

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Dieguito (UUFSD)
Policy and Procedure Document

Policy ID: 520

Title: Child and Youth Protection

Date Approved: February 1, 2009 by the Board of Directors

Purpose

Religious communities can be 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. Institutions operating in the best manner possible with all due concern still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free environment. Nonetheless, the policies and procedures set forth herein are established to support the safety and well-being of the youth and children attending all events sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Dieguito (UUFSD).

For purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

- Director of Religious Education (DRE): The person responsible for administration and oversight of the Religious Education Program.
- Employee: any individual who is paid for his or her service, whether as an employee or an independent contractor.
- Teacher: any unpaid volunteer who acts as a teacher, advisor, assistant, or facilitator in the RE Program.
- Supervisor: any unpaid volunteer who has agreed to oversee or otherwise supervise children and/or youth at any UUFSD-sponsored event.
- Person in charge: the one person designated to be in charge of any Youth/Child event.
- Youth/Child Event: any UUFSD-sponsored event at which a child/youth is present without the immediate supervision of his or her parent or guardian. This includes, but is not limited to, regular Sunday Religious Education (RE) classes, field trips, service events, conferences, UUFSD All-Fellowship Camp at deBenneville Pines, and the like. Events sponsored by other organizations (e.g. other deBenneville camps) are not covered by this policy. It does not include adult events at which youth or children happen to be present.

Policy

Guidelines for Employees, Teachers, and Supervisors

- The DRE has the exclusive right to select and/or remove any employee, teacher or supervisor without just cause. With regard to employees, the DRE shall consult with the personnel committee prior to the hiring and termination of any employee.
- Age restrictions

- i. Any employee, teacher or supervisor who is the person in charge of a youth/child event involving high-school aged youth must be at least 25 years of age.
 - ii. Any employee, teacher or supervisor who is the person in charge of a youth/child event involving middle-school aged youth must be at least 21 years of age.
 - iii. Any employee, teacher or supervisor who is the person in charge of a youth/child event involving all other children and youth must be at least 18 years of age.
- Employees – Prior to employment, any employee must:
 - i. Consent to a criminal background check. Should the potential worker have a criminal background, it is then within the discretion of the DRE to decide whether that person will still be allowed to work at UUFSD.
 - ii. Provide satisfactory references from other childcare or education related positions.
 - Teachers and Supervisors – Any teacher or supervisor must:
 - i. Have been active in UUFSD or a Pacific Southwest District Congregation for at least three months. If said teacher or supervisor has been involved with a congregation other than UUFSD, they must allow for a reference check from a staff member of the congregation where they were involved.
 - ii. Provide sufficient information to UUFSD to perform a Megan’s Law Verification (sex offender registry check). Should that check reveal that said teacher or supervisor is a registered sex offender, said worker will be notified immediately and will be barred from any UUFSD youth/child event.

General Policies

- The parent and/or legal guardian of any child participating in any youth/child UUFSD event must complete the following:
 - i. *Registration Form*, including *Medical Release*
 - ii. *Youth Participation Release and Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment*
- If an employee, teacher, or supervisor has a private one-on-one meeting with a child or youth, the DRE or Minister shall be notified about the meeting, either before the meeting or promptly afterward.
- No employee, teacher, or supervisor is to be alone with a child or youth off-site.
- If the parent or legal guardian leaves the premises of any UUFSD event while their child remains behind (e.g. Sunday RE class), they must notify the DRE or person in charge of their departure and provide emergency contact information.
- Any known Registered Sex Offender shall not be allowed at any UUFSD event in which children and youth participate. This includes, but is not limited to, Sunday Services. Any exception to this policy must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Minister in consultation with the DRE and the Board.

Event Supervision

- There must be a minimum of two adults who are unrelated to one another at each event.
- The ratio of adults to high-school aged youth should be 1:10
- The ratio of adults to middle-school aged youth should be 1:8
- The ratio of adults to elementary, nursery or toddler aged children should be 1:6.
- At each event there must be one adult designated the person in charge.
- Youth from other congregations who are attending a UUFSD sponsored event must have an on-site advisor. Each advisor may sponsor up to ten youth per event. It is up to the organizers of each event to ensure that each youth has a sponsor.
- For District events to be sponsored at UUFSD, an adult from UUFSD. must agree to attend and sponsor said event in order to protect the interests of UUFSD.
- For on-site district events, the person in charge should refer to the Pacific Southwest District Congregation Policies and Procedures.
- A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site.

