



# SAFE CONGREGATION POLICY

Unitarian Universalist Society  
of Wellesley Hills

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## INDEX

<b><i>I.</i></b>	<b><i>Statement of Philosophy</i></b>	Page 1
<b><i>II.</i></b>	<b><i>Definitions.</i></b>	Page 2
<b><i>III.</i></b>	<b><i>Relationship of Ministers and Religious Education Professionals to the Congregation</i></b>	Page 3
<b><i>IV.</i></b>	<b><i>Religious Education Safety Procedures</i></b>	Page 4
	<b>A. Adult Volunteers</b>	
	<b>B. Procedures</b>	
	<b>C. Boundaries and Touching</b>	
	<b>D. Off-Site and Evening Activities</b>	
	<b>E. Overnight Events</b>	
<b><i>V.</i></b>	<b><i>Fostering a Healthy Community, and Preventing Bullying, Abuse, and Harassment</i></b>	Page 9
	<b>A. Education and Training</b>	
	<b>B. Hiring and Volunteer Recruitment</b>	
	<b>C. Disruptive Behavior</b>	
	<b>D. Bullying</b>	
<b><i>VI.</i></b>	<b><i>Responding to Complaints of Abuse or Harassment</i></b>	Page 12
<b><i>VII.</i></b>	<b><i>Reporting Child and Elder Abuse to Community Authorities</i></b>	Page 12
<b><i>VIII.</i></b>	<b><i>The Safe Congregation Team</i></b>	Page 13
<b><i>IX.</i></b>	<b><i>Immediate Safety Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse.</i></b>	Page 14
<b><i>X.</i></b>	<b><i>Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse</i></b>	Page 14
<b><i>XI.</i></b>	<b><i>Guidelines Regarding Offenders</i></b>	Page 15
<b><i>XII.</i></b>	<b><i>Operational and Building Safety Measures</i></b>	Page 16
	<b>A. Communications.</b>	
	<b>B. Basic Requirements – Buildings and Grounds</b>	
	<b>C. Entry Codes and Keys</b>	
	<b>D. Training of Staff and Volunteers</b>	
	<b>E. Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process</b>	
	<b>1. Standard Process</b>	
	<b>2. Evacuation of Children</b>	
	<b>3. Suspicious or Dangerous Person on the Premises</b>	
	<b>F. Weapons and Security</b>	
<b>Appendices:</b>		Page 22
<b>Appendix A: CORI Policy</b>		
<b>Appendix B: Entry Code/Key Application and Receipt</b>		
<b>Appendix C: Procedures for developing a Limited Access Agreement.</b>		
<b>Appendix D. Sample Limited Access Agreement.</b>		
<b>Appendix E: Resources on Bullying</b>		

# Safe Congregation Policy

## *I. Statement of Philosophy*

The UUSWH is committed to upholding the first principle of Unitarian Universalism: to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. In order to foster personal and spiritual growth for participants of all ages, everyone stepping through our doors - whether children, youth, adults, volunteers, guests, or staff - should feel that they are safe and welcome. Maintaining a safe and welcoming environment is a responsibility shared by all members of the congregation.

Therefore it is essential that the rationale of our Safe Congregation Policy be clearly and widely communicated. Indeed, the concrete steps outlined in this document should be considered within a context of a culture that values honesty, respect, compassion, justice, and trust.

As a community of faith, UUSWH encourages a wide range of relationships, some of short duration, some spanning many years. Accordingly, it should be understood by the whole congregation that productive communications and respectful treatment are essential to the work of community building; behaviors and communication that can be reasonably expected to make anyone uncomfortable are unacceptable. It is not possible or even desirable to set up technical safeguards for every situation. Much of the focus of congregational safety policies is to protect those who are most vulnerable and in unequal positions: children with teachers, youth with advisors or mentors, the ailing with their visitors, homeless guests with volunteers, and those seeking advice and counsel from staff. Nonetheless, while no policy can anticipate every possible situation that might arise in a diverse community, this policy is intended to protect everyone, and at the same time to minimize the risk that any of our volunteers and staff will face an unwarranted accusation of inappropriate behavior.

Its primary goals are to:

- Outline steps that will foster a welcoming and safe environment for all participants in UUSWH programs - whether that pertains to fire and other physical risks, or the intangibles of interpersonal relationships - and at the same time reduce the possibility of misunderstandings or actual abuse;
- Encourage involvement outside our walls, through service or recreational trips, while maintaining congregational safety standards.
- Update and formalize the processes and practices that are already in place, and address gaps in prior policies, so that should a problem or concern arise, energy can be focused on ministering to the involved parties rather than scrambling for a response;
- Convey how essential it is to congregational health to honor a comprehensive safety policy, both for maintaining community trust and for reducing risk to all.

## ***II. Definitions.***

**Abuse** is non-accidental conduct that causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury, or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Bullying** is a form of aggression intended to physically or emotionally hurt another person, through such means as physical contact, gestures, and words; social aggression with the intent to socially isolate the target; or damage to the target's property. Bullying can take many forms, and can range from overt actions that are easy to observe, to more covert and subtle actions.

**Child** is any person under the age of 18, except where Massachusetts laws on crimes against the person (G.L. c. 265) establish a lower age limit. Youth, as used in this policy, typically means a child between the ages of 12 and 18.

**Cyber-bullying** is bullying of any type that is done through the use of electronic media.

**Emotional abuse** is conduct that leads to the systematic diminishment of another. It may be intentional or subconscious (or both), but it is typically repeated, rather than a single event.

**Physical abuse** is any physical injury inflicted other than by accidental means, any injury at variance with the history given of it, or a child's condition that is the result of maltreatment.

**Physical Harassment, molestation or exploitation** is non-accidental conduct that reasonably places a person in fear of bodily harm, regardless of the means by which it is accomplished.

**Sexual abuse** is the use of any child or vulnerable adult for the sexual gratification of another, and includes any activity that causes any person to engage in any sexual act or conduct without that person's consent, or in circumstances in which the person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age, mental capacity, or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.

**Sexual Harassment** is non-accidental conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual advances, sexual comments, or requests for sexual favors, where the other person by words or conduct has indicated that such words or conduct are not desired, or where a reasonable person would expect that such words or conduct would not be desired.

**Youth** is generally any person aged 12 to 18; it includes a person 18 or older who is enrolled in our Religious Education program; *or* any person aged 12 or older enrolled in elementary, middle school, or senior high school.

### ***III. Relationship of Ministers and Religious Education Professionals to the Congregation***

Ministers and Religious Education Professionals (REPs) are accorded high levels of trust, and are bound to honor that trust by conducting themselves with integrity, and to embody in their lives the values that they, and we, proclaim on behalf of our faith. Therefore, we as a community expect our ministers to fully adhere to the principles and standards set forth in this Safe Congregation Policy.

Additionally, we expect the ministers and ministerial staff to adhere to the Ethical Standards and Expectations of Conduct of the Code of Professional Conduct (alternatively called the Code of Conduct; hereinafter, the Code) adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), as set forth in the UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry. This Policy incorporates the Code as adopted at the 2010 UUMA Annual Meeting, and as it may be revised from time to time. The Code specifically requires ministers to demonstrate respect and compassion toward all without regard to race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability or ethnicity. It further calls on ministers to extend respect without regard to status within the organization, and without regard to whether the individual disagrees with the minister on specific issues.

