

SAFE CONGREGATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Submitted by: The UUCC Safety Task Force (Caroline Eastman, Neal Jones, Joe Long, Robin Scherer, Barbie Seymour, Dean Smith, Joan Watterson, and Keitha Whitaker, Chair): 8/20/14

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1.0 RATIONALE/PURPOSE

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia (UUCC) is committed to protecting children, youth, and adults in the congregation while on congregation property or engaged in congregation sponsored activities. Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to be the kind of community that takes responsibility for creating safe, just, and non-violent environments for all people, particularly those most vulnerable to injury and abuse.

Establishing a set of appropriate behavior and safety guidelines is the responsibility of every congregation, so that all may interact safely and respectfully within the community.

2.0 STRUCTURE

These policies are divided into the following sections:

- 3.0 Definitions
- 4.0 Right Relations: A Covenantal Community
- 5.0 Just Relations in a Safe Congregation
- 6.0 Responsible Staffing
- 7.0 Safe Physical Spaces
- 8.0 Use of Technology at UUCC
- 9.0 ~~Safety~~ Procedures
- 10.0 Community Relations

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Adult: *A person who is 18 years of age or older and who is not a youth as defined by this policy.*

Covenant: *A solemn statement of agreement about how congregants choose to be in relationship with each other as a way to model Unitarian Universalist values for each other, their children, and the wider community.*

Disruptive Behavior: *Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to:*

1. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child,
2. Disruption of our congregation mission and activities,
3. Diminishing the appeal of the congregation to its existing and potential membership.

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 insure 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.

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

Youth: *An individual who is under 19 years of age and is enrolled in the CYRE program.*

4.0 RIGHT RELATIONS: A COVENANTAL COMMUNITY

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith, created and sustained by relationships. We come together not around religious dogma or creed, but unite to walk together toward a vision of the Beloved Community as named in our Statement of Principles and Purposes as well as the vision that our congregation has named. How we walk together, holding and honoring our congregation's diversity, is a challenge and the value of covenant. —Conrad Wright, "Congregational Polity and the Covenant"

- 4.1 Decision making and congregational relationships will value and exercise an ethic of right relations. (See Attachment A, "The Way We Are With Each Other – A UCC Affirmation.")
 - 4.1.1 An ethic of right relations considers relationships when making ethical decisions.
 - 4.1.2 An ethic of right relations encourages relating and connecting in decision making or problem solving.
 - 4.1.3 An ethic of right relations understands relationships as expressions of value, commitment, purpose, and covenant.
 - 4.1.4 An ethic of right relations encourages the exercise of values in relating.
- 4.2 While honoring the worth and dignity of every individual is one of the central tenets held by our Congregation and is expressed in the Unitarian Universalist Association's Purposes and Principles, we believe that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere in which openness can exist. Our Congregation strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences.

Concern for the safety and well-being of our Congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of a particular individual. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly.

In order to address behavior that compromises the health of this Congregation, our actions as a people of faith must reflect this emphasis on personal safety and security. To that end this Congregation has adopted a *Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior and Safety Policies and Procedures for Children and Youth Served.*

5.0 JUST RELATIONS IN A SAFE CONGREGATION

Together we share our faith and order our lives aware of the differences that unite us. We look to our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles as a point of common reference. Our Principles give substance and depth to the comfort and safety that congregants feel in our faith communities; they shape contexts that encourage risk-taking, authenticity, and vulnerability and support honest religious journeying.

- 5.1 Just relations in a safe congregation rely on UU Principles and the following elements:
 - 5.1.1 Acknowledging: Making a person feel heard and affirmed in their worth.
 - 5.1.2 Compassion: The ability to recognize the suffering of another person.
 - 5.1.3 Truth-telling: Looking at all of a person's circumstances and all dimensions of a particular problem or incident.
 - 5.1.4 Protection: Accepting what has occurred and taking action.
 - 5.1.5 Restitution: Renewing right relations and patching broken wholeness.
 - 5.1.6 Vindication: Setting one free from blame and making things right.
 - 5.1.7 Accountability: An institutional process and responsibility.
 - 5.1.8 Personal responsibility: Adult individuals are responsible for their own actions and behaviors and agree to honor and abide by the UUCC Congregational Covenant.