Transportation

- To and from events: It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians of participating children and youth to provide safe transportation to and from UUFSD events.
- During events:
 - i. All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must be fully insured in accordance with California State Law.
 - ii. There must be enough seat belts for everyone and everyone must wear a seat belt. Appropriate safety gear is required when transporting younger children (i.e. car seats) in accordance with state laws. In addition, no child under the age of 9 shall be allowed to ride in the front seat of a car unless written permission is obtained from the parent/guardian stating the child may ride in the front seat.
 - iii. 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, name of driver(s), time of departure and time of return.
 - iv. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of substance that may affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his/her duty as a driver.

Incidents of abuse, misconduct, inappropriate behavior or the like:

- An employee, teacher, or supervisor may not use corporal punishment under any circumstances.

- An employee, teacher, or supervisor may not engage in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language.
- The use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs is prohibited at any UUFSD youth/child event.
- Any employee, teacher, or supervisor who acquires knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more youth at a UUFSD event has been sexually molested or exploited, injured, or been the victim of significant objectionable conduct shall immediately report the incident. (See below for reporting procedure.)
- e. Should circumstances or events arise that indicate an employee, teacher, or supervisor is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, steps will be taken to remove said adult from involvement or contact with children or youth. (See below for removal procedure.)

Procedures

Note: Supplies of all blank forms referred to in this procedure (form names shown in *italics*) are kept on file by the DRE, as are all completed forms.

Screening and Selection of Youth/Child Employees, Teachers, and Supervisors:

- Prior to employment at UUFSD, all employees must undergo a complete background check. This includes, but is not limited to a *Criminal History Check*.
- All teachers must complete the following forms:
 - i. *Agreement to Teach*
 - ii. *Code of Ethics*
 - iii. *Megan's Law Verification*
- All Supervisors must complete a *Megan's Law Verification* prior to working with youth and children on a regular basis. This form must be filled out if any supervisor intends to volunteer his or her time more than one time per calendar year. Therefore, a one-time volunteer would be exempt from filling out this form.

Reporting Incidents of Abuse.

- All reports of abuse must be made to the person in charge. If that person cannot be located, the report of abuse may be made to the DRE or the Minister.
- Every person to whom a report of such conduct is made shall immediately report the incident to either the DRE or Minister, and, within 48 hours produce a written report of the allegation.
- If the person to whom the report was made is a mandated reporter by state law that person shall report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.
- If the disclosure is made to the minister, he or she may be barred from disclosing the allegation if it is considered a privileged penitential communication. A penitential communication is defined under California law as "a communication, intended to be in confidence, including, but not limited to, a sacramental

confession, made to a clergy member who, in the course of the discipline or practice of his or her church, denomination, or organization, is authorized or accustomed to hear those communications, and under the tenets, customs, or practices of his or her church, denomination, or organization, has a duty to keep those communications secret.” This does not modify or limit the Minister’s duty to report known or suspected child abuse when he or she is acting in some other capacity that would otherwise make the Minister a mandated reporter.

Removal of An Employee, Teacher, or Supervisor

- Any person with concerns about an employee, teacher, or supervisor shall contact the DRE or Minister.
- The DRE or Minister will consult with all necessary parties and determine whether action is necessary. The DRE or Minister will then inform the UUFSD Board President of the allegations and make a recommendation.
- The DRE or Minister will afford the accused employee, teacher, or supervisor an opportunity to know the charges against him, to know the evidence and source thereof supporting such charges, and the right to reply to or rebut such charges.
- It is understood that such action will be handled with due caution and discretion, and that the professional Ministerial Staff of UUFSD has the full backing and support of the UUFSD Board in implementing these guidelines. Because of potential exposure to charges of discrimination or other legal hazard, the Board shall be promptly advised of the circumstances surrounding any removal action under these guidelines.