

# **Safe Congregation Policy**

## ***Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua***

**Approved: October 11, 2016**

**Revised: April 11, 2017**

**Revised: September 12, 2017**

**Revised: April 10, 2018**

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Change Log

<p>April 11, 2017</p>	<p>Section III: Extend initial review requirement to 24 months            Section IV.B: Expanded Building &amp; Facilities policies            Section IV.D: Added line to specify that policies apply to both onsite and offsite UUCN sponsored events            Section IV.G Supervision: all bullets moved to Section V.A            Section V.D.5.j removed (cleaning up after overnights)            Section V.E: Added requirement for signed Youth Code of Ethics            Section V.G: Added section on Communication with Children and Youth            Section V.H: Added section on Pastoral Care Team            Section VII: Added Section on Behavior            Minor word changes throughout for clarity</p>
<p>Sept. 12, 2017</p>	<p>Section IV.D: Change youth staff age minimum from 15 to 14</p>
<p>April 10, 2018</p>	<p>Section VI.A: Add Vice President to Safe Congregation Response Team</p>
<p>October 4, 2018</p>	<p>Added Change Log            Section I: Clarified that preschool has its own safety policies            Section VII: Added Board of Trustees to the process for excluding an individual from church activities            Section V.D: Clarified follow-up steps when youth violate the policy            Section V.G: Added requirement for tracking of approved communications methods            Minor word changes throughout for clarity</p>
<p>September 29, 2020</p>	<p>Section I: Changed Mission to reflect new mission adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2019.</p>
<p>October 1, 2020</p>	<p>IV.E: Added requirement for Board of Trustees to sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement</p>

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## **I. PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENTS**

*We are a welcoming community of faith, inspiring lives of wonder, generosity and courage, serving the world through love in action. (Policy 1.A of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua Governing Policies)*

UUCN is a spiritual community that takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for everyone who participates in our congregational life. As appropriate, this policy addresses the unique needs of children, youth and vulnerable adults. We are committed to protecting children, youth and vulnerable adults from harm and promoting their spiritual growth while part of our community. This Policy strives to provide a safe environment in which we may each deepen our acceptance and understanding of one another, and in which personal transformation and spiritual growth are encouraged and supported in an atmosphere of civility, mutual respect, trust and kindness.

As Unitarian Universalists, our commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion compels us to affirm and maintain a safe environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, or sexual/affectional orientation.

This Policy reflects the guiding principles articulated by the UUA including:

1. prevention through consideration of responsible staffing and supervision
2. screening of volunteers and paid staff
3. training and education on this Policy and current understanding of abuse
4. guidelines for groups/classes, transportation, nursery/child care, youth engagement
5. responding to incidents responsibly, including reporting both internally and to state/federal authorities
6. evaluation of limited access and pastoral needs of the congregation.

One important goal of this Policy is to be a “sexually healthy faith community:” a community that is committed to fostering spiritual, sexual, and emotional health among the congregation, and to providing a safe environment where sexuality issues are addressed with respect, mutuality and openness (as defined by Rev. Debra Haffner).

This Policy, created by the Safe Congregation Policy Task Force and approved by the Board of Trustees, applies to all UUCN employees/staff, volunteers, members, friends, attendees and

guests while attending or participating in any UUCN function (i.e., church-sponsored events). It also applies to other UU-affiliated groups and events sponsored by and using the facilities of UUCN. The Children's Winter Garden with White Wing School has its own safety policies which supercede this policy.

We view this Policy as a "Living Document" that may need to be amended to reflect changing needs. Requests for amendments should be made through the Minister/Executive Director. All amendments must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

## II. DEFINITIONS

*Age of Consent* - age for consensual sexual relations as defined by the laws of the State of New Hampshire

*Board* - the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Nashua

*Child/Children* - anyone less than 18 years of age

*Child Abuse* - harm or endangerment of a child including, but not limited to physical or sexual abuse, and/or neglect of a child's health or welfare. NH State Law RSA 169-C-3, II, defines an abused child as "...a child who has been:

- Sexually abused;
- Intentionally physically injured;
- Psychologically injured so that said child exhibits symptoms of emotional problems generally recognized to result from consistent mistreatment or neglect;
- Physically injured by other than accidental means."

*Church-Sponsored Event/UUCN-Sponsored Event* - any event, program or activity held on or off UUCN grounds; applies to activities of all committees, teams, classes, task forces or Boards acting on behalf of the church

*CYFF Team* - UUCN's Children and Youth Faith Formation Team

*DCYF* - New Hampshire's Division for Children, Youth and Families

*DFP* - Director of Faith Formation

*Faith Formation (FF) Program* - The structured program for the entire congregation centered on Unitarian Universalist principles, values, identity and relationships.

*Field Trips* - outings, conferences, meetings and other UUCN activities which take place off UUCN grounds and may require transportation by UUCN staff or volunteers.

*Harassment* - acts or behaviors which show unwanted pressure or intimidation of another, unwanted persistent communications and all acts defined as harassment as defined in NH State Law (644.4)

*Leadership* - refers to individuals in the following positions: Minister, Director of Faith Formation, Church Administrator, Membership Coordinator, Music Director, Board of Trustees, Committee/Team Chairs.

*Limited Access Agreement* - document restricting participation in specified UUCN activities or types of activities

*Nursery* - Care and supervision provided for children age 3 and under

*OWL* - Our Whole Lives is a comprehensive lifespan sexuality program.

*Positive Discipline* - Positive Discipline is characterized by techniques that consciously and consistently focus on positive behavior. Examples include but are not limited to: giving attention before a problem occurs; recognizing, praising, or rewarding behaviors that are caring, respectful, or helpful; honoring even small progress toward a goal; and/or clarifying expected behavior in response to a problem (rather than listing what not to do or describing all the things that are going wrong). When teachers use positive discipline effectively, every student experiences far more positive interactions than negative.

*ROPEs* - Rite Of Passage Experiences is UUCN's Coming of Age Program for youth in 8th and 9th grades

*Rover* - A screened adult who monitors the Faith Formation wing on Sunday mornings.

*Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT)* - a team that includes the Minister, the DFF, the Church Administrator and the President of the Board of Trustees, and that is responsible for responding to reports of any alleged instances of abuse.

*Staff/Employee* - individuals employed by UUCN

*Teacher/Facilitator*- person who leads a Faith Formation (FF) class or facilitates discussion in a FF activity.