6.0 RESPONSIBLE STAFFING (INCLUDES VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING)

- 6.1 Staff and Minister Criminal Background Checks: All staff and ministerial candidates shall submit to a criminal background check following the procedures of the Church Mutual Insurance Company. Criminal background checks for non-ministerial staff shall be conducted following the procedures in the Employee Manual. Criminal background checks for interim or settled ministerial candidates shall be conducted by the designated search committee.
- 6.2 Additional/Repeat Screening: Primary Volunteers and staff shall undergo repeat screening if absent from the Congregation community for a period of more than one year. Background checks for Primary Volunteers shall be repeated every five years and those for the Minister and staff every five years. Additional repeat screening may be requested by the DRE, Minister, or President.
- 6.3 Results obtained through a criminal background check for all Primary Volunteer applicants, for nursery staff, and other limited-hours or temporary staff working directly with children shall be reviewed ONLY by the Minister and the DRE, shall be held in confidence, and shall be filed under lock and key in the Minister's Office. The Minister and DRE shall have the discretion to disclose information revealed in a criminal background check to the extent necessary to carry out their duties.

- 6.4 Results from criminal background checks for other professional staff and limited-hours or temporary staff who do not work directly with children shall be reviewed ONLY by the Minister, shall be held in confidence, and shall be filed under lock and key in the Minister's Office. The Minister shall have the discretion to disclose information revealed in a criminal background check to the extent necessary to carry out ministerial duties.
- 6.5 Results from a criminal background check conducted for an interim minister candidate shall be reviewed ONLY by the President of the Board, shall be held in confidence, and shall be held under lock and key in the Minister's office prior to signing a contract with the candidate. The results of the background check (cleared/not cleared) shall be conveyed to the Chair of the Search Committee.
- 6.6 Results from a criminal background check conducted for a settled minister candidate shall be reviewed ONLY by the President of the Board after the candidate is announced to the Board by the Search Committee and shall be held in the strictest confidence. If the candidate is called by the Congregation, the results of the background check shall be filed under lock and key in the Minister's office.
- 6.7 The Treasurer shall be bonded as required by the Bylaws 7.5(d).

7.0 SAFE PHYSICAL SPACES

- 7.1 Injury or Safety Incident Notification: Any adult who witnesses or becomes aware of an incident that could have or did result in an injury to any individual shall immediately complete a UUCC Incident Report (Attachment B) and shall promptly notify the DRE, Minister, or President, who shall receive the report. The DRE, Minister, or President shall notify the Congregation's general liability insurer in accordance with the insurance policy.
- 7.2 Proper Repair and Function of Equipment and Facilities: The Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee shall ensure that equipment and facilities used in UUCC activities are in proper condition for their intended use. Equipment and facilities shall not be used for other than their intended purpose.
- 7.3 UUCC acknowledges that creating safe and usable spaces for all is a work in progress. Individuals are encouraged to bring their ideas and concerns, including access and safety issues, to the attention of the Board of Trustees of UUCC at any time.
- 7.4 UUCC will not tolerate disruptive behavior. Suspected incidents of disruptive behavior shall be reported and documented. Reported incidents will be investigated, and confirmed incidents of disruptive behavior may result in a warning, suspension, or expulsion from the UUCC. All findings will be treated as confidential information, with limited access by only those required to participate in the policy. Any individual(s) expelled may be reinstated.