The Ethical Standards of the Code require ministers to refrain from engaging in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with any minor child or unwilling adult; and to refrain from engaging in such behavior with any participant or member of the congregation or their spouse or partner; any staff person, intern, or any person with whom they have a pastoral or counseling relationship, except his or her spouse or partner.

All Religious Education Professionals are expected to adhere to the Liberal Religious Educators Association's Code of Professional Practices, pursuant to which religious educators acknowledge that they are recipients of special trust, and covenant not to exploit the power inherent in their roles. Consistent with their professional responsibilities, they are bound by the same prohibitions against sexualizing behavior as are ministers.

In the case of a violation of this Policy, the Safe Congregation Team will notify the Mass Bay District Executive and the Ministerial Fellowship of the UUA to initiate an investigation. If the accusation alleges abuse of a minor (under 18 years of age) or minors, the allegations are to be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families ("DCF") (currently, at 800-792-5200), followed immediately by a written report to that same office, as required by Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 119, section 51A; and reported to the Wellesley Police. The Safe Congregation Team will work with the Standing Committee to implement a prompt and appropriate congregational response which assures the safety of all, fairness to both accuser(s) and accused, and is consistent with our stated values and beliefs.

The Safe Congregation Team will implement an Interim Safety Plan that will include a Limited Access Agreement during the period of the investigation. If the accusation involves a child or youth, the plan will be developed in consultation with the child's parents or guardians, and clearly communicated to them by the Safe Congregation Team. Following an allegation, the Safe Congregation Team will consult with the Standing Committee in developing and implementing a plan to address the pastoral needs of the congregation, with special attention to the allegedly abused person and his or her family, the alleged abuser and his or her family, and others affected by the abuse, especially children.

#### ***IV. Religious Education Program***

It is important that Religious Education (RE) volunteers maintain positive relationships with the young people with whom they work, exercise good judgment, and keep the best interest of the children and youth primary. Children and youth are in a vulnerable position when dealing with persons older than themselves, and may find it difficult to speak out about any behavior of their leaders and caretakers that makes them uncomfortable. Because of this, it is the responsibility of adult volunteers and staff to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Adults and older youth in leadership roles are in positions of stewardship in fostering spiritual development, and it is important that they provide appropriate nurture, care, and support. Spiritual growth involves physical, emotional, intellectual, sexual, and gender identities. We are mindful that all communication - including the choice of words, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice - has the potential to carry powerful messages.

In this policy we define children and youth as any person under the age of 18; any person enrolled in our Religious Education program; *or* any person enrolled in elementary, middle school, or senior high school. At the discretion of the lead staff Religious Education professional (“REP”) in conversation with minister(s), youth who are 18 or older, and who are still enrolled in high school may be exempted from requirements for parental permission slips, and may sign their own permission slips. They will be considered youth in all other respects.

This policy only applies to UUSWH programs. No policy can fully cover unforeseeable events or circumstances, and we therefore expect and rely on our volunteers and staff to use good judgment and reasonable discretion at all times.

#### **Congregational protective measures for our children and youth will include:**

##### **1. Screening RE volunteers:**

- RE volunteers who will regularly work with children or youth should be approved by the REP, who is authorized to make a final decision about the candidate’s suitability for the work in conversation with the minister(s).
- Except for occasional one-time volunteer positions, all RE volunteers should have been active participants in the congregation for at least six months. The REP may consider references from the minister or religious leader of the volunteer’s prior faith community if a prospective volunteer has not yet been an active participant in the congregation for six months.
- A background check will be completed on all volunteers who work with children or youth on a regular basis. Any volunteer who has not yet had a background check completed should work within view of a volunteer or paid staff person who has.
- Background checks on active volunteers will be completed at least every three years, and will be stored in a locked location by Senior Minister.

- If the results of a background check on a volunteer candidate indicate potential risks to children or youth, the REP will consult with the Minister(s) before making a decision about the candidate.
- All volunteers will be provided a copy of the Safe Congregation Policy before working with children or youth.
- A **Code of Ethics** for participation will be developed and remain available for all volunteers.

## 2. Procedures

### **The Two-Adult Rule—**

- No fewer than two adults should be present at all times during any RE program, except as set out elsewhere in this policy. This policy may be adapted at the discretion of the REP in conversation with the minister(s).
- For the purposes of the nursery, preschool, and K-5th grade program, middle and senior high youth can count as adults towards the “two-adult rule.” For the nursery and preschool program both of the volunteers must be at least in high school. For the K-5 program at least one volunteer must be a senior in high school and the second volunteer may be in middle school.
- Sensitive conversations between a child or youth and a Minister or REP, should occur in a room with an open door within view of others. If the child or youth needs confidentiality, then the conversation may occur within a closed-door room with a window, provided that at least one other REP, youth or Minister is made aware that the conversation will occur, or, if unscheduled, immediately thereafter.
- An adult helping a child or children to use the bathroom should leave the door open, and whenever possible have another adult in view. RE volunteers should use good judgment, based on the age and needs of the child, in deciding whether a child should be permitted to go to the restroom on his or her own, or with a classmate.
- In a situation that takes one of the RE volunteers out of the room, the door should remain open and other adults should be within the vicinity.
- No person working with children or young people should arrange a meeting with a child or young person away from the church premises without authorization by the parent or guardian. Coming of Age Mentor relationships are likely to require such meetings, therefore, there is a specific COA agreement that must be reviewed and signed by the COA participant, Mentor, Parents/ Guardians, and REP.
- **Pick-Up**  
Pick-up of children and youth attending RE classes and programs at UUSWH should be done by an authorized adult according to the following age-based guidelines
  - Child Care – Grade 2: Parents, guardians, and authorized adults of children in Child Care, Kindergarten, and Grades 1-3 should pick their children up at their classrooms or other designated areas at the conclusion of the RE program.
  - Grades 3 – 8: Children in Grades 3 - 8 will be released to join their families in Parish Hall for Coffee Hour.



- Senior Youth: Members of the Senior Youth Group and their parents or guardians are responsible for making arrangements for arrival and departure.
- Registration of children in the RE Program constitutes permission for them to accompany their class within the UUSWH buildings and property, and the neighboring town park. No child or youth may leave these grounds without prior written parental permission.
- First Aid: In the event of any accident or injury, first aid will be rendered as soon as possible. If addressing the injury is beyond the ability of the RE volunteer, they should seek help immediately. The RE volunteer should attempt to notify a parent or guardian immediately. The RE volunteer must complete an Accident Report following the event, and the REP will give a copy to the injured child's parent or guardian, and to the Minister(s).
- Allergies: Parents and guardians of children with allergies should communicate clearly with the REP and classroom RE volunteers about acceptable foods, and emergency measures.
- Illegal Activities: RE volunteers shall not permit or encourage any illegal activities among youth.
- RE volunteers will not permit or encourage children or youth to engage in any behaviors that are physically, emotionally, or socially abusive of another child, youth, or adult.
- Bullying, whether by children, youth, or adult will be addressed as appropriate by the adult volunteer or staff present. The REP should be notified of any incidents, and will deal with them as appropriate under the circumstances, and notify the parents or guardians of the children involved.