*UUA* - Unitarian Universalist Association

*UUCN* - Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua

*Volunteers* - individuals who donate their time and efforts to UUCN events, programs, tasks, projects, and activities

*Vulnerable Adults* - individuals 18 and older who are in need of special care or concern due to physical, mental, cognitive, sensory or emotional disability or strain

*Young Adults* - individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 35 and who are no longer a part of our Children and Youth Faith Formation programming

*Youth* - children between the ages of 12 to 18 years of age.

*Youth Advisor* - individuals who work with youth, most often in the Senior High Youth Group.



### **III. POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND MONITORING**

This Policy is in effect at all times. The UUCN staff will administer and implement this policy year-round, and the Board of Trustees will monitor this policy on a regular basis.

The Board of Trustees will conduct a review of this policy, originally adopted October 11, 2016, and its implementation within 24 months of its adoption and at least every three years thereafter. As a part of this review, a brief questionnaire may be given to employees and representative church members asking for their reactions and concerns.

## **IV. PREVENTION**

### **IV.A. Identifying Vulnerable Groups**

This Policy is intended to minimize risk of abuse, harassment, or harm to the entire congregation, with special attention to vulnerable populations within the congregation. Vulnerable populations include:

- *Children*
- *Vulnerable Adults*

### **IV.B. Building & Facilities (security and safety)**

1. Building Security on Sunday Mornings
  - a. The entrance to the church by the Chapel will be locked from 10:00-11:30 am.
  - b. There will be a Rover present in the Faith Formation wing. Details are in Section V.A.
  - c. The door to the lower level of the Faith Formation wing will be closed at 10:00 am and remain closed until the end of the service.
  - d. The DFF will establish and maintain a system of communication between the DFF, the Rover and any FF volunteers using the Parish House.
2. Evacuation
  - a. Evacuation Procedures will be reviewed annually by staff.
  - b. Evacuation maps will be posted in every room.
  - c. All CYFF Volunteers, Worship Associates, Board members and staff will be trained on Evacuation Procedures.
  - d. Staff will offer a training on Evacuation Procedures for church leaders at least once every church year.
  - e. A Church-wide Fire Drill will be held at least once every church year on a Sunday morning.
3. Intruder/Active Shooter
  - a. Intruder/Active Shooter Procedures will be reviewed annually by staff.
  - b. All CYFF Volunteers, Worship Associates, Board members and staff will be trained on Intruder/Active Shooter Procedures.
  - c. Staff will offer a training on Intruder/Active Shooter Procedures for church leaders at least once every church year.
  - d. The DFF will create an evacuation procedure for FF teachers and youth leaders.
4. Tornado/Severe Weather
  - a. Tornado/Severe Weather Procedures will be reviewed annually by staff.
  - b. All CYFF Volunteers, Worship Associates, Board members and staff will be trained on Tornado/Severe Weather Procedures.

- c. Staff will offer a training on Tornado/Severe Weather Procedures for church leaders at least once every church year.
  - d. A policy on Building Closure due to Inclement Weather will be reviewed annually by staff.
- 5. Weapons
  - a. No firearms are allowed on UUCN premises.
  - b. There will be signs posted banning firearms from the premises by all doors.
- 6. Smoking/Vaping
  - a. No smoking or vaping is allowed in UUCN buildings.
- 7. Alcohol
  - a. See UUCN's Alcohol Policy here:  
<https://www.uunashua.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ALCOHOLPOLICY.pdf>

#### **IV.C. Medical**

- 1. First Aid Kits
  - a. An accessible First Aid Kit can be found in each of the following areas: Sanctuary, Kitchen, Parish House Coat Closet, Faith Formation wing lower level and the Resource Room.
  - b. Each classroom binder will have basic first-aid supplies and a reminder where full First Aid Kits are located.
  - c. Off-site activities and events - the organizer, contact person or youth leader will bring at least one travel first-aid kit. See Section IV.G for more details on Transportation and off-site activities.
  - d. The responsibility for the maintenance and replenishment of all First Aid Kits rests with UUCN staff.
- 2. Parents/Guardians will be informed of any situation involving a vulnerable person requiring medical attention aside from rudimentary First Aid.
- 3. Reporting
  - a. Minor injuries or need for first-aid that take place during a FF class or program will be documented using an "Ouch" report.
  - b. More serious or major injuries at any UUCN-sponsored event must be documented within 24 hours and submitted to either the DFF or the Church Administrator using an Incident Report. Accident reports are typically required by police, safety personnel, and insurance companies. Staff or Volunteers in charge should be ready to record all pertinent information.
  - c. Incident Reports are filed with the church's insurance company and kept in the Church Administrator's office. If necessary, they will be filed with the appropriate state agency.

#### **IV.D. Hiring and Volunteer Selection**

UUCN staff, leadership and volunteers who have access to privileged information or work with families or youth in the course of church sponsored activities are considered to have “access to children and youth.” Such access should only be granted to screened and trained individuals according to the policies outlined below.

For UUCN-sponsored activities where parents or guardians are not present and it is explicitly understood that children or youth are in the care of teachers, volunteers or staff, said teachers, volunteers or staff are considered to be “supervising children”. Such a responsibility should only be granted to screened and trained individuals according to the screening requirements outlined in Section IV.E.

#### ***Working with Children and Youth***

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 church members and friends to read and abide by this Safe Congregation Policy. 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.

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.

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 UUCN) is revealed. In this situation, it is the adult’s responsibility to report any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse to the DFF or the Minister if the DFF is unavailable. The CYFF Team will provide regular training on dealing with suspected abuse or neglect. Refer to the section on Training.

### Staff:

1. To support our efforts to provide a Safe Congregation, the Minister(s) and all adult employees will undergo a reference check and criminal and sexual offender background checks prior to employment. Subsequent criminal and sexual-offender checks will be completed during employment at least once every three years.
2. Youth staff must be a minimum of 14 years of age and have been actively involved at UUCN (or an affiliated UU congregation) for a minimum of one year and will undergo a reference check prior to employment.
3. The DFF and any staff member who works directly with youth in the Faith Formation Program must be at least 25 years of age.
4. The Child Care Lead must be at least 21 years of age.

### Volunteers:

1. Adult volunteers or lay leaders who wish to work with children and vulnerable adults must be a minimum of 18 years of age and have been actively involved at UUCN (or an affiliated UU congregation) for a minimum of one year.
2. Youth volunteers must be a minimum of 15 years of age and have been actively involved at UUCN (or an affiliated UU congregation) for a minimum of one year.
3. Adult volunteers or lay leaders who wish to work with youth must be a minimum of 25 years of age and have been actively involved at UUCN (or an affiliated UU congregation) for a minimum of one year.
4. Drivers who transport children and youth must be at least 25 years of age. See sections on Youth and Vulnerable Adults for other restrictions.