8.0 USE OF TECHNOLOGY AT UUCC

- 8.1 UUCC Property: UUCC computers and electronic equipment may only be operated by or under the direct supervision of a member of the UUCC staff, of the Technology Services Committee,

of the Finance Committee, or of the Board. UUCC computers and electronic equipment may not be used to intentionally access, download, or otherwise view or use material that contains any content that might be illegal or might subject UUCC to liability. UUCC computers and electronic equipment may not be used to download and copy material protected by copyright without the express written consent of the author or copyright holder.

- 8.2 **Personal Computers and Electronics:** Members of the UUCC community may bring personal computers or electronic equipment to UUCC. UUCC is not responsible for destruction, damage, or theft of personal computers or electronic equipment, and the owner brings such to UUCC at his or her own risk. Such computers and electronic equipment must be free of any material that contains any content that might be illegal or might subject UUCC to liability and may not be used to access, download, or otherwise view or use such material while at UUCC.
- 8.3 **Video Ratings:** Written consent of parents and guardians must be obtained before showing movies, videos, or video games with ratings other than G (movies), E (video games), TV-Y or TV-E (television programs) at UUCC events where children and youth are likely to be present. For events sponsored or organized by a group other than CYRE, it is the responsibility of the committee, group, or organizer of the event to obtain written consent, not the responsibility of the DRE or CYRE Committee.
- 8.4 **Social Media:** UUCC staff and volunteers may communicate with members of the UUCC Community, including children and youth, through electronic and social media. UUCC staff and volunteers shall refrain from engaging in any inappropriate behavior in any form, including such that is likely to be viewed or used by children or youth. Inappropriate behavior includes that of a violent, sexual, or profane nature; abuse of, or the promotion of underage use of, alcohol, tobacco, or drugs; and bullying or harassment. All posts, including announcements, comments, and photographs, on any UUCC sponsored social media site are subject to the review of, and removal by, the staff member, Board member, or other person designated as the moderator for the site. Complaints regarding activities on non-UUCC sponsored social media sites will be addressed in accordance with the Policy on Disruptive Behavior.
- 8.5 **UUCC Website and Online Publications:** The UUCC website and other online publications shall be used for the sole purpose of promoting the services, activities, events, accomplishments, associations, affiliations, and facilities of the Congregation and shall not be used for promotion of interests of individuals or private or public entities. UUCC will endeavor to protect personally identifiable information (PII), including but not limited to, refraining from publishing home addresses, dates of birth, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, health information, financial information, account numbers, and names of minors online. Only office email addresses and telephone numbers of staff will be published on the UUCC website and other online publications. Personal email addresses and home telephone numbers of individuals will only be published online with express, written consent. A photograph or video recording of a minor will not be published online without the express, written permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian. The Chair of the Technology Services Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that the content of the UUCC website and other online publications conform to this policy.

9.0 PROCEDURES

- 9.1 UUCC shall comply with the safety procedures outlined in the Safety Code (Attachment C).
- 9.2 Inspection of Building and Grounds for Safety Hazards: Whenever an activity is conducted at the congregation, the person or group responsible for the activity is responsible for the inspection.
- 9.3 Emergency Procedures:
 - 9.3.1 For any disturbance on UUCC's property call 911 immediately and follow the UUCC Protocol for Any Disturbance on the UUCC (Attachment D.). The Minister, or the service leader in the Minister's absence, will determine any direct action taken.
 - 9.3.2 In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the building, adults should assist children, the elderly, and the disabled in exiting the building at the nearest exit in a safe and effective manner. Such emergencies include circumstances such as fire, gas leak, active shooter, or bomb threat. Under no circumstances should anyone remain in the building in an emergency that warrants evacuation to assist an individual who refuses to evacuate.
 - 9.3.3 To the extent it is safe, congregants who evacuate the building should gather at the designated rally point. The designated rally point is the southeast corner of the UUCC property, located at Heyward Street farthest from the building.
 - 9.3.4 In the event of an emergency in which evacuation cannot be done safely, adults should assist children, the elderly, and the disabled in sheltering in place and taking steps to make their location known to emergency personnel.
 - 9.3.5 UUCC will take reasonable steps to periodically prepare members and employees for responding to emergency situations, including dissemination of information about emergency preparedness as appropriate.
- 9.4 Concealed Weapons:
 - 9.4.1 State law prohibits carrying of concealable weapons on church property without the express consent of church officials, except for designated emergency personnel.
 - 9.4.2 It is the policy of UUCC that church officials will not give permission for the carrying of concealable weapons on church property except in emergency situations.
- 9.5 Alcohol: All applicable state laws regarding the use of alcohol must be observed. In addition, at the conclusion of any UUCC event at which alcohol is served, all alcohol must be removed from the premises.
- 9.6 Disruptive Behavior
 - 9.6.1 Reporting/Documentation
 - 9.6.1.1 Any individual may report an incident of disruptive behavior, either by filling out an Incident Report (Attachment B) or sending an email to incidents@uucolumbia.org following the same format as an Incident Report.

