

**UUFSD Policy and Procedure****Document Policy ID: 520****Title: Child and Youth Protection**

Date Approved: March 10, 2024 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). These policies and procedures shall also satisfy the requirements of California Assembly Bill 506 (AB506) which became law on September 16, 2021 and went into effect on January 1, 2024. This law sets new requirements for youth serving organizations in three areas: screening, training, and policies. In addition, the law allows insurance carriers to seek verification of compliance with these requirements.

For purposes of this document, the following **definitions** apply:

- **Director of Religious Exploration and Fellowship (DREF):** The person responsible for administration and oversight of the Religious Education Program.
- **Employee:** any individual who is paid for their service, whether as an employee or an independent contractor.
- **Assignee:** a third party that steps into the shoes of the original party. For example, the Minister or a board appointee may fulfill any duty of the DREF as an assignee if there is no DREF.
- **Mandated Reporter:** persons trained and required by law to report suspected or known instances of abuse.
- **RE Volunteer:** any unpaid volunteer who acts as a teacher, advisor, assistant, or facilitator in the RE Program.
- **Regular RE Volunteer:** an RE volunteer at any UUFSD-sponsored children/youth event who is 18 years of age or older and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children/youth for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year
- **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 youth/child is present without the immediate supervision of their 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

### I. **Guidelines for Employees, RE Volunteers**

- a. The DREF (or assignee) has the right to **select and/or remove any employee or RE Volunteer** without just cause. With regard to employees, the DREF shall consult with the Minister and the personnel committee prior to the hiring and termination of any employee.
- b. **Age restrictions**
  - i. Any employee or RE volunteer who is the person in charge of a youth/child event involving middle-school or high-school aged youth must be at least 25 years of age.
  - ii. Any employee or RE volunteer 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.
- c. **Employees – Prior to employment, any employee must:**
  - i. **Screening Process:**
    - **Provide satisfactory references** from other childcare or education related positions, if applicable to the position.
    - **Criminal Background Check:** Consent to a criminal background check, including **LiveScan fingerprinting**. Should the potential employee have a criminal background, it is then within the discretion of the DREF (or assignee) to decide whether that person will still be allowed to work at UUFSD. Should that check reveal that said potential employee is a registered sex offender, said person will be notified immediately and will be barred from employment at UUFSD.
  - ii. **Policy and Procedures:** Read and return a signed copy of this *Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedure* document.
  - iii. **Training:** Complete the following training and submit corresponding certificates or signed agreements to the DREF (or assignee).
    - California Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Online Training. (To be renewed every two years.)
    - CPR and First Aid Training (Renewed every two years.)

- d. **RE Volunteers** – Any RE Volunteer must:
- i. **Screening Process:**
    - Have been **active in UUFSD or a UU Congregation** for at least **six months**.
    - **Complete a volunteer application form.** If said RE volunteer 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.
    - Provide sufficient information to UUFSD to perform a **criminal background check**. Regular RE volunteers will also consent to LiveScan fingerprinting. Should that check reveal that said RE volunteer is a registered sex offender, said worker will be notified immediately and will be barred from any UUFSD youth/child event.
  - ii. **Policy and Procedures:** Read and return a signed copy of this *Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedure* document.
  - iii. **Training:** Complete the following training and submit corresponding certificates or signed agreements to the DREF (or assignee).
    - California Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Online Training for Volunteers. (Renewed every two years.)
    - All other UUFSD Specific RE Trainings and Agreements. (see Procedure section)

## II. General Policies

- a. 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*
- b. If an employee or RE volunteer has a private one-on-one meeting with a child or youth, the DREF or Minister shall be notified about the meeting, either before the meeting or promptly afterward.
- c. No employee or RE volunteer is to be alone with a child or youth off-site.
- d. 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 DREF or person in charge of their departure and provide emergency contact information.
- e. 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 DREF and

the Board.

### III. **Event Supervision**

- a. There must be a minimum of two unrelated adult RE volunteers at each event.
- b. The ratio of adults to high-school aged youth should be 1:10
- c. The ratio of adults to middle-school aged youth should be 1:8
- d. The ratio of adults to elementary, nursery or toddler aged children should be 1:6.
- e. Whether in person or online, the DREF (or assignee) shall designate an adult RE volunteer/employee to be the person in charge at each youth/child event.
- f. 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.
- g. For Regional events to be sponsored at UUFSD, a minimum of two unrelated adults RE volunteers/employees from UUFSD must agree to attend and sponsor said event in order to protect the interests of UUFSD.
- h. For on-site regional events, the person in charge should refer to the *2019 GA Youth Safety Guidelines*.
- i. A minimum of two unrelated adult RE volunteers/employees must accompany a group going off-site.

### IV **Transportation**

- a. 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.
- b. During events, if driving youth/children other than your own:
  - i. All drivers must be a screened RE volunteer.
  - ii. All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must be fully insured in accordance with California State Law.
  - iii. 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 12 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.
  - iv. 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.
  - v. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of substance that

may impair physical or mental performance during or before carrying out their duty as a driver.

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

- a. An employee or RE volunteer may not use corporal punishment under any circumstances.
- b. An employee or RE volunteer 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, to include the use of images, videos, etc..
- c. The use of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, cannabis and illegal drugs is prohibited at any UUFSD youth/child event.
- d. Any employee or RE volunteer 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 or RE volunteer 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 DREF, as are all completed forms.

I. **Screening and Selection of Youth/Child Employees and RE volunteers:**

- a. Prior to employment at UUFSD or volunteering in the youth/child events at UUFSD, **all employees/volunteers must:**
  - i. **Screening Process:**
    - Complete a *Volunteer Application Form* and interview with the DREF (or assignee)
    - **Criminal Background Check:** Undergo a background check including but not limited to, a Criminal History Check and **LiveScan fingerprinting** (Employees and Regular Volunteers, regular lead Teachers even if they do not meet minimum volunteer hour criteria for state defined Regular RE Volunteer).
  - ii. **Policy and Procedures:** Read and return a signed copy of this Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedure document.
  - iii. **Training:** Complete the following training and submit corresponding certificates or signed agreements to the DREF (or assignee).

- California Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Online Training. (Renewed every two years.)
- CPR and First Aid Training (Employees and regular lead Teachers, renewed every two years.)
- *Signed Code of Ethics Agreement*
- *Agreement to Teach*

## II. Reporting Incidents of Abuse

- a. 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 DREF or the Minister.
- b. Every person to whom a report of such conduct is made shall immediately report the incident to either the DREF or Minister, and, within 48 hours produce a written report of the allegation.
- c. 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, and promptly apprise the Board of the situation.
- d. If the disclosure is made to the minister, they 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 their church, denomination, or organization, is authorized or accustomed to hear those communications, and under the tenets, customs, or practices of their 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 they are acting in some other capacity that would otherwise make the Minister a mandated reporter.

## III. Removal of An Employee or RE Volunteer

- a. Any person with concerns about an employee or RE volunteer shall contact the DREF or Minister.
- b. The DREF or Minister will consult with all necessary parties and determine whether action is necessary. The DREF or Minister will then inform the UUFSD Board President of the allegations and make a recommendation.
- c. The DREF or Minister will afford the accused employee or RE volunteer an opportunity to know the charges against them, to know the evidence and source thereof supporting such charges, and the right to reply to or rebut such charges.
- d. 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

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hazard, the Board shall be promptly advised of the circumstances surrounding any removal action under these guidelines.