### ***Working With Vulnerable Adults***

All volunteers who work with vulnerable adults (For example, members of the Pastoral Care Team) must meet the following criteria:

1. Prior to participating, all volunteers will agree to a background check. After the initial background check, a background check will be done every two years.
2. All volunteers will attend a yearly Safe Congregations Training.
3. All volunteers must have been attending the congregation for at least one year prior to working with vulnerable adults.

In addition, all Pastoral Care Team members will participate in yearly Pastoral Care Team Training and sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement.

#### **IV.E. Screening**

1. Prior to volunteering, individuals will meet with a supervising staff to discuss their volunteer interests and past volunteer experience.
2. All volunteers who work directly with or near children and youth as Faith Formation Teachers, Youth Advisors, OWL Facilitators, ROPEs Mentors, or in other capacities must agree to undergo a criminal and sexual-offender background check administered by UUCN staff prior to beginning volunteer work.
3. Background Checks will be completed by UUCN staff and will include a Criminal Offender Record Information, based on reported places of residence. CORI will check for Registered Sex Offenders nationwide .
4. All youth staff and volunteers who work directly with children must undergo a separate screening process that will include reference checks, and written permission from a parent/guardian.
5. All members of the Board of Trustees will agree to undergo a criminal and sexual-offender background check administered by UUCN staff at the beginning of each term. Members of the Board will also sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement at the beginning of their time on the Board.
6. All drivers for UUCN-sponsored activities involving vulnerable populations must show proof of license, registration, and insurance coverage. UUCN will also run a Volunteer Drivers Screening Report. Drivers with any points on their driver's license are ineligible to drive for UUCN-sponsored events unless they receive an exception from the SCRT.
7. Positive returns from any screening process will be evaluated by UUCN staff.
8. Authorization forms for background checks, drivers screening report and reference checks will be kept strictly confidential. Only members of the UUCN staff and Board President will have access to these forms, which will be kept in paper format in a dedicated, locked filing cabinet in the office of the Church Administrator. *Only the Minister, DFF and Church Administrator will have keys to this cabinet.*

Exceptions to Background Check Requirement: Background checks will not be required for adults who come in as guest speakers or presenters in Faith Formation (FF) classes and events but they may be invited to sign the Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth. However, during all Faith Formation events where unscreened adult speakers or presenters are present, at least two (2) unrelated screened UUCN volunteers and/or staff will be present. Unscreened adult speakers or presenters will never be left alone with children or youth in any scenario.

Response to Reported Past Sexual Misconduct Convictions: If an adverse report is received, steps to be taken can be found in Section VIII.

#### **IV.F. Training and Education**

1. Each year the Safe Congregation Response Team, in consultation with the Church Administrator and the DFF, will offer at least one training program that details UUCN's Safe Congregation Policy. Training will include:
  - a. The definition of child abuse according to the New Hampshire mandated reporting law – Child Protection Act RSA 169-C-3 II<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Recognizing the signs of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, and neglect, and how to respond to suspected abuse and neglect
  - c. What constitutes appropriate boundaries and inappropriate conduct
  - d. High risk activities and circumstances
  - e. Church policies that govern working with children, youth and other vulnerable populations
  - f. The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct
2. The staff will make their best efforts to meet individually with volunteers who cannot attend the annual training. All volunteers will complete training within 30 days of assuming duties.
3. The link to this UUCN Safe Congregation Policy will appear at least annually in the congregation newsletter, on the Church web site, and in visitor and new member packets.

#### **IV.G. Transportation To and From UUCN Sponsored Events**

All field trips must be approved by the DFF or the Chairperson of the Children & Youth Faith Formation Team, ideally at least two weeks prior to the event. It is the responsibility of the Children & Youth Faith Formation Program, or the parents/guardians, to provide safe transportation to and from UUCN sanctioned events. This Policy requires the following:

1. Location: All field trips will originate and end at UUCN, unless otherwise specified by UUCN staff. Participants may be driven to and from an event separately if desired.
2. Permission Slips: When traveling to and from field trips, a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an offsite activity. If a child or youth does not have a signed permission from their parent or guardian, that child or youth will not be allowed to participate in the scheduled event.
3. Youth Responsibilities: There must be a signed Youth Code of Ethics on file in order for a youth to participate in an event.
4. Drivers: All drivers must meet the minimum age and screening requirements as outlined in the Hiring and Screening Sections.

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<sup>1</sup> RSA 169-C-3, II, defines an abused child as "...a child who has been: Sexually abused; Intentionally physically injured; Psychologically injured so that said child exhibits symptoms of emotional problems generally recognized to result from consistent mistreatment or neglect; Physically injured by other than accidental means."

5. State and Federal Laws: Every person in the car will have a seat belt and age appropriate seating arranged in reference to airbag safety rules and State requirements. Drivers must comply with all applicable State and federal laws regarding the operation of a motor vehicle. Adults are encouraged to set a good example for children and youth by wearing their seatbelts.
6. Ratios: Ideally, a minimum of two unrelated adults per vehicle must accompany a group going offsite. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may be made by the DFF or the primary adult leader(s), or written permission may be provided by the parent or guardian. When possible, two adults shall be present to transport a single child.
7. Parent/Guardian Communication: At the discretion of the trip leader, parents will be notified when arriving or departing from trips.
8. Safety: the primary adult leader will be supplied with at least one First Aid Kit.
9. Leader Information: Leader(s) must have a list of names, emergency contacts, medical conditions and a parent/guardian emergency treatment authorization with them at all times.
10. Medications: Parents/Guardians should disclose any medication that may need to be taken by their child during the trip to the staff member or volunteer in charge of the trip. Parents/Guardians should talk directly with the staff member or volunteer responsible for the field trip to agree on appropriate procedures for administering *emergency* medication that their child may require during the field trip.

## **V. GUIDELINES**

### **V.A. Classes and Programs for Children and Youth**

1. Each baby, child and youth will have a registration form on file that includes information about special needs and permission to accompany their group on walks around the building or neighborhood on Sunday mornings. In addition, the registration form will ask for permission to post photographs for UUCN purposes. When registering, parents and guardians will agree to abide by the guidelines within this Safe Congregation Policy. Staff will share pertinent information with volunteers and will endeavor to keep the rest of these registration forms confidential.
2. Parents and guardians are responsible for speaking with the DFF or the Minister about any custody issues, and, upon request, put the most important facts in writing. The DFF or the Minister will communicate appropriately with teachers and youth leaders
3. Parents and guardians of children in Faith Formation programs are responsible for supervising their children before and after class time and other Sunday morning activities. During services and classes, children sixth grade or under must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the DFF.