If child or youth is involved, follow the Instructions in the Safety Policy and Procedures for Children and Youth Served.

9.6.1.2 The Minister shall collect Incident Reports relating to disruptive behavior and immediately refer them to the Shared Ministry Committee (SMC). In the absence of a SMC, an ad hoc committee will be identified by the Board President and the Interim Minister.

9.6.1.3 The SMC will inform the Board President at the beginning of the process.

9.6.2 Adjudication

9.6.2.1 The SMC will investigate all reports including conducting an interview with the person(s) involved. A written final report of the SMC (including the initial Incident Report and all investigations and findings) will be kept in a secure file to which only the Minister and Board President have access. The Executive Committee shall be kept informed of the progress and decisions made.

9.6.2.2 The response will be decided on a case-by-case basis. However, three levels of action/response to verified disruptive behavior are recommended:

(a) Level One – The SMC shall inform the Minister of the specific nature of the problem, and either the Minister or a member of the SMC shall meet with the offending person(s) to communicate the concern.

(b) Level Two – The offending person(s) is excluded from specific activities of the congregation for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return written and made clear (with a copy going to the offender and one kept in a secure file).

(c) Level Three – The offending person(s) is permanently excluded (expelled) from church premises and all activities of the congregation. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be written and sent by the Minister to the individual, outlining the expulsion, the individual's rights, and any possible recourse. Only the Board of Trustees shall have the authority to expel an individual.

9.6.2.3 All individuals involved will be kept informed in a timely manner of the steps being taken to deal with the person(s). In addition, the Minister may offer individual or group counseling to any congregation members who have been adversely affected by the disruptive behavior.

9.6.3 Reinstatement: A decision to expel a person may be appealed to the Board of Trustees. Such an appeal must be submitted in writing to the President. The Board shall decide whether or not to gather additional information. In such cases, the decision of the Board of Trustees regarding expulsion shall be final. If necessary, legal action will be taken to ensure that the individual complies with the expulsion.

10.0 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In order to cultivate and encourage good community relations UUCC both participates in community activities and invites community groups to rent UUCC facilities for group meetings and activities.

- 10.1 All UUCC activities and events and all rentals by Members and non-members must be scheduled on the Administrator's master calendar.
- 10.2 Groups that want to use UUCC facilities must demonstrate that the group's activities are in accord with UUCC principles and abide by the rules outlined in the Application for Use of UUCC Facilities.

Attachment A

**THE WAY WE ARE WITH EACH OTHER –
A UCC AFFIRMATION**

We will make ours a positive, welcoming environment -- one that includes the diverse perspectives of our spiritual community and builds a sense of connectedness.

We will practice direct communication in all facets of UCC life, using the power of our words to work toward solutions rather than additional problems.
We will refrain from spreading hearsay.

We will nurture each other's spiritual and personal growth by entering into conversations and interactions with compassion, deep listening, and respect for differences of opinion without judgment.

We will value and express appreciation for each contribution, whether it is time, money or effort.