### **3. Boundaries and Touching**

The purpose of this provision is to promote a positive, nurturing environment through healthy touch and healthy touch boundaries; **not** to prevent touch. We recognize that children and youth cannot—developmentally and legally—consent to particular types of touch.

- Touch should be appropriate for the developmental age of the child or youth. For example, young children may decide to sit on the laps of adult caregivers, but the same behavior between an older child or youth and an adult leader would be inappropriate.
- While adults may initiate appropriate, limited touching with a child or youth (for example putting a hand on a child's shoulder for a moment to get his or her attention), adults must respond to verbal or nonverbal feedback from the child about the touch and must immediately withdraw any touch which the child or youth seems to find uncomfortable.
- In general, hugs, lap sitting, and similar touching should be initiated by the child or youth rather than the adult, and should never occur without consent. The adult should respond to the child or youth's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection, and not base touching on their own emotional need.

- When playing games as a part of a UUSWH activity, particularly those that involve touch, participants must always be able to opt to observe rather than participate; guidelines for appropriate touch should be provided; and adults should remain vigilant about ensuring that consent is continual.
- Adult volunteers may be required to use temporary restraints in order to prevent a child or youth from harming himself or herself, or another child or youth. Such restraints should be gentle, used only when necessary, and reported to the REP and a parent or guardian.
- Any questionable behavior by other adults interacting with children or between children or youth should be discussed promptly with the REP or Minister(s).

#### **4. Off-Site and Evening Activities**

Events that happen outside the regular RE hour are highly prized by children and youth, and are central to the community building and social justice components of RE. In all cases, adults are expected to enforce the ground rules of the group. Generally written parental permission is required, regardless of age to ensure that parents and guardians know about events, and that we know how to contact them. **REP approval is required for all off site activities and field trips involving children and youth.**

- There will be advance communication with the parents and guardians of children and youth about the purpose, length, time, and place of the field trip.
- There must always be a minimum of two adults present for any event or activity. The REP in conversation with the minister(s) can make exceptions to this policy for small groups on field trips and service-learning trips. For groups larger than expected, RE volunteers should use best judgment and discretion concerning the need for additional adults. The following ratios should be used as guideline for groups:
  - **Preschool- Grade 5:**                      **1 adult for every 5 children**
  - **Middle School:**                              **1 adult for every 8 youth**
  - **High School:**                                  **1 adult for every 10 youth**
- All responsible adults should be aware of circumstances in which a child or youth requires special attention.
- Transportation to and from UUSWH is the responsibility of the child or youth's family.
- Transportation to Off-Site Events. The two-adult rule will be followed whenever possible for trips which begin at the UUSWH. However, exceptions may be approved by the REP or lead volunteer in conversation with minister(s) if necessary due to the length of travel, size of car, etc. In this case, the driver should be adults over the age of 25 and transport more than one child or youth at a time, and preferably travel in a multi-vehicle caravan. Children and youth traveling in cars must always wear seat belts when available, and drivers should ensure that their insurance provides suitable coverage. Each driver should carry a copy of the permission slips for all children and youth on the trip. Generally children and youth will not be permitted to change cars mid-trip

- On all field trips all children and youth will remain with the group; the REP, in conversation with minister(s), may make exceptions to this policy.
- A youth group party held at the home of a congregation member may be considered a UUSWH-sponsored event if done under the auspices of the RE program. If so, all church policies and procedures should be followed.

## 5. Overnight Events

The following provisions are in addition to those included in “**Off-Site and Evening Activities**” included above. Adults should balance young people’s need for autonomy with their need for structure and safety, and provide support as non-intrusively as possible. Adults should make every effort not to be alone with children or youth in private areas. If, for unanticipated reasons, an adult needs to be in a private area with a single child or youth, another adult should be called for to attend to the other children and youth in the area, as well as to provide a second set of eyes. Adults will also address general safety concerns, including cooking and fire safety, and building security. They will work to ensure that all young people stay with the group, follow safety guidelines, and play and interact safely.

- Youth and their parents should acknowledge, by a written agreement, that they will:
  - 1) Come to have a good time.
  - 2) Stay through end of event (REP and Youth Advisor Discretion)
  - 3) Not leave the building or designated areas.
  - 4) Not bring or use drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or weapons.
  - 5) Engage in no sexual or exclusive behavior.
- Youth will be housed in groups and the one-person/one sleeping bag rule is always in force. When possible, parents and guardians will be notified of the sleeping arrangements one week in advance of the trip. If changes must be made, an effort will be made to notify parents of the changes.
- Housing arrangements can be gender diverse and planners should seek gender diversity of adult chaperones to the extent possible.
- Youth who are dating one another or involved in a romantic relationship should be housed in separate rooms, unless there are at least five youth and two adults in the room. The REP and youth advisors are allowed to use their best judgment in such arrangements.
- In the event of housing in cabins or larger rooms, two adults should be present in each cabin that sleeps eight or more people. Adult supervision during sleeping hours should be decided by the REP in conversation with adult advisors and minister(s).

## *V. Fostering a Healthy Community, and Preventing Bullying, Abuse and Harassment*

Our commitment to our Unitarian Universalist Principles requires us to do our best to foster a healthy community. All children need and deserve acceptance, love, encouragement, discipline, consistency, stability and positive attention; and all adults need and deserve the opportunity to engage in a vibrant, safe community. Although no one can guarantee

complete safety, we can reduce risk by focusing on prevention, education, training, careful hiring, and congregation-wide safety procedures.

### **A. Education and Training**

Education and training are critical to the creation of a safe congregational environment. Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthy relationships based on self-esteem and respect for others. Greater understanding of sexuality and abuse will make us better able to avoid situations that could lead to abuse, and to move more effectively toward justice and healing for us all. To this end we believe it is important to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility among our children, our members and friends. We will provide programs as follows:

- a) The Minister for Religious Education and Religious Education (RE) Committee are responsible for:
  - Offering age-appropriate information about development and sexuality for our children, youth, and adults on a regular basis, including clarification and understanding of the complex aspects of sexuality, as well as focusing on sexual abuse prevention, and
  - Keeping employees, advisors, and parents informed of this policy and reviewing it at least annually.
- b) The Standing Committee is responsible for:
  - Promoting congregational awareness about this policy, and
  - Informing members and attendees of resources that address the issues of abuse, bullying, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

### **B. Hiring and Volunteer Recruitment**

Incidents of bullying, abuse and harassment often take place in the context of ongoing relationships. Therefore it is essential that recruitment and hiring procedures foster a healthy community, and protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, members and friends from injury as well as from unfounded accusations, and protect the congregation from ethical and legal liability.

All candidates for paid employment at UUSWH, including candidates for Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Ministerial Interns, Religious Education assistants, the Director of Music, Administrator, Sexton and all office staff will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee. In evaluating candidates who have cleared the initial review, the hiring committee will contact at least two references (at least one of whom has known the applicant for a minimum of five years) and maintain notes of each such contact, and conduct a criminal history record check, including a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) and such other multi-state records check as shall be available from alternative sources recommended from time to time by the Unitarian Universalist Association. The hiring committee shall conduct at least one formal interview with the candidate in person. The employment application and above reference material will be confidential and will be available only as required by law and to those responsible for screening and hiring, or participating in the Safe Congregation Team. Within five days from his or her hire, a candidate will be required to read and acknowledge receipt of a copy of the policy against harassment set forth in the Employment Manual.