- a. Preschool through Grade FIVE - Parents of children in preschool through fifth grade classes must pick up their children promptly when classes end.
  - b. Sixth Grade and Older - Parents of children in sixth grade and up may make arrangements with the teachers to have their child dismissed independently.
  - c. Mixed Aged Classes - In mixed aged classes the entire class will follow the guidelines for the youngest grade present.
4. At least two unrelated adults should be present in each FF classroom on Sunday mornings and during any UUCN functions involving children or youth unless the DFF or Minister determines otherwise in their sole discretion.
  5. There will be a Rover in the Faith Formation wing from 9:45am to 11:15am or the end of classes, who will follow all procedures for safety.
  6. Parents may serve as classroom aides and/or visit classes at any time. If they choose to stay, parents/guardians of school age children will try to support the lesson and minimize any distraction their presence may create. In the Our Whole Lives (OWL) class, parents and aides generally are not allowed unless approved ahead of time.
  7. Approved guest speakers are welcome at OWL overnight activities.
  8. Teachers are subject to the approval of the Children & Youth FF Team.
  9. One individual may be alone briefly 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.
  10. If an adult needs to leave the room for more than a brief time, the Rover will be asked to come into the classroom.
  11. All classes require an open or windowed door. This does not apply to OWL classes.
  12. Children and youth must let teachers know when they are leaving the classroom or meeting space for bathroom visits, water breaks or other adult leader-approved purposes. Children and youth are expected to go straight to the bathroom or approved destination and then return directly and promptly. They will let the teachers or youth leaders know when they have returned.
  13. If teachers or youth leaders wish to move their class/group to a location outside the classroom that is approved by the DFF or Rover they will post a sign or message in their classroom clearly indicating where they will be and when they will return.
  14. Any participating adult may not consume alcohol or use any drug, which can affect physical or mental performance, before or during the carrying out of their responsibilities.

### **V.B. Discipline**

For this section, the word “teachers” should be understood to include any person working with children in a UUCN classroom, program or event. UUCN recommends positive discipline techniques (see Definitions Section). Teachers will make best efforts to establish clear

expectations, provide rewards and incentives for acceptable behavior, and to use appropriate verbal redirection. In particular:

1. Teachers will strive to discipline with kindness and patience.
2. Teachers will discipline with actions and words designed to help children develop a sense of responsibility and self-control.
3. Teachers will support children in creating caring communities and happy learning experiences.
4. Inappropriate discipline, including corporal punishment and punitive techniques that cause pain, is not permitted and may be construed as child abuse.
5. UUCN does not permit yelling, shaming, or belittling. UUCN discourages sarcasm, which is likely to be misunderstood by children.
6. When a child's physical safety is at risk, teachers may temporarily hold a child's hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing the child to stand and then walk to a safe location.
7. Teachers will consult with FF Staff and children's parents/guardians to plan collaboratively how to improve problematic behavior.
8. If a child's behavior is disruptive and has not improved in response to a variety of positive discipline techniques, teachers will communicate with FF staff and may choose to enforce consequences as follows.
  - a. **BREAK INSIDE CLASSROOM:** The child takes a break from participation, but remains inside the classroom. The child is NOT told to stand in a corner, but is directed to sit in an area apart from the activity. One teacher is available to supervise the break. The teacher briefly discusses the solution to the problem with the child when s/he is ready to rejoin the class activity.
  - b. **BREAK IN HALLWAY:** A teacher accompanies a child outside the classroom for a break from participation in the hallway. Make sure to summon the Rover if one teacher leaving results in less than two teachers in the room. They briefly discuss the problem and solution when the child is ready to go back in the classroom.
  - c. **BREAK WITH FF STAFF:** A teacher walks with the child to find FF Staff, and the child has a longer break in the company of FF Staff. The FF Staff discusses the problem with the child and works collaboratively to develop a plan or solution.
  - d. **PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPERVISION & REMOVAL FROM A LESSON:** A teacher or FF staff person finds the parent or guardian of the child, and the parent or guardian is asked to supervise the child for the remainder of the class. The parent/guardian and teacher and/or staff member meet subsequently to discuss the problem and develop a plan.

9. Physical violence among children is not allowed. Every effort will be made to prevent physical harm to others. In the unlikely event that a child intentionally hurts someone, teachers will enforce one of the more serious consequences above and report this incident to the parents or guardians of both children, as well as the DFF.
10. In the event that a child's behavior is highly disruptive, dangerous, or repeatedly emotionally hurtful, the FF Staff may decide that the child needs to be excluded from some, or all, participation in the Sunday school program or FF-sponsored events.

### **V.C. Touch**

Healthy, loving touch is a basic, human need. Common expressions include, but are not limited to, appreciation (high five), condolence (hand on shoulder), comforting and affection (hugs); affirmation (pats on the back); and physical caretaking (diaper changing, face washing, etc.).

These are all acceptable and encouraged as long as three guidelines are followed:

1. Touch needs to be respectful and age appropriate.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect a child, youth, or vulnerable adult's preference not to be touched and adjust activities accordingly.
3. Adults should only touch a child if they are in the presence of another adult or in a room with an open door.
4. Staff and volunteers will not touch or interact with children, youth or vulnerable adults in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating or undertaken for purposes of sexual gratification.

### **V.D. Working with Youth**

1. All Youth Advisors and teaching volunteers are encouraged to attend a Basic Youth Advisor Training and Advanced Advisor Training when they are appropriate and available.
2. Volunteer teachers, youth advisors and ROPEs mentors will maintain regular contact with the DFF during any year in which they are volunteering as youth advisors, mentors or teachers.
3. There will be a minimum of two screened unrelated adults present for youth group meetings and at other events involving youth of the congregation. There must be a minimum of three adults present for overnights. If the required number of adults cannot be present, the event will be canceled.
4. The minimum age for adult volunteers working with youth is 25.
5. Youth Group Events. Youth daytime and evening events and overnights are an integral part of UUCN's youth program. To keep these experiences safe, nurturing, welcoming and enjoyable, UUCN has established these guidelines:
  - a. Only UUCN Youth Group members may participate in Youth Group events other than meetings, unless express permission has been granted by the DFF or their

designee for visitors to attend. Youth Group members are those youth who have registered for the Children & Youth FF program and have attended UUCN classes or events regularly. Walk-in visitors are not allowed.

