

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

Rights and Responsibilities of Parent/Guardian and Participant

Children and youth agree to:

- help keep UUCE a caring community by being safe with our bodies and words,
- use materials respectfully and using resources wisely,
- get help from an adult when we need to work through a problem,
- try to be kind to everyone
- listen to each other
- let an adult know if they are not comfortable participating in the group activities
- share thoughts and ideas to help make RE, the church, and our community better
- let teachers know before we leave the classroom or playground,
- recognize there are many ways to “be right” and accept others views
- be stewards to the earth (e.g. turning off lights when leaving room, not leaving water running, etc)
- be respectful of each others' differences (e.g. one person’s excited talking can be yelling to another person’s ears)

Parent/Guardian agrees to:

- stay on church grounds while child(ren) are in RE during worship
- check in with RE staff before leaving children/youth at a church sponsored event
- remind and reinforce basic safety rules (e.g. no running/fast rolling in halls)
- let church staff know about better way to include the child
- pick up children promptly at the end of RE session
- communicate with RE staff any problems or issues or concerns

Definitions

- UUCE = The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene
- RE = Religious Exploration: children’s activities learning about Unitarian Universalism
- Faith Formation: education about UU, covers both children and adult
- DFF = Director of Faith Formation
- Children = preschool through elementary school ages (about 3-11)
- Youth = middle and high school ages (11-18)
- Teachers = individuals who contract with religious education staff to teach designated classes of children and youth
- Advisors = facilitators of high school and middle school youth

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

- Youth leaders = youth enrolled in the RE program who have significant influence on, or responsibility for, other youth enrolled in the program
- Classroom Helpers = individuals who assist a teacher in the classroom
- Mentors = adults, age 25 or older, who have been screened, interviewed, and matched with individual youth as part of the “Coming of Age” program
- Coming of Age = a program which involves teens’ spiritual exploration and development outside of regular worship
- OWL “Our Whole Lives” = set of comprehensive sexuality and development programs targeted at different ages from Kindergarten to adult

Philosophy of how we approach children/youth safety

UUCE is concerned with the health and safety of children and youth, as well as with spirituality, religious education, and community building. Our top priority is always the safety of our children and youth. The DFF will review the safety and communication policies with the children & youth at least annually. We recognize the role of RE is forming connections and showing children and youth Beloved Community in action. We believe that forming healthy relationships with multiple adults gives children and youth a broader safety net.

The RE Committee and the RE staff are committed to creating and maintaining a church community in which all people can worship, learn, and play together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Such behavior is unethical and will not be tolerated within our programs. We seek teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors who promote a spiritual community that affirm the UUA principles and demonstrate personal integrity. We seek individuals who nurture, care for, respect, and support children and youth, building acceptance for participants including those with differing abilities and learning styles, and are worthy of our trust. All people engaged in children, youth, and family programs at UUCE are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions upon the individuals with whom they engage. We have developed the following policies and procedures to ensure a safe, healthy, and respectful environment.

Availability

Child care is available during UUCE services. Children and youth shall be properly supervised whenever at a church-sponsored event. Guests are welcome with responsible guardian information, and if regularly attending are encouraged to register. A Field Trip Permission Slip signed by a parent, guardian, or other adult responsible for the child, is required for each child or youth to participate in an off-premise event.

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

Please see current documents from the DFF specifying exact procedures including pick-up and drop-off requirements.

Teachers and Volunteer Training and Screening

All adults who volunteer or are hired by RE staff (including teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors) to care for children and youth are screened:

- All are required to undergo an annual Criminal History Background Check.
- All must have been regularly attending UUCE for 6 months or have an outside reference.
- All will be personally interviewed by DFF

All teachers receive First Aid and Safety Training, and follow the procedures specified by the DFF in case of injury including filling out reports and communicating with families regarding any injuries.

All staff, including teachers, receive Emergency and Evacuation Training. This includes evacuation maps, location of fire extinguishers, AED, and first aid kits, and specify the procedure in case of emergency. This training and these procedures are reviewed and are reported to the board annually.

All RE staff/volunteers are trained in confidentiality and are considered mandatory reporters.