Volunteers whose work will put them in frequent, close, unsupervised contact with children, Youth, and adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable to abuse or exploitation, shall also be screened under the procedures and pursuant to the standards for RE Volunteers set out in Section IV, above. Background checks on volunteers who will be working solely with vulnerable adult populations, rather than with children or Youth, will not be reviewed by the REP, but by the Senior Minister.

### **C. Disruptive Behavior**

The Unitarian University Society of Wellesley Hills, in agreement with the UUA principles, encourages the democratic process both within and outside the church. Striving to be an inclusive community, we embrace and encourage differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. As such, we cannot ignore behavior that interrupts that process; whether in worship, church groups, meetings or off-site church activities. Additionally, any action that creates concern for the physical or emotional safety of children or adults is considered disruptive behavior.

Disruptive behavior is to be addressed immediately by the leader of the meeting or worship service or church event in which it occurs. The person causing the disturbance will be asked to participate respectfully. If the disputant is unwilling to do so, they will be asked to withdraw from the meeting and leave the premises. If further assistance is required, the Wellesley Police are to be called. The incident shall be reported as soon as possible to the ministers, the chair of the Standing Committee and the chair of the Safe Congregation Team.

Subsequently, the Safe Congregation Team shall determine if further action is needed (i.e. if the disruptive behavior is likely to re-occur). The Team shall interview the disruptive person, the church leader who took action, and others in the meeting who might have perspective on the disruptive event. The Safe Congregation Team shall report to the Standing Committee with a recommendation of one of the four following responses:

- 1) No further action (beyond pastoral care for those involved)
- 2) A signed contract for clearly defined parameters of behavior
- 3) Temporary exclusion either from the church or specific church activities for a designated period of time
- 4) Exclusion from the church premises and all church activities indefinitely.

The Chair of the Standing Committee and the Senior Minister shall convey the response that is the decision of the Standing Committee to the person who engaged in the disruptive behavior, the church leader who took action, and the chair of the Safe Congregation Team.

### **D. Bullying Prevention and Response**

A positive and respectful atmosphere discourages bullying, and an immediate response to an instance of bullying prevents escalation. When children observe that adults intervene effectively, they are less likely to join in bullying. Stopping bullying takes courage for a child or youth, but when a peer demonstrates defender behavior, the perpetrator is denied the social reward, and it likely to quickly end, and is less likely to recur. This can be facilitated by encouraging children and youth to seek the assistance of an adult when they or

others are bullied. and that teaching them that reporting that another person is unsafe is not tattling.

Volunteers working with children and youth who observe the most common and less severe bullying behavior (such as teasing, name-calling), are encouraged to respond immediately in a manner appropriate to the child's age. By doing so they model and encourage behavior that shows bystanders how to become defenders, and prevent escalation of the behavior.

Because adults may be unaware of bullying until a serious incident occurs, Volunteers should not wait for a pattern to emerge before responding, and should thereafter seek assistance and support from the REP. Any child, youth, parent or adult member of the congregation who seeks assistance or support with respect to an incident of bullying should consult with the REP or minister, as appropriate.

Repeated instances of bullying should also be brought to the attention of the REP or of a minister. Resolution will include parents and guardians of minors, and may at the REP's minister's, or involved person's request, also include the Safe Congregation Team.

Consequences should be age-appropriate. Because bullying is not a conflict between equally powerful peers, but a form of aggression and peer abuse, resolution will not include such means as mediation, which is likely to cause further harm to the target.

Cyber-bullying differs from traditional bullying in that it can be done anonymously, a single event can be broadcast instantly, and it can be redistributed multiple times. It should therefore be treated as a serious incident. Accordingly, it should be immediately brought to the attention of the REP, minister, and the Safe Congregation Team, and support offered to all involved.

**Recommended steps for resolution are:**

- 1) Sharing the concern with all involved parties, including parents or guardians, and hearing each response.
- 2) Evaluating the degree of further response needed to adequately address the concern.
- 3) Moving toward reconciliation/resolution, including having the child or youth in question revisit and recommit to the Religious Education Covenant.

Additional action, including referral to the Safe Congregation Response Team is to be taken as determined to be appropriate in the case of more severe or repeated offenses.

***VI. Responding to Complaints of Abuse or Harassment***

Situations that may prompt a response regarding a complaint or concern about sexual or emotional harassment or emotional, sexual or physical abuse, include the following examples:

- A child, youth or adult reports possible abuse by a minister, staff member, member, family member, or other individual;
- A minister, staff member, member, friend, or attendee suspects that a child, youth or adult is being abused;
- A minister, staff member, member, friend or attendee learns that a member, friend or attendee (child, youth or adult) is under investigation for allegedly abusing others.



**A.** Any member or staff member of UUSWH who receives a report of such abuse or who personally observes or has reasonable cause to suspect such abuse should immediately bring it to the attention of the Senior Minister or Assistant Minister and, in the case of suspected or reported abuse of a child, the Religious Education Professional.

**B.** The immediate priority is the safety of the child, youth or adult alleged to be the victim. The child's immediate needs should be addressed, and if there is an immediate physical danger, the police should be contacted.

### ***VII. Reporting Child and Elder Abuse to Community Authorities***

It is not the function of the Ministers, Religious Educator, Chair of the Standing Committee or the Safe Congregation Team to conduct an investigation into accusations of child or elder abuse, sexual abuse, harassment. Rather it is both the law in Massachusetts and the policy of UUSWH that in any situation in which the Minister, Assistant Minister or REP has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected, an immediate report must be made to the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families (DCF), by telephone to the hotline that the DCF maintains for such purpose at 1-800-792-5200 and within 48 hours thereafter by way of a written report on the form promulgated by the DCF, a copy of which shall be provided to and kept on file by the Safe Congregation Team.

If the Senior Minister or Assistant Minister has reasonable cause to believe that a person aged 60 or over has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected, an immediate report must be made to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, by telephone to the hotline that the Executive Office of Elder Affairs maintains for this purpose at 1-800-922-2275, and a written report filed with Elder Affairs within 48 hours of the oral report.

Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, UUSWH will await the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint before taking any final actions.

Concurrently, it is the responsibility of the Safe Congregation Team to consider and adopt, in consultation with the Standing Committee as time permits, such interim actions as may be prudent to temporarily restrict the privileges and access of any alleged abuser who is a member, friend or visitor to UUSWH or any of its programs or the programs of those organizations that use or rent its facilities, as further outlined in the Section below titled 'Immediate Safety Needs Of The Congregation.'

In all cases the Senior Minister will also notify the Chair of the Standing Committee and the Mass Bay Area District Executive, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Senior Minister or a member of the Standing Committee will promptly notify UUSWH's insurance company.

### ***VIII. The Safe Congregation Team***

The Safe Congregation Team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of UUSWH. This Team will be composed of the Senior Minister, Assistant Minister, and three members of

UUSWH, one of whom shall be a member of the Standing Committee and all of whom shall be appointed by the Standing Committee. It is preferable that two of the members of the team be familiar with issues that are likely to arise, to include but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, human resources and legal issues.