- b. The onsite ratio of adults to youth will be at least 1:10. A minimum of two unrelated adults is required for a daytime or evening-only event to take place. The off-site ratio of adults to youth will be at least 1:6 with a minimum of three, and ideally 4 screened adults required for the event to take place.
- c. Youth must sign a Youth Code of Ethics to participate in the program and are expected to treat each other with kindness and respect. Youth participants will respect the requests and requirements of adult leaders.
- d. Youth will not go outside after dark unless accompanied by adult leaders or with an adult leader's permission. If this rule is violated, youth may be sent home after one warning.
- e. Youth will stay with the larger group or with a designated small group. If this rule is violated, youth may be sent home after one warning.
- f. No firearms, weapons, fireworks, illegal drugs or alcohol are allowed. If a youth violates this rule, the items will be confiscated and disposed of as directed by the DFF or Minister, and the youth will be sent home immediately. The youth will stay under adult supervision until the parent/guardian arrives. The youth will not be able to participate in overnights, retreats and field trips for one calendar year and then may resume participation if approved by the DFF or their designee.
- g. No smoking or tobacco products are allowed. If a youth participant violates this rule, the tobacco products will be confiscated, the youth's parent/guardian will be called and the youth may be sent home. Further participation in overnights, retreats and field trips will require an individualized written agreement among the youth and adult leaders, the DFF and the youth's parents/guardians.
- h. Sexual behavior is inappropriate during a youth overnight, field trip or retreat. Sexual activity detracts from the group environment and the sense of group safety. If this rule is broken, the parent/guardian of the youth in question will be called, and the youth may be sent home. Further participation in overnights, retreats and field trips will require an individualized written agreement among the youth and adult leaders, the DFF or the designee and the youth's parent/guardian.
- i. Youth and Advisors will respect UUCN and others' property. If willful destruction of property occurs, the relevant parent/guardians will be notified, restitution will be required and involved youth may be sent home.
- j. If a youth faces consequences related to items d-i, the DFF and Minister will be notified and will follow up with the youth and their parent/guardian, taking into consideration both the disciplinary and pastoral needs.

### **V.E. Overnights and Trips**

1. All adults supervising youth sleepovers must comply with Screening requirements of this Policy (Section 4.D and 4.E). Parents who are staying over with their own youth need not have been active participants.
2. There will always be a minimum of three adults, at least two unrelated, 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 UUCN, 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 UUCN, 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 or until the building is open for other events.
4. In order for a youth to participate in an overnight or trip, a parent/guardian will sign the required forms that give consent for teens to participate and provide medical information and release to authorize emergency medical services.
5. The adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees.
6. Youth will sleep only in areas equipped with a functioning smoke detector.
7. Adults will be informed of fire safety procedures and youth will be made aware of fire safety guidelines.
8. Ideally, no other groups will be in the building when an overnight occurs. If there are other groups in the building, youth will remain in a separate part of the building until the other event concludes. Every effort will be made to avoid contact between youth and other groups.

### **V.F. Nursery and Child Care**

1. Drop off and pick up: Parents must sign in/out children and provide cell numbers. The child care provider may use discretion in asking for identification when parents or guardians pick up their children.
2. Parents/Guardians of infants and toddlers may remain in the Nursery or classroom with their children
3. Registration: Parent(s) or Guardian(s) must register their children annually. Visitors must complete a Visitors' Card. The Registration Policy regarding attendance will be followed.
4. Diaper Changing:
  - a. Parents must give written permission to allow Child Care Provider/Staff to change diapers.
  - b. Professional childcare providers who have been trained on diaper changing procedure by the DFF can change diapers.

- c. Teachers who have not had training in diaper changing should not change diapers. When a child's diaper needs to be changed, teachers will call a parent/guardian on the cell phone or go find a parent/guardian, so s/he can change the diaper.
  - d. Anyone who changes a diaper must wash their hands thoroughly when finished.
5. Toilet training: if there is a lavatory in the nursery/classroom a child may go unaccompanied in the room. If the child needs assistance the door must remain open. When using the public restroom, the door to the hallway must remain open and the child care provider will be available if assistance is needed. If possible, child care provider will contact Rover to provide assistance. Everyone must follow hand washing protocols. If an older child has special needs, DFF will work with child's parents/guardians to develop an individualized plan.
  6. Ratios: There will be one caregiver for every four children with a minimum of two child care providers at all times. Parents will be invited to stay to maintain this ratio if needed. If a parent is invited to stay, at least one screened and trained caregiver must remain in the room at all times.
  7. Age of providers: Age 14 or older. See Hiring and Screening Sections for details on Child Care Lead age.
  8. Minimum number of child care providers: There is a minimum of two child care providers at all times. It is acceptable for both child care providers to be minors, provided they meet age requirements.
  9. Training - Child Care Providers shall participate in Safe Congregation Policy training within 30 days of being hired and on an annual basis thereafter.

### **V.G. Communications with Children and Youth**

Every year, social media, email and virtual communications become more and more integral to the work of UUCN, especially with youth. It is impractical to set out specific rules about interactions online because there are a seemingly infinite number of platforms to use and they change so rapidly. However, it is incumbent upon staff and volunteers who are interacting with youth in their professional capacity to ensure that virtual communications follow the same general principles of safety as outlined in this Policy. Here are key points to keep in mind for social media usage with youth, which apply to all social media as well as emails, phone calls, video chats, text messages, webinars, and any other communications that do not happen in person.

If an advisor is in doubt about any ongoing or new form of social media communication, they should consult with the DFF for guidance.

*Groups and witnesses* – It is always better to have multiple people (particularly multiple adults) present for virtual communications, to preserve a “group-appropriate” standard and to provide

for corroboration should future questions arise. Examples are closed Facebook groups, webinars, video chats or Google+ hangouts with three or more people. Use of social media should always be in a closed group monitored by church staff and parents. The judicious use of texting for church related business of an immediate nature (ex., the group was to meet at 6:30, now it's changed to 7) should also include parents. UUCN staff might use texting to communicate quickly with teens on staff. All UUCN-related texts should be transparent; toward that end, another adult should be copied on each text.

If an adult volunteer is contacted privately by a minor, they will maintain appropriate boundaries and use discernment. They should either copy another adult on the response or contact the DFF or Minister as soon as practical to inform them that the contact occurred.

*Documentation* – All digital communications are not confidential. Written evidence or a recording of a communication offers proof should future questions arise. Examples of documented communications include email or recorded video chats, whereas one-on-one phone calls or automatically deleted text messages (such as SnapChat) could prove problematic.

*Parental permission* – Parents or guardians of youth should be notified and consulted about communication expectations, such as Facebook, email or phone calls, and be given the opportunity to limit their youth's participation if it is appropriate, particularly for youth under 18.

