



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS  
OF THE CHESTER RIVER

# UUCR Child Safety Policy

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESOURCES**

The Child Safety Policy of the Unitarian Universalists of the Chester River was compiled from a variety of sources including but not limited to the following:

UU Faith Works

Thomas Jefferson District of UUA

Pacific Northwest District of UUA

UUA REsource Packets

UUA Lifespan Education Department

These resources were adapted and modified for the use of UUCR under the belief that their original sources were published to be freely used, modified and adapted by other UUA congregations; and the use, modification and adaptation by UUCR does not imply intentional or unintentional infringement of copyright protection.

**This Section Contains**

**General Information**

**on**

**Risk Management and**

**Creating Safety Policies**

UU Faith Works  
Summer/Autumn 2002

# Safety and Risk Management Issues for Congregation Leaders

*By Laurel Amabile, Lifespan Program Consultant,  
Thomas Jefferson District and the Learning Center for Leadership*

Recent events and societal trends have prompted more questions and concerns about safety policies and risk management procedures to protect children and youth in our congregations. Here I will do my best to offer some recommendations and point you to some resources that can guide your congregation in this often complicated and uncomfortable subject.

Unitarian Universalist Congregations are divided as to how they handle the screening of volunteers working with children and youth - some have written applications and do background checks; many have written safety policies or standardized procedures they use to protect children and set forth expectations for their volunteers. Official background checks may be advisable in congregations experiencing rapid growth and those with populations of people moving in and out of the area (military bases, technology centers, and universities).

In my years as a director of religious education, the congregations I served did not go to the extent of official background checks, though that is a process worth consideration. Based on my training and experience as a religious education professional I would strongly recommend the following advice:

1. Do not recruit religious education volunteers who are new to your congregation - allow at least six months for them to function appropriately in the life of the congregation. Some individuals and families come directly from years of service at other UU congregations. These folks may be experienced enough to work with children and youth sooner than six months, though it is best to contact that congregation for references and recommendations from the director of religious education or the parish minister.
2. Orient and train all religious education volunteers to the religious education program, policies, and expectations - providing a packet of materials that includes a calendar for the year, child and faith-development info, suggestions for religious education teachers, and

religious education program policies, including safety policies and procedures. In this should be a copy of the **UUA Code of Ethics for Adults Working With Children and Youth**.

3. Have all church staff and volunteers working with children and youth review and sign a copy of our code of ethics YEARLY and keep signed copies on file in the office.

4. Put in writing and make official (by governing board sanction or vote) any policies and procedures in place related to safety:

a) Institute Universal Precautions for infectious diseases, handling of bodily fluids, etc. (Especially nursery and toddler caregivers.)

b) Establish an emergency evacuation procedure (schedule practice drills at least once a year).

c) Clearly defined behavior/safety expectations for children, youth and adults both inside and outside of the church building (such as playground safety procedures).

d) Medical Release Form to be provided for any off-site field trip or church sponsored activity signed by parent/guardian with copies of the forms provided to the assigned drivers or chaperones.

e) Written applications and personal reference checks for mentors of youth, or any volunteers who will be working with children or youth outside of the church, but in a church sponsored role, such as Coming of Age mentors.

5. Review your church liability policy to track responsibilities and areas of liability related to religious education activities.

a) Inspect insurance policy for who empowers all non-ordained staff and/or volunteers in their scopes of responsibility. Is this the governing board? The parish minister? Is the director of religious education or religious education committee accountable for incidents related to children and youth during religious education-sponsored events?

b) Know how claims are handled in the event of playground accident and for any accidents in cars driven by staff or volunteers. (It is a good idea to have a copy of your volunteer drivers' license and insurance card on file when trips are scheduled.)

c) All of these conditions can vary from policy to policy and additional professional insurance or steps may need to be put in place, if the policies are lacking certain coverage. Consult with your congregation's insurance representative/agent for further clarification and recommendations.

d) Contact your state officials about the existence of "good samaritan" provisions that may protect volunteers during their service to your organization.