In cases of a conflict of interest, a Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Their function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The Safe Congregation Team will generally have the following responsibilities:

- a) Become familiar with state laws regarding reporting of abuse.
- b) Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
- c) Evaluate applications for volunteers that are flagged by the Senior or Assistant Minister as needing more information or follow up.
- d) Receive allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations. See also the below section regarding Pastoral Needs of Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse.
- e) Establish a support committee for the alleged victim and the victim's family, if they are members of the congregation or attendees. Establish a separate support committee for the accused and the accused's family if they are members of the congregation or attendees.
- f) Develop Limited Access Agreements for participation when those are deemed appropriate.
- g) Work with the Music and Worship Committee, the Ministers and the Sunday Team Leaders to develop a policy for avoiding and/or responding to potential or actual disruption of church worship services and other church meetings and functions, and obtaining and conducting training sessions to enable the Sunday Team Leaders to respond effectively to such situations.
- h) Advise the Standing Committee on its determination of whether to communicate information about incidents of suspected or alleged abuse to the congregation, and if so, how much information to communicate and at what point during the investigation. This determination should consider both the interests and needs of the parties involved, as well as the interests and needs of others in the congregation.

The Safe Congregation Team will maintain confidentiality to the extent possible, while at the same time gathering the information necessary to enable it to ensure that adequate measures are taken to protect the safety and dignity of all concerned. The information it collects and the actions it takes may only be disclosed when the Team determines it to be necessary and appropriate.

## ***IX. Immediate Safety Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse***

### **A. Interim Safety Plan:**

When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child and the suspected abuser is a church employee, member or attendee, the Safe Congregation Team will develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of abuse. This plan may include, but not be



limited to implementation of a Limited Access Agreement, which may be developed with the assistance of legal counsel if the Senior Minister and Chair of the Standing Committee determine that such counsel should be obtained. If the accused abuser is another youth, the plan must be developed with input from both sets of parents or guardians. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser or, if a minor, his or her parents or guardians, by the Safe Congregation Team. The Senior Minister and/or Assistant Minister may implement similar steps while awaiting initial recommendations of the Safe Congregation Team.

**B. Ongoing Safety Plan:**

Upon final disposition by appropriate authorities, either a) an ongoing Limited Access Agreement will be developed by the Safe Congregation Team that among other provisions, complies with any orders imposed by such authorities; or b) the Interim Safety Plan will be ended.

***X. Pastoral Needs of the Congregation Regarding Reports of Abuse***

1) Following a report of suspected abuse, the Safe Congregation Team will also develop, in consultation with the Ministers, a plan to address the pastoral needs of our congregation, including:

a) The person or child who has allegedly been abused: This includes establishing a Support Committee for the alleged victim and his or her family. The Support Committee may provide information about or referrals to appropriate professional, community' and UUSWH or UU resources' as needed. The Support Committee members are not appointed to serve as advocates for an individual or family, and all must recognize that they do not serve in a confidential capacity with respect to law enforcement or social service agencies.

b) Other members and friends of our congregation, including

- Members, friends, or attendees immediately affected by the incident (such as family members or partners) whose needs we can help meet, either directly or indirectly;
- Other members and friends of the congregation who witnessed one or more incidents or, who having heard about them, are reminded of their own concerns and prior experiences; and
- Other congregation members and friends who are relied on to a great degree by the person or child who has allegedly been abused or accused offender, or those connected to them.

c) The accused person: If the accused person and his or her family is a member or attendee of the UUSWH, the Safe Congregation Team will establish a Support Committee for the accused and his or her family. The Support Committee may help the accused person access the appropriate professional, community and spiritual resources. While there may be feelings of ill-will toward the accused person, if that individual is a part of our community, he or she also deserves our support. It remains the mission of this congregation to recognize and support the integrity and inherent worth and dignity of that person even though we do not condone the alleged inappropriate behaviors, and to treat him or her with compassion.

The Support Committee members are not appointed to serve as advocates for an individual or family, and all must recognize that they do not serve in a confidential capacity with respect to law enforcement or social service agencies.

d) Other persons and children who have allegedly been abused and who have been reluctant to come forward: If warranted, the response plan will include a way of reaching out to these individuals in a manner that is non-threatening.

2) The plan established will be such that both the alleged victim or victims and other individuals are not put at risk for further incidents.

### ***XI. Guidelines Regarding Offenders***

1) If an individual has been accused or convicted of aggressive or violent conduct, including sexually aggressive or violent conduct, that situation will be addressed as follows:

a) If an individual has been accused of aggressive or violent conduct and is currently involved in civil or criminal litigation of such a charge, that individual will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved. a Limited Access Plan will be developed (see Appendix). Upon a final disposition of the case, a determination will be made based on the Court's verdict or judgment.

b) An individual who has confessed to, been convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of a sexual crime or other violent crime, or who has been determined to have engaged in any form of child abuse in any civil, criminal, administrative or ecclesiastical forum will not have contact with children or youth or the parties involved.

c) In the event that a person has been convicted of a sexual crime or a crime of violence, and has completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of the UUSWH, the Safe Congregation Team will meet to determine whether individual may be safely involved in the life of the congregation, and if so, any limitations on that involvement. If it is determined that the person can participate in congregation life, a Limited Access Plan will be developed.

d) In all cases the Safe Congregation Team, with approval of the Senior Minister and Chair of the Standing Committee, may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either an interim or permanent Limited Access Agreement.

## ***XII. Operational and Building Safety Measures***

### **A. Communications and Publications**

Our internal and external communications are intended to inform our members, invite and welcome newcomers, and highlight the positive experiences of shared community. However, publication of photographs, videos, and personal information in UUSWH publications - including its newsletter, its website, and similar online social media sites - may raise privacy concerns for some of our members, particularly as publication may include photographs or information regarding children and youth. To respect each member's concerns for safety and privacy:

#### **1. Use of Images and Personal Information**

The Office Administrator will maintain a list of any members and guests who do not want photographic or videographic images of themselves, or of their children, to be used for these purposes. Permission must be affirmatively given for publication of an image of a child or youth under the age of eighteen. The UUSWH will post an advisory announcement on its bulletin board, and periodically publish it in the newsletter, reminding those who do not wish their photos to be published that they may contact the Office Administrator to add their names to that list.

1. Photography and videography permission forms will be provided annually to parents and guardians as part of the RE registration materials, and signed permission forms will be retained by the REP. Any child for whom a permission form is not filed will be added to the list referenced above.
2. Before publishing any images of children or youth, the Newsletter Editor and the Webmaster verify that a signed permission form is on file.
3. Any image of, art work, caption or article from or about children or youth may contain only the child's or youth's first name. It may not contain the last name, age, school attended, or any other identifying information that would easily enable someone to identify or contact the child or youth unless there has been express parental permission for the specific publication. The standard permission form will not constitute such permission. However, parents should be aware that a photograph may be "tagged" in Facebook, and identifying information thus made public.
4. Before publishing any images of adults, the Newsletter Editor and the Webmaster will verify that no one on the opt-out list is included in a photograph.
5. Upon establishment of a password-protected, limited access website for the UUSWH, the permission form will allow members to specify the extent of permission to publish that is being granted.

#### **2. Communication with Children and Youth**

Although new technology and communications media allow more direct and efficient communication with youth and older children, they also present additional concerns regarding privacy and safety. Our goal is to model and facilitate communication that is consistent with our values and demonstrates respect for each person.