We will acknowledge conflicts, address them openly and honestly, and resolve them as close to their source as possible, using mediation if necessary.

We will practice forgiving each other and ourselves.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia

February 9, 2003

Renewed October 2, 2005

Attachment B

INCIDENT REPORT
OF INJURY, ILLNESS OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Use this form to document all incidents by anyone on UUCB property or participating in a UUCB activity. Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to: (1) Dangerous acts, such as perceived threats to the safety of any adult, child or youth, such as physical or verbal abuse, threats of bodily harm, or other inappropriate behaviors; (2) Disruption of our congregation mission and activities; or (3) Offensive acts that would diminish the appeal of the congregation to its existing and potential membership through unwanted advances, harassment, and abusive or inappropriate language. ***Please print neatly.***

Date and time of Incident: _____

Individual(s) involved: _____

Indicate the type(s) of incident being reported:

injury

illness

disruptive act

Description of Incident (who, what, when, where, why). Include sequence of events and persons involved. Use back of this page if additional space is needed:

Witness Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Witness Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Name & Title (if applicable) of Person Preparing Report: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Report submitted to:

Minister

UUCB Staff Person

DRE

Board President

Board Member

incidents@uucolumbia.org

This portion is to be filled out by the individual receiving the report:

Date report given to Minister _____

All Incident Reports shall be turned into the Minister, who will include them in a monthly Report to the Executive Committee and

refer them to the Shared Ministry Committee for action.

Attachment C

FIRE MARSHALL'S SAFETY CODE

Monitoring sanctuary as per Fire Marshall's safety code (est. 2012)

1. The sanctuary's center aisle and back aisle to the foyer exit need to be 4 feet wide. This includes the center aisle of the alcove and the aisle along the Art Exhibits wall. Observe spacing as per the Fire Marshall's code.
2. All exit aisles and the room divider behind alcove seating should be kept 4 feet wide for the handicapped with walkers and in wheel chairs.
3. All chairs need to be locked (ganged) together with sufficient room between rows for people to pass through.
4. No seats along the back wall of the sanctuary should be within 4 feet of the double doors to the foyer.
5. Side aisles in the sanctuary should allow for easy passage by individuals.
6. Exit signs should be in place above each exit door. A fire extinguisher must be visible and readily available.

Monitoring the sanctuary to support the Fire Safety Code after a planned event

At the conclusion of Coffeehouse nights and other special events, representatives from the event should check the sanctuary making sure:

1. All seats are locked together,
2. The 4-ft. aisle spacing fire safety code is maintained,
3. All litter and trash (clutter) is removed from the foyer, sanctuary, and social hall.

Attachment D

PROTOCOL FOR ANY DISTURBANCE ON THE UCC PROPERTY

(Source: Rev. Kenn Hurto, Lead Executive, Southern Region)

1. Call 911. Don't wait. If necessary, evacuate the property and ensure the safety of those present.
2. Confront disrupters immediately but do so in a way that reflects our values: kindness, respect along with firmness.
3. Notify congregational leadership as soon as possible.
4. Notify regional staff as soon as possible.
5. Consult with regional staff or the UUA public relations team as soon as possible regarding engagement or follow-up with the media.
6. Formally inform the congregation what has transpired as soon as practicable.
7. Engage the congregation's pastoral care team as appropriate.
8. If the disruption has been severe, with fear or actual harm to parishioners, contact field staff and the UUA trauma team.

RESOURCES

Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations. <http://www.uua.org/safe/children/>

Safe Congregations

<http://www.uua.org/safe/>

UUA: Safe Congregation Handbook

<http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/>

Church Mutual Safety Resources

<https://www.churchmutual.com/98/Safety-Resources>

Key Liability Risks for Religious Organizations, Presented by Richard Hammar

Church Mutual webinar presented November 1, 2012

Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship

http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Developing_EOPs_for_Houses_of_Worship_FINAL.PDF

What Is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.pdf>