6. Document any incidents or reports of injuries or accidents and keep on file. Use a standardized form, and make sure religious education incidents are reported to the minister. Research done by Christian Ministry Resources indicates that 1 in 50 churches are sued each year, most related to injury claims.

### **Other things to explore related to safety and risk management in churches:**

1. The ratio of adults to children or youth - avoid having only one adult in a room with children and youth; at least two is preferable.
2. Assess your congregation's areas of vulnerability. Ask yourselves: Can children or youth be isolated in our buildings or grounds? Can those in upstairs classrooms get out of the building in the case of emergency, such as fire? Should there be windows in the doors to keep an eye on the activities?
3. Provide training for staff and volunteers in basic first aid, universal precautions (handling bodily fluids and dealing with infectious diseases), child abuse protection, and fire safety procedures.
4. Determine the process to be followed if there is an incident or accusation of abuse or neglect. Know your state laws on reporting

abuse or neglect. (For example, North Carolina has mandatory reporting requirements for all adults, including clergy.)

5. Discuss the behaviors you would look for that are indicators of inappropriate conduct or potential abuse. Make sure that the minister or director of religious education is aware of anyone who is observed behaving inappropriately with a child or youth.

6. Determine how often to do an inspection of the playground equipment, toys, and classroom areas to ensure safety. (Look for cracks in toys and equipment, check swing chains and eye hooks, raised nail heads, etc.)

Legal advisors of nonprofit organizations and churches advise that these steps be taken to provide a safe environment and to demonstrate the intent to protect and ensure safety through explicit means, such as written safety policies and procedures, medical release forms, safe practices and proper training of staff and volunteers. In addition, we have the moral obligation to do so as faith organizations and leaders.



# 'GOOD SAMARITAN' LAW

What is a "Good Samaritan" law? While specifics vary from state to state, all have similar basic principals: *Any person who, in good faith, renders emergency medical care or assistance to an injured person at the scene of an accident or other emergency without the expectation of compensation, shall not be liable for civil damages for any act or omission, not constituting gross negligence.*

The Maryland legislature has developed several statutory sections which provide immunity for tort or civil liability to certain classes of individuals who provide assistance in emergency situations. These sections generally require that the voluntary emergency assistance be provided without a fee to the victim and absent gross negligence on the part of the assister. The following is a brief summary of the Good Samaritan statutes and interpretative case law governing the doctrine in the State of Maryland.

## ***I. Emergency Medical Care - Specially Trained and Non-Trained Individuals:***

Under specifically defined circumstances, Md. Code Ann., Courts and Judicial Proceedings §5-309 (1995) provides immunity from civil liability to both specially trained and non-trained individuals who provide emergency assistance.

Special personnel are generally defined as individuals who have been specially trained to provide emergency care. As long as their actions do not constitute gross negligence and are provided without fee or other compensation, they are immune from civil liability for any damages arising out of the provision of emergency care. Md.Code Ann., Courts & Judicial Proceedings §5-309 (a)(b) (1995)

Non-trained individuals will similarly not be held civilly liable for any damages which occur when providing assistance or medical aid to a victim at the scene of an emergency as long as they provide the assistance in a reasonably prudent manner, the assistance is provided without fee or other compensation, and the individual relinquishes care of the victim when someone who is licensed or certified by the State to provide medical care or services becomes available to take responsibility for the victim. Md. Code Ann., Courts and Judicial Proceedings §5-309 (c) (1995).

In interpreting this statute, the Maryland Court of Appeals has held that special personnel who are salaried are not "compensated" within the meaning of the statute as long as they do not charge a fee directly to the victim. Tatum v. Gigliotti, 321 Md. 623, 583 A.2d 1062 (1991).

# Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

## What You Need to Know

Each State and U.S. Territory designates individuals, typically by professional group, who are *mandated* by law to report child maltreatment. Any person, however, may report incidents of abuse or neglect.

## Individuals Typically Mandated to Report

Individuals typically designated as mandatory reporters have frequent contact with children.

Such individuals include health care workers, school personnel, law enforcement officers and social workers. However, approximately 18 states require ALL citizens to report suspected abuse or neglect regardless of profession. (Maryland is one of these states, see below.)