1. RE registration materials will annually ask each parent or guardian what media are permissible and preferred for communicating with junior high school youth and older children.
2. Staff and volunteers will generally communicate with junior high school youth and children through media that are accessible to their parents and guardians. Accordingly, their parents and guardians will be notified of any new social media site that is established or used (*e.g.*, a new Facebook site), and given instructions on how to join. To the extent reasonable and practical, e-mail to junior high school youth and children will also be addressed to parents and guardians.

### **3. Use of UUSWH Social Media Sites.**

All users of social media sites established by the UUSWH must respect and practice the principles of the UUSWH community. They must:

1. Communicate only in ways that are kind and respectful;
2. Report threatening or discomfiting materials to the REP and the Webmaster;
3. Respect the autonomy of each person, and their right to choose what information about themselves they wish to maintain as private;
4. Respect and protect the intellectual property of others, and refrain from plagiarizing others' work;
5. Not intentionally create, copy or transmit any material that is pornographic, threatening, rude, discriminatory, or meant to harass another;
6. Not intentionally create, copy or transmit any material that is illegal (such as illegal copies of copyrighted work);
7. Not use the resources in any other way that would violate the Code of Ethics.
8. Respect and protect the privacy of others by not using these sites to distribute sensitive private information about themselves and others. This includes information generally acknowledged to be sensitive – *e.g.*, social security numbers – as well as other personal information or opinion that has been shared in conversations and discussions that might reasonably be considered to have been confidential.
9. Not distribute passwords to unauthorized individuals.
10. Respect and protect the integrity, availability, and security of all electronic resources by observing all network security practices; promptly reporting security risks to the Webmaster; not destroy or damage data, networks, or other resources that do not belong to them.

## **B. Basic Requirements – Buildings and Grounds**

1. Both the Main Building and Rice House will be maintained in compliance with applicable building, fire and health codes.
2. First aid kits, fire extinguishers and an automated external defibrillator (AED) will be readily available within the church building at all times, and their locations clearly marked. They will be maintained by the Sexton in coordination with the House and Grounds Committee.
3. A list of congregation members and staff who have training in first aid, CPR, and use of an AED will be posted in each classroom and throughout the Church, and updated periodically.

4. Evacuation plans shall be posted by each exit within each classroom and at each exit within the church building. Evacuation plans will be reviewed with the Wellesley Fire Department on an annual basis.
5. Fire Exits and Lanes will be clearly marked, and kept free from obstructions, including ice and snow.
6. Illicit drugs and weapons are not permitted at church events or on church grounds at any time.
7. Child-proof plugs are to be placed in unused electrical outlets in the RE Space.
8. Smoke Detectors are hard-wired and checked at least as frequently as recommended by the Wellesley Fire Department.
9. The RE Committee, the Safe Congregation Team and the Ushering Team will annually meet and establish the schedule for unlocking and locking specific doors during worship services and other regularly scheduled events.

### **C. Entry Codes and Keys**

1. Anyone who requires possession of a key or entry code (“code”) (together or alternatively, “code/key”) to the Church or Rice House must:
  - a) Complete a Code/Key Application and Receipt Form, and agree to comply with all policies and procedures regarding building use and the UUSWH Safe Congregation Policy. The code system permits time-limited and/or room-specific entry, therefore, requests for codes will specify the time periods and rooms for which access is requested.
  - b) Have reason for possession of a code/key. By virtue of their positions, staff members are issued codes/keys to Rice House, Rice House office suite, and the Church that provide unlimited access (“24/7/365”). Members of the Standing Committee and members of the Building and Grounds Committee are presumed to need 24/7/365 codes/keys to the Church. Those running special events and UUSWH-related meetings are presumed to need an entry code to the relevant building for a reasonable time before and after the event or meeting. In all such cases the Office Administrator may approve the request for a Code/Key. The Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee and the Chair of the Standing Committee each have authority to approve other reasonable requests for codes/keys.
  - c) Must be responsible for the security of the code/key. Code/Key holders with 24/7/365 access must ensure it is not duplicated, shared or used by an unauthorized person. Those with single-event or limited recurring access may share codes as needed with participants to permit them to gain access to the event or meeting.
  - d) Use good judgment in determining how and when to open the building to attendees, particularly if there are expected to be children in attendance.
  - e) Control access to the Church and Rice House when using either after normal operating hours; and ensure that the premises are left in good order, and that the last group to leave extinguishes all lights, closes all windows, and locks all entrances.
  - f) Return the key when it is no longer needed or its return is requested. Codes will be made inactive after use is no longer approved.
2. The Office Administrator will manage code/key distribution, Code/Key Application and Receipt Forms; and will maintain records of code/key holder names, and the date each code/key is issued and returned. Members of the congregation who have submitted

a Code/Key Application and Receipt Form can request additional time-limited codes by telephone or e-mail, without the need to file an additional application. The Office Administrator will e-mail the code and a copy of the Code/Key use agreement.

3. The Building and Grounds Committee, in consultation with the Minister and the Standing Committee, will determine when keys to the Church and Rice House should be replaced. Codes will be replaced periodically.

#### **D. Training of Staff and Volunteers**

1. Staff, Teachers, Ushers, and volunteers who work with children will be trained annually on procedures required for drills and emergencies, and age-appropriate methods of evacuating children. All should always be cognizant of the staffing required to safely evacuate infants, toddlers, and small children during an emergency.

2. Emergency evacuation plans and designated meeting place are posted on or by each exit door in each classroom, and staff and volunteers should familiarize themselves with these plans.

3. Staff and volunteers should familiarize themselves with the location of first aid kits, alarms, fire extinguishers, and AEDs.

4. The Safe Congregation Team, the RE Committee, and the Ushering Team will develop an emergency evacuation instruction sheet, which will be periodically updated.

5. Chairs of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, the Ushering Team, the RE Committee and the Safe Congregation Team will develop and maintain a fire drill plan and, along with the Fire Department, annually hold at least one church-wide fire drill. After the drill, participants will be asked to give feedback regarding what worked well and where improvement is needed.

#### **E. Fire and Emergency Evacuation Process**

##### **1. Standard Procedure: When the alarm sounds:**

- a) Immediately leave the building through the nearest exit without stopping to collect coats.
- b) Walk briskly away from the building and, unless otherwise directed, assemble on the lawn at the far side of the Clock Tower. If there is a person near you who might need assistance, please offer such assistance or get additional help if necessary.
- c) If someone sitting near you is in a wheelchair or otherwise physically handicapped, locate another person for help, then proceed with the wheel- chair bound person out the nearest exit. If you must go down steps, turn the wheelchair backwards and with one person in the front and the other in the rear, guide the wheelchair down the steps.
- d) In the event of an emergency evacuation, all children will be escorted out of the building by their teachers. Parents should go outside and meet their child at the designated meeting space. They should not go into the building as this may create traffic that could block others' exits.

- e) Parents should find their children at the designated place. They should not take their child until the teacher has marked the child as signed out.
- f) In the event of an emergency evacuation due to a crime in the building, those who are not meeting anyone and can leave should do so immediately. They should go directly to the police station in case eye-witness information is needed. To keep the traffic lanes clear for emergency responders, do not try to exit the parking lot by car. If law enforcement personnel are on site everyone should follow their instructions.

## **2. Evacuation of Children**

Do a head count to account for all children and volunteers.