Classroom Behavior Management

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene respects the uniqueness of each individual and supports the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means. Our RE classes and church-sponsored activities endeavor to provide engaging opportunities for young people with a wide range of temperaments, interests, and learning styles. The DFF will work with teachers and families to make accommodations as appropriate to meet the needs of children and youth, and to respect children and youth in crisis. Please see the current agreement that is made by each family, child and youth upon registering for RE program to ensure safe and respectful behavior in the classrooms.

In the case of children/youth who do not follow the behavior agreement, we ask that any adult witnessing the event (including teachers, volunteers, sponsors, caregivers, and parents) bring this to the attention of the DFF. Initial events shall be investigated by the DFF who will meet with the child/youth's parent/guardian to make accommodations to seek a mutually acceptable and respectful solution to the problem. In the case of extreme violations of behavior agreement, exclusion is never the first response but may

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

be deemed necessary by the DFF for the safety and security of all RE participants and leaders.

Child Safety: Physical Health, Emotional Health, Abuse Prevention

One goal of youth programs is to expand the number of safe adults in their lives. All relationships between youth, children, and adults must be transparent. No adult will create a personal relationship with a youth that is private or secret. Adults will report situations/conversations to the RE team (keeping conversations confidential within the RE team) with the goal of expanding children/youths' circle of support.

Confidential communication between children/youth and adults can create a greater sense of safety for children/youth. Having positive relationships with non-parental adults can be a protective factor and prevent or mitigate abuse. Those relationships, however, can also be opportunities for abuse and it behooves us all to be intentional and transparent about those connections. While some of us may be legally mandated to report certain acts, we all treat ourselves as mandatory reporters in the organization. In the case of suspected abuse or harm, the RE staff will meet with DFF and/or minister about how best to alert authorities.

To keep all members of our church community healthy, we ask those who have a contagious condition to stay home. Please see the most up to date documents published by the church regarding specific policies around current community health concerns.

All teachers receive First Aid Training (including location of fire extinguishers and first aid kits), and follow the specific procedures specified by the DFF in case of injury (including filling out a report and communicating with families regarding any injuries).

If it is determined that any person should have restricted access to children, they shall be required to sign a Limited Access Agreement, and shall not be allowed to have any further contact with children.

Confidentiality

Information about the health or abilities of any child or youth, or a family's status, will be considered confidential. Such information will be shared with RE staff. Confidential information will be shared with volunteers only as necessary to meet the needs of the child/youth, or upon family request.

The role of a trusted advisor or mentor can be a powerful support during a turbulent time in the life of a youth. To maintain youth privacy and protect relationships, private stories from youth will be kept in confidence within the team of youth advisors and the DFF and will not be shared with parents/caregivers. Mandatory reporting rules do apply;

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

therefore if a child or youth is believed to be in danger or believed to be a threat to themselves or others, the RE staff will notify the appropriate people. Confidentiality will be maintained amongst other youth/church members.

Teacher and Advisor Covenant:

Teachers and advisors covenant to come to church prepared to work with kids and youth and create a safe and respectful culture of care. We will communicate clearly and honestly about concerns, ask questions or for help when needed, and remember our positive intentions for the youth, kids, and church community.

Conduct and Accountability Agreement for RE Staff/Volunteers

Consent for activities for those under 18 is the responsibility of guardian(s).

Children/Youth might share confidential information with RE staff/volunteers. All private contacts with children/youth will be logged and anything that is sensitive, repeated, or lengthy must be discussed with the DFF/staff group. If staff or volunteers are questioning whether something is reportable or not, they MUST review the issue that same day with the DFF to discuss how/if it falls under mandatory reporting and the best way in order to do so.

All members of the RE team (including teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors)

- Are trained in current procedures for safety and behavior
- Follow current guidelines for reporting incidence
- Will participate in an annual training with the DFF
- Will read the RE families manual
- Will check in with the DFF each week
- Will check the classroom notebook for any new notes or child/youth registration
- Will log any private conversations with a participant

Grievance Procedures

Any concern can be brought to any RE staff, or to the minister.

Anonymous concerns can be dropped off at the RE mailbox.

All concerns will be investigated by the DFF, or if directly concerning the director, the minister will investigate.

UUCE Children & Youth Safety Policies

Updated 5/17/2023, this nullifies prior versions of UUCE's Health and Safety Policies and Guidelines for children and youth

Approved by board: 5/23/2023