## Standard for Making a Report

Typically a report must be made when the reporter suspects or has reasons to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected.

## Specifics of Maryland State Law

**Statute:** Family Law § 5-704(a); § 5-705(a)(1)

### Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Social work professionals
- Education/child care professionals
- Law enforcement professionals
- All persons

### Standard for Reporting:

Have reason to believe

### Privileged Communications:

- Attorney/Client
  - Clergy/Penitent (does NOT apply to Clergy/Congregant)
- Privileged Communications does not extend to any other church staff or volunteer

**The Following Sections  
Contain the  
UUCR Child Safety Policy**

## Unitarian Universalists of the Chester River

# Child Safety Policy

***This Policy is meant to supplement, and be used in conjunction with, the UUCR Sexual Conduct Policy***

### Preamble

We, the Unitarian Universalists of the Chester River, as an institutional body of religious affiliation, recognize the importance of creating communities where everyone, and especially our children and youth, are safe. We recognize that religious communities – which should be dedicated to the creation of safe environments for all their members – are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit and the strong reliance and need for volunteers, especially in children and youth programs.

We recognize the importance in a religious community of those very factors of trust, welcome and volunteer commitment, and the necessity to adopt requirements, with explanatory guidelines, to guard against incidents of abuse.

We further realize that institutions operating in the best manner possible with all due concern still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free environment.

We recognize that to adequately address the need for safe environments, it will mean change and sacrifice of some convenience, yet we know our responsibility to respond to the reality of our situation and to our children and youth.

In this spirit, we endorse the following Child Safety Policy for youth-inclusive activities.

## **Screening and Selection of Child/Youth Workers\***

All protocols established in the UUCR Sexual Conduct Policy shall be followed.

All workers who provide direct care or supervision of children or youth at UUCR and/or associated programs and events either on or off our property, must meet the following criteria:

- Child and youth workers must have been active in the UUCR congregation for at least six months. If a worker comes directly from an established Unitarian Universalist congregation, this provision may be waived upon satisfactory references from at least two (2) members of the previous congregation affiliated with their child/youth program.
- All workers must complete and sign the appropriate Participation Release and Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment form annually.
- All adult workers must complete and sign a Statement of Disclosure form and Consent to Criminal Background Check.
- All workers (teen and adult) must sign the appropriate Conduct Covenant.
- References must be checked for each worker.
- All workers age 16 and older shall be checked against the Maryland Judiciary Case Search online database and the Maryland Sex Offense Registry.

\* *The term Worker is understood to be either compensated or volunteer, and includes those providing childcare in the nursery.*

## **Supervision Requirements**

There will be a minimum of two adults on the premises responsible for the supervision of children and youth in all religious education and youth activities. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may be made only by the primary adult leader when it becomes necessary in case of an emergency absence of one adult.

Corporal punishment may not be used under any circumstances.

No adult, other than a parent or guardian, is to be alone with a child or youth.

At any UUCR child or youth event, the ratio of adults to children and/or youth should not exceed 1:10.

## **Release of Children and Youth to Adults**

It is the policy of the UUCR Religious Exploration committee to determine the parents' wishes for the release of their child or youth after RE classes and youth activities. Determination will be made by requesting that parents indicate during the registration process whether they prefer their child to be included in a general dismissal from classrooms at the conclusion of the worship service; or whether they prefer to have the child wait in the classroom with adult supervision until they personally pick him/her up.

**All children attending the nursery/child care MUST be personally picked up by the authorized adult at the conclusion of the worship service.**

## **Transportation To and From Events**

It is the responsibility of the UUCR or the parents to provide safe transportation to and from UUCR events. UUCR strongly recommends that all children and youth ride with adults who meet the requirements below.