- a) Take the attendance and emergency contact information with you, and if possible, a cell phone and any medications provided for a child.
- b) Exit the building through the nearest emergency exit.
- c) If children must be evacuated through a window, one adult should go first to attend to the children as they are helped out of the window, and to assist the other adult.
- d) Proceed together to the meeting place on the far side of the clock tower.
- e) Do a head count to be sure all are accounted for.
- f) Check children off from the attendance list as they are released to their parents or guardians.
- g) If police or other emergency responders direct evacuation to another location, stay with the children and contact parents or guardians as soon as possible.

## **3. Suspicious/Dangerous Person on the Premises**

If you become aware of a suspicious or dangerous person or situation in the building:

- a) ***If at all possible, exit to a safe place, and call 911. Do NOT pull the fire alarm in a non-fire emergency.***
- b) If evacuation is not possible, find a safe place to hide or be shielded. Discreetly contact 911 and provide as much information as possible. Silence all cell phones.
- c) If you are working with children and youth, if at all possible, exit to a safe place and call 911. If evacuation is not possible, find a safe place to hide or be shielded. *Discreetly* contact 911 and provide as much information as possible. Silence all cell phones
- d) One adult should stay with the children and NEVER LEAVE THEM. A second adult may be able try to determine what is happening, and if reasonable, engage the person to thwart their access to the children or obtain assistance from another member of the congregation.
- e) Give continual feedback to children that adults are working to resolve the situation. Praise their cooperation and bravery in following directions. Remind them that you will not leave them.



## **F. Weapons and security.**

We strive to be open and inclusive, and at the same time to maintain a safe environment so that we all can worship freely. Everyone on UUSWH property or at a UUSWH-sponsored function shares the responsibility to help prevent and respond to acts or threats of violence, or other forms of intimidation or harassment, and to bring any concerns to the attention of the appropriate person or, in extreme cases, law enforcement. In all instances, the inherent worth and dignity of every person must be respected.

1. Members, staff and visitors are expected to refrain from all forms of physical or verbal fighting, or any other conduct that might reasonably be considered dangerous or harmful to others.
2. Members or visitors who have applied for or obtained a protective order or restraining order are urged to so advise the Senior Minister, so that the ministers and the appropriate members of the congregation can attempt to take precautionary steps to support him or her. Such requests will be treated confidentially to the extent possible while meeting this objective.
3. Firearms, weapons of any kind, and any other dangerous or illegal devices and substances are prohibited from UUSWH property and from UUSWH-sponsored events. This policy does not apply to law enforcement officers or uniformed security officers who have been hired by the church to help with security during an event.
4. Anyone who suspects that a person is carrying a weapon, or whose behavior appears threatening, should immediately contact an Usher, Greeter, Minister, the person in charge of the event, or any member of the Standing Committee. That official will use their best judgment to determine whether to approach the person and ask him/her to take the suspected weapon off the church property, whether to solicit additional assistance before approaching the person, or whether instead to immediately call for police assistance. If the person is approached, agrees to leave and does, the police should still be called as a precaution to ensure that he or she does not return. If the person refuses to take the weapon off of UUSWH property, then the person will be asked to leave, and the police must be called as a precaution. If the person refuses to leave, the police must be called to escort the person from the church property.
5. Anyone who finds him or herself involved in or witnessing a situation involving actual violence, an imminent threat of violence, or any situation that imminently threatens his or her safety or the safety of another, should immediately contact the police, and thereafter contact a minister, staff member, or other person for assistance. No one should ever assume that someone else has already called the police.
6. If the conflict presents a general threat to safety, the building should be immediately evacuated. When evacuating the church during an emergency, those meeting others should go to the far side of the Clock Tower in the park. If there is a crime in progress, those who are not meeting anyone, and are able to leave immediately, should go to the police station in case eye-witness information is needed. To keep the traffic lanes clear for emergency responders, do not try to exit the parking lot by car. If law enforcement personnel are on-site, follow their instructions.
7. The Standing Committee will periodically consult with and arrange trainings by law enforcement and emergency response experts on the best response to threats or acts of violence.



## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: CORI Policy**

**Appendix B: Entry Code/Key Application and Receipt**

**Appendix C: Procedures for developing a Limited Access Agreement.**

**Appendix D. Sample Limited Access Agreement.**

**Appendix E: Resources on Bullying**

## ***Appendix A: UUSWH CORI POLICY***

### **UUSWH CORI POLICY**

This policy is applicable to the criminal history screening by the Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills (UUSWH) of prospective and current employees, subcontractors, volunteers and interns, professional licensing applicants, and applicants for the rental or leasing of housing.

Where Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and other criminal history checks may be part of a general background check for employment, volunteer work, licensing purposes, or the rental or leasing of housing, the following practices and procedures will be followed.

#### **I. CONDUCTING CORI SCREENING**

CORI checks will only be conducted as authorized by the DCJIS and MGL c. 6, § 172, and only after a CORI Acknowledgement Form has been completed.

If a new CORI check is to be made on a subject within a year of his/her signing of the CORI Acknowledgement Form, the subject shall be given seventy-two (72) hours notice that a new CORI check will be conducted.

#### **II. ACCESS TO CORI**

All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential, and access to the information must be limited to those individuals who have a “need to know”. This may include, but not be limited to, hiring managers, staff submitting the CORI requests, and staff charged with processing job applications. The UUSWH will maintain and keep a current list of each individual authorized to have access to, or view, CORI. This list must be updated every six (6) months and is subject to inspection upon request by the DCJIS at any time.

#### **III. CORI TRAINING**

An informed review of a criminal record requires training. Accordingly, all personnel authorized to review or access CORI at the UUSWH will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

Additionally, if UUSWH is an agency required by MGL c. 6, s. 171A, to maintain a CORI Policy, all personnel authorized to conduct criminal history background checks and/or to review CORI information will review, and will be thoroughly familiar with, the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

#### **IV. USE OF CRIMINAL HISTORY IN BACKGROUND SCREENING**

CORI used for employment purposes shall only be accessed for applicants who are otherwise qualified for the position for which they have applied.

Unless otherwise provided by law, a criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant. Rather, determinations of suitability based on background checks will be made consistent with this policy and any applicable law or regulations.

#### **V. VERIFYING A SUBJECT'S IDENTITY**

If a criminal record is received from the DCJIS, the information is to be closely compared with the information on the CORI Acknowledgement Form and any other identifying information provided by the applicant to ensure the record belongs to the applicant.

If the information in the CORI record provided does not exactly match the identification information provided by the applicant, a determination is to be made by an individual authorized to make such determinations based on a comparison of the CORI record and documents provided by the applicant.

#### **VI. INQUIRING ABOUT CRIMINAL HISTORY**

In connection with any decision regarding employment, volunteer opportunities, housing, or professional licensing, the subject shall be provided with a copy of the criminal history record, whether obtained from the DCJIS or from any other source, prior to questioning the subject about his or her criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history record is also to be disclosed to the subject.

#### **VII. DETERMINING SUITABILITY**

If a determination is made, based on the information as provided in section V of this policy, that the criminal record belongs to the subject, and the subject does not dispute the record's accuracy, then the determination of suitability for the position or license will be made. Unless otherwise provided by law, factors considered in determining suitability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Relevance of the record to the position sought;
- (b) The nature of the work to be performed;
- (c) Time since the conviction;
- (d) Age of the candidate at the time of the offense;
- (e) Seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense;
- (f) The number of offenses;

- (g) Whether the applicant has pending charges;
- (h) Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof; and
- (i) Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the candidate or requested by the organization.

