children.

1.5 Individuals must first be active participants of the congregation for six months before being eligible to serve as RE teachers or Youth counselors. Exceptions may be allowed at the discretion of the DFM or Minister.

1.6 High School Youth advisors must be at least 25 years of age and RE teachers must be at least 18 years of age. Our Whole Lives advisors must be at least 25 years old for all levels.

1.7 The Minister and DFM will attend a UUA safe congregation workshop, or equivalent education.

1.8 Upon hire, paid caregivers will attend a yearly training by the FMD or other appropriate authority that will cover basic child development, safe congregations policies and procedures. Paid caregivers are also to maintain current CPR and First Aid certification, which will be obtained within three months of employment. Trainings will be repeated when necessary.

1.9 Youth Advisors and RE teachers will attend a safe congregation training session, offered by the FMD at the beginning of their service ~~least once per year~~. This will include training and information with respect to appropriate responses to severe allergic reactions. Trainings will be repeated when necessary.

2.0 The FMD will ensure education and resources about child sexual abuse/neglect and prevention will be offered to the entire congregation on a regular basis.

3.0 Policies for responding when a person is accused of sexual abuse, or the report of an incident on church property or during activities associated with or sponsored by UUCP.

3.1 UUCP will establish a “Child Safety Response Team” (CSRT) comprised of the minister, the DFM, the RE Chairperson, and two other members of the congregation. Each member of the team will receive:

- *a copy of this document

- *all congregational policies and procedures that govern working with children or youth.

3.2 If a congregant becomes aware of a prior offense alleged or charged against an adult in the congregation; they will notify a member of the CSRT who will inform the other members of the team. They will assess the situation and take actions to best assure the safety of the children and youth of the congregation. This can include

restricting the person from all activities involving children and youth. This information will be kept confidential among the members of the CSRT.

3.3 If a congregant becomes aware of a current allegation they will:

*Notify a member of the CSRT immediately, and whoever receives this information will inform the others immediately. If the charges involve a minister, the next point of contact shall be the PNWD District Executive, or the UUA Department of Ministry.

*Follow the procedures outlined in Appendix B (Child Protective Act 16-1619) to assess and take actions to best assure both the safety of the congregational children and youth, and confidentiality for the person alleged to have committed the uninvestigated occurrence. Again, This information will be kept confidential among the members of the CSRT.

Appendix A: Code of Ethics

Appendix B: Idaho Child Protective Act 16-1605