1. All drivers must be at least 21 years of age and must provide copies of driver's license and proof of insurance.
2. There must be enough seat belts for everyone and everyone must wear a seat belt.
3. Maryland state laws regarding the use of approved child seats will be followed. It is the responsibility of parents to provide the child seat.
4. Written permission of the parent/guardian of all minor passengers will be obtained prior to being transported. This permission will include all relevant details pertaining to the event, such as date and location, time of departure and time of return.
5. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug which can impair physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his/her duty as a driver.
6. A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may be made only by the primary adult leader in case of an emergency absence by one adult.



## **Removal of An Adult Worker**

Should circumstances or events arise that indicate that an adult is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, action will be immediately taken to remove said adult from supervision, involvement or contact with children or youth. Any person with concerns about an adult advisor shall contact the UUCR Board President and/or Director of Religious Exploration who will then assess the need for removal.

In taking any such action, the **UUCR Board President** will afford the affected worker or advisor the following:

- An opportunity to know the complaints/allegations against him or her;
- To know the evidence, and source thereof, supporting such complaints/allegations; and
- To have the right to reply to or rebut such complaints/allegations.

## **Reporting of Incidents**

All persons affiliated with a UUCR event, including compensated workers, volunteers, adults, or youth, who acquire knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more children or youth at a UUCR event has been injured, become the victim of significant objectionable conduct, or sexually molested or exploited, shall immediately report the incident to the adult in charge of the event.

**Every person in charge of an event to whom a report of injury, objectionable conduct, or molestation is made shall :**

- (i) complete and file an Incident Report form with UUCR;
- (ii) report the incident to the parent(s) of the child(ren) or youth;
- (iii) consult with the UUCR Board President to determine if:
  - the incident requires filing an insurance report or claim;
  - the incident requires reporting to law enforcement authorities, and if so, the person shall report the incident to such authorities (see “Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect”);
  - the incident requires reporting in writing to the Board President of UUCR, who will then determine if the UUA regional office (Central Eastern Region) should be informed (use the Confidential Documentation of Incident form.)

## **Response to Media Inquiries**

**It is the policy of the UUCR Religious Exploration committee that only the UUCR Board President and/or UUA/CER staff or their specific designee may speak for the UUCR in response to media inquiries concerning an alleged incident of abuse, injury, or objectionable conduct.**

**In such an event, it is advisable for the UUCR Board President to consult with the UUA/CER before issuing any statement to the media.**

In general, the following requirements apply for these situations with the public media:

- Because of the issue of confidentiality, in the best interests of the child or youth, we cannot discuss specific cases in a public context.

Particularly if litigation seems possible, it is important that we protect both the Congregation and the UUA, and the interests of the child or youth.

A statement that the speaker wishes to protect the confidentiality of the apparent victim, and for that reason declines to add details, is almost always the most appropriate response to further media inquiry.

- The UUCR Board President or UUA have the authority to discuss what steps UUCR has taken to guard against abusive situations.

## **Integration into the Church of a Person Charged or Convicted of a Sexual Offense**

*Please refer to the UUCR Sexual Conduct Policy  
for specific procedures*

The Director or acting director of the UUCR Children's Religious Exploration Program shall be notified with the name of the individual who is charged or convicted of a sex offense so that appropriate monitoring with children and youth can be initiated.

Among other things, the person charged or convicted of a sexual offense must agree in writing to make no attempt at any time to interact with our children or youth either on or off UUCR property.

Any child or adolescent who has sexually abused or assaulted another child must be directly supervised by a designated adult and be in the company of that adult at all times while on the premises of UUCR, or attending UUCR-related activities off premises. This includes congregants who have children or adolescent relatives visiting the congregation with a history of having sexually abused or assaulted another child.

## UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS PROCEDURE

One of the pressing problems of community and institutional programs today is how to address the reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other infectious diseases. These diseases can be easily spread through improper hygiene practices when handling the bodily fluids of infected individuals. Current practice in most institutional settings is to use *universal precautions*, that is, that all people must be treated as though they may be infected. There are several basic practices that should be implemented in the Religious Education program and nursery:

1. Protective measures for the handling and disposal of bodily fluids that include:
  - (i) The use of disposable gloves for all diaper changes and in treating any conditions where there is blood. Gloves shall be located in every class space and in the first aid kits.
  - (ii) Disposal of all soiled diapers and materials, including used disposable gloves, in a covered trash receptacle.
  - (iii) Washable changing pads, etc. should be wrapped in a plastic bag for cleaning and replaced with clean ones.
  - (iv) Thorough cleaning of surfaces should follow.
  - (v) Careful hand washing with soap and warm water after disposal of soiled items.
2. Awareness and education on the part of staff and volunteers about HIV/AIDS and infectious disease transmission and prevention, in general and in our church setting.
3. Instruction on the use of the protective measures in the above section.
4. Review of policy and procedure by all paid and volunteer staff at the start of their term of service.

## **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN FOR RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION PROGRAM SPACES**

The Children's Religious Exploration Committee has established the following procedure for the safe and effective evacuation of children, youth and adults located in the RE Program spaces, in the event of fire or other emergencies. This procedure has met with approval by the Board of Trustees of this congregation.

### **Logistics**

A map of the RE Program spaces shall be located by all classrooms and common spaces, indicating the locations of all exits, fire extinguishers, and alarms.

All exit doors in the RE program spaces and classrooms will be unlocked on Sunday mornings.

In evacuating the RE spaces, all children in the main building will be walked together through the nearest available exit to the designated meeting place (the Memorial Garden.) Once assembled, the group will remain there awaiting further instructions.

RE Staff and/or Sunday morning coordinators will be in charge of signaling for evacuation, giving oral instructions during the evacuation, calling 911 (if needed), and checking spaces before leaving the building to join the group outside.

RE Teachers will be in charge of the children in their class, keeping a head count, ensuring an orderly departure and return, staying with their group.

RE Teachers and other adults will be asked to assist the nursery and preschool children exit, particularly if the window exits must be used. In this case, those assisting will go to the outside of the windows to help the children exit safely.

## **Active Intruders** *(con't: Emergency Evacuation Plan)*

In the event that a childcare worker or RE teacher suspects an active intruder within the building, children should be evacuated IMMEDIATELY. Children in the nursery/children's room should be quickly taken across the parking lot and behind the hedgerow. Seek assistance from the neighbors and CALL 911. Children in the RE classroom should be quickly taken across the back lawn and behind the screening trees at the back of the property. Seek assistance from the neighbors and CALL 911.

***WHEN IN DOUBT, GET OUT!***

### **Information and Publicity**

RE Teachers, assistants and paid staff will receive information on this procedure annually, or sooner if updated.

Information about this plan will be available to all families upon registering their children in the RE program, and publicized periodically.

Children, youth and adults will be offered education about fire safety and emergency procedures at least once a year.

Children, youth and adults participating in Religious Education activities will take part in periodic evacuation drills.

Printed copies of the evacuation plan will be posted in each classroom and nursery for review.

## **PLAYGROUND SAFETY GUIDELINES**

The following inspection should be conducted annually:

- All hardware and fasteners inspected and tightened/replaced as needed
- All wood pieces inspected for structural integrity
- All wood pieces inspected for splintering and sanded as needed
- All climbing pegs, ropes, swing seats and chains, slide and tire inspected and replaced if needed
- All wood pieces stained and sealed or painted every 5 years or in accordance with manufacturer recommendations

*See attached guidelines from playground manufacturer for specific maintenance schedules*





## INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of person reporting the incident \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Place(s) where incident occurred \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of person(s) involved \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of incident:

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(Attach any supporting materials when completing if necessary.)

Did you observe the described incident directly? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If not, who or what was your source of this information? \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Please return this completed form with any supporting material to the Religious Exploration Program Director for handling and filing***



**CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTATION  
OF INCIDENT FORM**

Name of Person Reporting Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Location(s) of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the circumstances from your perspective:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Attach any supporting materials when completing.)

Did you observe the above circumstance directly? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If not, who or what was your source of this information?

\_\_\_\_\_

Was there a referral in this case? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If so, to whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Copies of this form filed:

Religious Ed Office \_\_\_ UUCR Church Office \_\_\_ CER Region Office \_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_