*Professionalism* – Adults leaders and staff should ensure that communications sent through social media do not violate the volunteer or professional relationship they maintain with youth. UUCN believes parents are the final arbiters of how and when their child or youth should receive communication from adults. Staff and adult volunteers will respect any such restrictions expressed by parents.

*Youth and Adult Comfort and Privacy* - Since many social media platforms are comfortable environments for youth, UUCN staff and adult volunteers should respect that dynamic while also being able to use these same platforms for their own personal and professional uses. Staff and adult leaders will limit their online relationship to minors to the platforms established by UUCN. A list of these platforms will be maintained by the staff. For example, staff and adult leaders will not accept friend requests from youth on Facebook, but may interact with youth in a group setting, etc. Inappropriate interactions include initiating and engaging youth in conversations better discussed in person, exploring youths' social media pages and commenting as peers.

## **V.H. Pastoral Care**

1. Visiting congregants in their homes
  - a. If a Pastoral Care Team (PCT) Member is making a visit to a home where they know children or youth are present during the visit, they must bring a staff member or a second PCT member on the visit.
  - b. If a PCT Member wishes to bring a second person on a pastoral care visit, that second person must be a staff member or another PCT Member.
  - c. Volunteers and staff may not assist with toileting, bathing or dressing.
2. Visiting congregants in a facility
  - a. If a PCT Member wishes to bring a second person on a pastoral care visit, that second person must be a staff member or another PCT Member.
  - b. Volunteers and staff must abide by any guidelines the facility has about visitors.
  - c. Volunteers and staff may not assist with toileting, bathing or dressing.
3. Providing transportation
  - a. Volunteers and staff may only provide transportation for individuals who are able to get into and out of a vehicle on their own.



## **VI. SAFE CONGREGATION RESPONSE TEAM**

In order to ensure continuity, the Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT) 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 UUCN.

Safe Congregation Response Team membership, responsibilities and roles include:

- A. The membership of the SCRT will include the Minister, the DFF, the Church Administrator, the President and Vice President of the Board of Trustees. The Board may add additional Team members at its discretion but may not remove any of the aforementioned unless a conflict of interest arises or for issues found in the Personnel Policy.
  - a. In the case of a conflict of interest, a Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate.
- B. All members of the SCRT will sign the SCRT Confidentiality Agreement.
- C. The SCRT's function, individually and collectively, is to evaluate and respond to accusations, actual incidents and reports of abuse or any criminal behavior that jeopardizes the safety and well being of the congregation and offer confidential support, advice and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved.
- D. The SCRT will have the following responsibilities
  - a. Have access to information about community resources for child abuse, intimate partner violence, treatment for sex offenders and support groups for survivors.
  - b. Know about state laws regarding reporting.
  - c. Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
  - d. Evaluate prospective teachers, child care providers, youth group leaders or other volunteers that are flagged as needing more information or follow up.
  - e. Participate in an annual training for all volunteers and staff who work with vulnerable populations on issues, policies and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse.
  - f. Receive allegations of possible abuse and follow a process for expedient handling of each allegation.
  - g. Communicate with other SCRT members upon receiving a report or allegation.
  - h. Meet with convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in congregational activities.

All activities of the SCRT will be conducted in a confidential manner and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the SCRT or as required by law.

## VII. BEHAVIOR

UUCN's behavior policy reflects a commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment. While we are a congregation that welcomes all individuals, we are responsible for providing a safe environment and as such, we do not welcome all behaviors. If at any time a person's physical and/or emotional well-being or the well-being of the congregation is threatened, the source of the threat must be addressed. In some cases this may require removal of the disruptive person(s) from UUCN property and activities, possibly permanently.

Behavior warranting response can be characterized as one or more of the following

- **Dangerous Behavior:** the individual(s) embodies a threat or perceived threat to persons or property,
- **Disruptive Behavior:** the individual(s) behavior interferes with church activities
- **Offensive Behavior:** the individual(s) behavior is inconsistent with our UU values and principles
- **Harassment:** unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, sexual orientation or genetic information.

**Dangerous Behaviors** - In the case of behavior which is deemed to be dangerous, an immediate response shall be taken. The response can include asking the disruptive person(s) to cease the behavior, asking them to leave the event/activity, and/or suspending the event/activity. If the behavior continues, or the situation requires further assistance, the Nashua Police Department shall be called. If the danger is deemed to be immediate, the Police may be called without first approaching the source of the danger.

Ideally, the person responding will be the Minister or a staff member. If staff are not present or available, other church leadership should take this responsibility. After an occurrence of a dangerous disruption, an Incident Report shall be completed, detailing all resulting responses taken and outcomes. The Safe Congregation Response Team shall meet to review the origin of the event and the effectiveness of the response, and follow steps outlined in Section VIII of this policy.

**Disruptive Behaviors** – If a situation arises where a behavior interferes with UUCN activities, the behavior should be reported to the Minister, staff or church leadership as soon as practical. If a situation is reported to staff or church leadership, it shall be communicated to the Minister. An Incident Report shall be completed, detailing all resulting responses taken and outcomes. If the Minister deems it appropriate, they may approach the involved person(s) to discuss the situation

and possible resolution. At their discretion, the Minister may also choose to take a situation to the Safe Congregation Response Team for review, either before or after approaching the person(s) involved. The Safe Congregation Response Team will then review the situation for severity and determine the appropriate response.

**Offensive Behaviors** - If a situation arises where a behavior is inconsistent with UU values and principles, we encourage people to work within our Covenant of Right Relationship.

**Harassment** - If a situation arises where an individual is harassed by another individual in the congregation, we will abide by all state and federal laws.

If a person believes they have been or are being harassed by anyone encountered in the course of your time at UUCN, they should report that conduct immediately to the Minister. If the complaint involves the Minister, or if the Minister is unavailable, they should immediately report it to the President of the congregation.

The SCRT will investigate every complaint or report of harassment promptly. Although investigations are conducted with sensitivity to confidentiality issues, investigative information is communicated as appropriate to those with a need to know. Appropriate action is taken quickly if the investigation indicates that a violation of this policy has occurred.

### **Possible Responses/Remediation**

If a situation is referred to the SCRT, the team will determine the appropriate response to individual situations on a case by case basis using the following guidelines:

- All situations will be approached as individual events, with no prejudice
- All relevant information will be collected
- The severity of the situation will be determined in regards to danger, disruptiveness, offensiveness and harassment
- The causes of the situation will be analyzed, along with any relevant history
- The potential for the situation to recur or reduce in the future will be assessed

Possible remediation includes:

- Meeting with the person(s) involved in the manner most suitable to the situation, and in accordance with UUCN's Covenant of Right Relationship.
- Limiting individual's access to and/or participation in UUCN events/activities, with a clear understanding of how and/or if their return to such activities/events may be allowed. The terms of such an understanding should be clearly laid out in a Limited Access Agreement. A copy should be provided to the individual(s) involved and a copy should be kept in church files, as stipulated below.

- Permanently excluding an individual from UUCN grounds, events and activities. The decision to permanently exclude an individual will be made by the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the SCRT. If the decision to exclude is made, a letter from the Minister and President informing the individual(s) of the exclusion, its reason and the individual's rights and possible recourse will be mailed to the individual via Certified Mail.

All activities of the SCRT will be conducted in a confidential manner and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the SCRT or as required by law.

**Record Keeping** - All events and reports of behaviors outlined in this section and any ensuing responses taken will be documented and kept by the SCRT. These records can be used to provide context and continuity should similar issues arise. All records will be kept strictly confidential. Only members of the SCRT will have access to these forms, which will be kept in paper format in a dedicated, locked filing cabinet in the office of the Church Administrator. Only the Minister, DFF and Church Administrator will have keys to this cabinet.

## **VIII. RESPONDING TO A REPORT, COMPLAINT OR ALLEGATION**

UUCN is committed to maintaining the safest environment possible for children, youth and adults while being a religious community open to those who would like to worship on Sunday morning. The goal of this policy is to respond to a report, complaint or allegation rationally, compassionately and with unity of purpose. Creating and maintaining a healing community is to create an environment of trust within which both victims and offenders feel safe enough to speak about what has happened. With this goal in mind, the SCRT is charged with responding to abuse allegations.

When someone who has been legally charged with or convicted of a crime against a child, youth or adult - including but not limited to child abuse, sexual abuse, assault and intimate partner violence - seeks to attend our services or participate in other congregational activities, it is our responsibility to address both the need to be a welcoming congregation and the need to maintain as safe an environment as possible for all people.

Additionally, when someone has been accused of a crime against a child, youth or adult (whether or not the incident is church-related) or an allegation or complaint of inappropriate or illegal behavior has been made, it is our responsibility to execute due diligence in following all applicable federal, state and local laws as well as to maintain the respect and dignity of all people involved.

There are several situations which may prompt a response regarding a complaint, report or concern about sexual or physical abuse, including but not limited to:

1. A child, youth or adult reports possible abuse by congregational staff, a member, another youth or an attendee
2. A UUCN member, official, friend or attendee suspects that a child, youth or vulnerable adult is being abused
3. A child or youth reports possible abuse by a family member or another individual
4. UUCN officials learn that a member, friend, employee or attendee (child, youth or adult) is under investigation for allegedly abusing others, or
5. UUCN officials learn that a member, friend, employee or attendee (youth or adult) has been convicted of a crime.

Because child abuse (and abuse of incapacitated adults) is addressed directly in New Hampshire state law, such cases require that reporting laws be followed. Those steps are outlined in the following section.

- A. Role of Person Who Receives a Report of Abuse.
  - a. Any person witnessing, having knowledge of or having reasonable suspicion of injury, exploitation, objectionable conduct toward, physical or sexual abuse of any child or youth or other vulnerable person at UUCN shall report the information immediately to the Minister, the DFF or a member of the SCRT. Of these, whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others. The reporting person will follow all UUCN Policies as well as federal, state and local laws.
  - b. Any person who becomes aware of charges or convictions made against an employee, volunteer, member or attendee of UUCN shall report the information immediately to the Minister, the DFF or a member of the SCRT. Of these, whoever received the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others.
- B. Role of Minister, DFF or other SCRT Member Who Receives A Report
  - a. Inform other SCRT members so that the Minister and DFF can determine:
    - i. What level of confidentiality should apply to the Report
    - ii. If there is imminent danger and a child should not be released to their parent/guardian
    - iii. Whether a report must be made immediately and the local authorities called
    - iv. Whether a meeting of the SCRT should be convened
  - b. Assist the reporting person in completing a written report using Report of Suspected Abuse Form.
  - c. Take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the children and/or vulnerable person in the congregation pending investigation of the Report
  - d. Abide by New Hampshire law on reporting abuse
  - e. Where the Report may disclose criminal activity, refer the matter to law enforcement
- C. Evaluation of Need for Limited Access
  - a. If it is determined that any person should have restricted access to children or vulnerable adults, or should be denied permanent access to the congregation, that person shall be required to sign a Limited Access Agreement and shall not be allowed to have any contact with children or youth and may be asked to resign their membership and/or participation in congregational life. The latter would involve a permanent denial of access.
  - b. Steps to assessing and implementing an Agreement include
    - i. The Minister and/or the DFF will meet with the individual in question to discuss the charges against them and to determine how they would like to participate in congregational life.

- ii. The Minister and/or the DFF will inform the remaining members of the SCRT. The SCRT will determine whether this person may safely participate in congregational life, and under what conditions. The SCRT will provide an individualized agreement for the individual in question to sign governing the manner in which they may attend UUCN worship services and other UUCN sponsored events.
- iii. The individual will sign and abide by the Agreement. A copy of the Agreement will be retained by the Minister who will oversee its implementation with the support of the SCRT.
- iv. The Board of Trustees will be informed about all Limited Access Agreements.
- v. A list of companions will be provided to the individual in question if specified in the Agreement.

D. Disclosures or Concerns About Staff or Volunteers

- a. The SCRT will follow all policies in the UUCN Personnel Manual.
- b. If the SCRT or Minister deems that it is appropriate to remove a staff member or volunteer from a position, or to restrict in any way their role with children, youth or vulnerable adults, the SCRT and/or the Minister will provide the affected employee or volunteer an opportunity to:
  - i. Know the complaints/allegations against them
  - ii. Know the evidence supporting such complaints/allegations
  - iii. Have the right to reply to such complaints/allegations

E. Disclosures or Concerns about the Minister

- a. Disclosures or concerns about the Minister will be taken directly to the President of the congregation, who will work with the Board of Trustees to respond.
- b. The next points of contact shall include the New England Regional Lead of the UUA or the UUA Department of Ministry.
- c. The Board will follow all policies in the UUCN Personnel Manual, and abide by the guidelines spelled out in the Minister's Letter of Call and Ministry Agreement.
- d. If the congregation votes to dismiss the Minister, or the Board decides to restrict in any way the Minister's role with children, youth or vulnerable adults, the Board will provide the Minister an opportunity to:
  - i. Know the complaints/allegations against them
  - ii. Know the evidence supporting such complaints/allegations
  - iii. Have the right to reply to such complaints/allegations

F. Youth Who May Be Abusers

- a. If a youth incident comes to the attention of the member of the SCRT, the Team member should contact the parents of both children to discuss the allegation and

next steps. In most cases, the family will be required to demonstrate that the alleged abuser has completed a comprehensive assessment by a child psychologist or appropriate mental health professional before the alleged abuser is allowed to continue to attend Faith Formation Programs. The SCRT may ask for documentation of the assessment from the professional.

- b. It is not the responsibility of the Minister or the SCRT to determine if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that an appropriate assessment does take place. In some instances, the SCRT may also determine that the matter should be referred to DCYF.
  - c. If the evaluation described above indicates that the child has a behavior problem that is likely to result in continued abuse, the SCRT, in consultation with the child's parents and the Children & Youth FF Team shall determine how and if the child can safely be involved with the Faith Formation Program. If the SCRT determines that the child can participate in FF, a individualized Limited Access Agreement shall be developed and signed by both the child and their parents/guardians. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the child continued involvement with other children until psychological counseling, therapy or other appropriate treatment is completed.
  - d. In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for abusive behavior back into the congregation after psychological counseling therapy, or other appropriate treatment is completed. In such cases, the SCRT, in consultation with the child's parents, shall develop an individualized Limited Access Agreement to be signed by both the child and their parents/guardians. The SCRT recognizes that in such cases, pastoral care and support from the wider congregation for the family(ies) involved is an important element of this process.
- G. Safety and Pastoral Needs of the Congregation
- a. Following a report of suspected abuse, the SCRT will also develop a plan to address the pastoral needs of our congregation, including the needs of:
    - b. The person/child who has allegedly been abused: This may include providing information about or referrals to appropriate professional, community, and UUCN or UU resources, as needed. Additionally the SCRT may assist in dealing with the appropriate authorities.
    - c. Other members and friends of our congregation:
      - i. 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;
      - ii. the Minister (or other members of the staff) to aid in dealing with the pastoral needs of the victim or accused person;



- iii. 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
  - iv. other congregation members and friends who are relied on to a great degree by the person/child who has allegedly been abused or accused offender (or those connected to them).
  - d. 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, they also deserve our support; withdrawing it at this critical point in that person's life might have severe detrimental long-term effects on their 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 them with compassion.
  - e. Other persons/children who have allegedly been 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.
- H. The plan established will be such that other individuals are not put at risk for further incidents.

## IX. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Anyone who becomes aware or suspicious of sexual or physical abuse, sexual harassment, disruptive/dangerous behavior, conduct, charges, reports, complaints, investigations or convictions must report this information immediately to either the Minister, DFF, or a member of the SCRT.

### A. Role of Person Informed of An Incident of Abuse

- a. Report the incident to the Minister, DFF or other member of the SCRT. Of these whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others. In the event that the charges involve a minister, the next points of contact will be the Regional Lead of the New England Region or the UUA Department of Ministry
- b. Complete the Report of Suspected Abuse form
- c. New Hampshire state law, RSA 169-C, the Child Protection Act, states that any person who has reason to suspect that a child under the age of 18 has been abused and/or neglected **must** make a report to the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) immediately. This law also states that any person making a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability.
- d. New Hampshire state law, RSA 161-F 46<sup>2</sup>, the Adult Protection Law, requires any person who has a reason to believe that an elderly incapacitated adult has been subjected to physical abuse, neglect, or exploitation or is living in hazardous conditions must notify their local law enforcement agency.
- e. It is not the function of the SCRT to conduct an investigation into accusations of child abuse. It is both New Hampshire law (RSA 169-C, “Child Protection Act”) and the policy of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Nashua 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.

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<sup>2</sup> **161-F:46 Reports of Adult Abuse; Investigations.** – Any person, including, but not limited to, physicians, other health care professionals, social workers, clergy, and law enforcement officials, suspecting or believing in good faith that any adult who is or who is suspected to be vulnerable has been subjected to abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation or is living in hazardous conditions shall report or cause a report to be made as follows:

I. An oral report, by telephone or otherwise, shall be made immediately, followed by a written report, if so requested, to the commissioner or his authorized representative. When oral reports are made after working hours of the department, or on weekends or holidays, such reports shall be made to the police department of the appropriate political subdivision, or to the sheriff of the county, in which the alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation occurred. Law enforcement officials receiving reports under this paragraph shall notify the commissioner within 72 hours of receipt of such reports.

II. Within 72 hours following receipt by the commissioner or his authorized representative of such oral reports, an investigation shall be initiated by the commissioner or his authorized representative.

III. Investigations shall not be made if the commissioner or his authorized representative determines that the report is frivolous or without a factual basis.

- f. In the presence of one of the members of the SCRT, the reporting person must report the incident to DCYF (1-800-894-5533). The reporting person should keep careful written notes of the telephone conversation and the name of the person they are speaking with. A follow-up written report by the reporting person may be required by DCYF.
  - g. If the victim is an adult, the abuse report must be made through the local or State Adult Protective Services (APS) Agency in the presence of one of the members of the SCRT. Calls may be made to the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) at 603-271-7014 or toll free at 1-800-949-0470.
  - h. The entire matter must be kept confidential from anyone other than the Minister, the DFF or other members of the SCRT until information is received that an investigation has been completed.
- B. The Role of the SCRT
- a. The Minister, DFF, and other members of the SCRT shall carefully document the handling of the incident and report the incident immediately, as appropriate, to the child's parents/guardians, the proper civil authorities and the congregation's insurance company.
  - b. If the member of the SCRT, upon being informed of suspected abuse, believes that a child may be in imminent danger should that child be released to their parents, the SCRT will contact state and local authorities and turn over the investigation to those agencies.
  - c. When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child and the alleged abuser is a church employee, member or attendee, the SCRT will immediately develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of the abuse. The purpose of this plan is not only to safeguard our children, but 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 parents or guardians of both the alleged abuser and the victim. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser or, if a minor, their parents or guardians, by the SCRT. 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).
  - d. In all cases, the SCRT or the Board of Trustees may seek legal counsel before proceeding with a Limited Access Agreement.
  - e. The SCRT shall reach out to the victim and the victim's family and extend whatever pastoral resources are needed.
  - f. In the event that knowledge of the incident becomes public, the SCRT shall utilize the UUCN Crisis Communication Plan.

- g. The SCRT shall determine how to address the incident within the congregation. While civil authorities are investigating the reported incident, the SCRT shall determine the appropriate actions to be taken regarding the accused.