The applicant is to be notified of the decision and the basis for it in a timely manner.

#### **VIII. ADVERSE DECISIONS BASED ON CORI**

If an authorized official is inclined to make an adverse decision based on the results of a criminal history background check, the applicant will be notified immediately. The subject shall be provided with a copy of the organization's CORI policy and a copy of the criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history will also be revealed. The subject will then be provided with an opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the CORI record. Subjects shall also be provided a copy of DCJIS' Information Concerning the Process for Correcting a Criminal Record.

#### **IX. SECONDARY DISSEMINATION LOGS**

All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential and can only be disseminated as authorized by law and regulation. A central secondary dissemination log shall be used to record any dissemination of CORI outside this organization, including dissemination at the request of the subject.

## ***APPENDIX B: Entry Code/Key Application and Receipt Form***

### **ENTRY CODE/KEY HOLDER APPLICATION AND RECEIPT FORM**

I request an entry code ("code") and/or door key to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills (UUSWH)

( ) Main Church Building

( ) Rice House

( ) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

for the following reason:

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree that:

☐ ☐ I will adhere to all Building and Safe Congregation policies when using this code/key.

☐ ☐ I will not lend this code/key to anyone else, unless it is established for a group meeting, nor will I attempt to have a duplicate or duplicates made.

☐ I will return this key when I no longer have the organizational responsibility I now have which requires the use of a door key.

☐ ☐ I will control access to the Church when using the code/key after normal operating hours; and will ensure that the premises are left in good order, and that last group to leave extinguishes all lights, closes all windows, and locks all entrances. ☐

☐ I will return the key when it is no longer needed or its return is requested.

The UUSWH *Safe Congregation Policy* requires that this form, or a similar form, be completed annually as long as an individual is assigned a numbered and controlled key for the UUSWH.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For dates \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Code/Key issued: \_\_\_\_\_

Code/Key Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date key(s) returned: \_\_\_\_\_ Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Appendix C. Procedures for Working with a Person Who Has Engaged in Abuse or a Violent Crime.***

Because we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. We do not believe any person should be automatically excluded from participation because of their past actions. However, we have responsibility to insure the well-being of all of our attendees. The ability of some perpetrators to change their behavior is uncertain. If someone wishes to participate in this congregation who has been convicted of a violent crime, or determined to have abused a child or youth, we will welcome that individual. However, the person's participation may be limited to ensure the safety of all.

No adult person who has been convicted of, or who has an unresolved accusation of any sexual or violent misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any religious education or youth group activities. The response of the UUSWH to a convicted or accused adult offender's request to participate in congregational activities is to offer a Limited Access Agreement. Youth convicted or accused of sexual or violent misconduct shall be addressed in an age-appropriate way.

### **Procedure**

1. The Senior Minister shall meet privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The Senior Minister shall check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. If the person is a member of the congregation and has a partner who also attends the church, then the minister shall reach out to the partner as well. If the minister determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, the person should then be asked to meet with Safe Congregation Team.
2. The individual shall be asked to sign a release form so that the minister can contact his/her parole officer, and any current sex offender treatment provider or therapist, to determine their professional assessment of the likelihood that the person will re-offend, and whether additional restrictions beyond the standard Limited Access Agreement ought to be placed on the person's participation.
3. If the individual refuses permission to contact the parole officer or therapist, the congregation shall refuse participation in any congregation activity.
4. If the person's parole officer and therapist indicate that the person has completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is not at high risk for recidivism, the Safe Congregation Team shall develop a Limited Access Agreement.
5. If either the person's parole officer or therapist indicates that the person is at high risk for re-offending, involvement in our faith community shall be denied until treatment is successful at reducing the risk.
6. If the Safe Congregation Team recommends that a Limited Access Agreement be in place they shall then set up a small group, including the minister, two persons who have

agreed to offer support for the offender by accompanying them in worship and other church activities, someone with expertise or experience in this field, and someone to represent the wider church community.

7. Any person who is asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement and refuses to do so, shall be denied access to congregational functions and church property.
8. The Safe Congregation Team will meet at least quarterly with any person with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. It may seek and obtain updates from the person's parole officer and/or therapist.
9. If any member of the Safe Congregation Team, Minister, REP, or Chair of the Standing Committee steps down from that role, they must inform their successor of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved.
10. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement shall result in denial of access to church property and future church functions.
11. Copies of files including Limited Access Agreement information shall be kept in a secure file drawer by the Senior Minister.

If it is determined that any person should have restricted access to children, youth or other populations, he or she shall be required to sign a limited access agreement, and shall not be allowed to have access to children, youth or other populations except as consistent with that agreement. The Senior Minister, the Safe Congregation Team and the Standing Committee Chair shall determine if a limited access agreement is necessary, and the terms of that agreement.

**Sources: Piedmont UUC, Peidmont NC accessed at  
<[http://puuc.org/images/PUUC\\_Safe\\_Cong\\_Policy-without\\_procedures.pdf](http://puuc.org/images/PUUC_Safe_Cong_Policy-without_procedures.pdf)>**

**And <<UUA, <http://www.uua.org/safe/children/appendices/23512.shtml>>>**

***Appendix D. Sample Limited Access Agreement (based on UUA Model) To be modified to fit the circumstances of the case.***

***Limited Access Agreement—Confidential***

**Introductory paragraph in a case involving allegations, but no confession, conviction or court finding:**

The UUSWH affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, a serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you. While this allegation is being investigated, in order to protect the children and youth in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances.

**Introductory paragraph in a case involving an individual who has confessed to or been convicted of a violent crime or of a sex offense:**

The UUSWH affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of all and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

**Agreement:**

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- a) You must refrain from any physical contact with children and youth.
- b) You must not participate in, volunteer for or chaperone events for children or youth, including religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, and driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- c) You must remain in the presence of another adult who knows of this agreement at all times when children are in the church building.
- d) You must not enter into conversations with children.
- e) You may not enter the RE wing on Sunday mornings.



- f) UUSWH must provide safety for a variety of groups that use the building during the week. To that end, you may not enter the church building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session.
- g) You may not possess or borrow a key to any church building.

The UUSWH will respect your privacy and right to confidentiality. Our primary responsibility, however, is to ensure that the church is a safe place for children and youth. Please consider the Minister and the Minister for Religious Education to be your points of contact should further developments or questions arise. You are required to contact them in advance of the service or activity.

Any person affected by this process has the right to appeal to the Safe Congregation Team. The Safe Congregation Team will convene within ten days to consider the appeal. The decision of the Safe Congregation Team in this regard is final upon a majority vote at a legally constituted meeting.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect those for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

I have reviewed this agreement and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this agreement will be reviewed every six months and will remain effective until modified or rescinded.

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

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Minister for Social Justice and Religious Education: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Board Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Appendix E. Resources on Bullying.***

Bullying involves a power imbalance that makes it difficult for the target to defend herself or himself, and the bullying itself involves the use of verbal or physical aggression to increase power. It cannot be treated as a mere conflict between equals. Bystanders - all who witness an act of bullying - play an important role in bullying. Even if they do not actively support the bullying, their silence is taken as approval, and provides a social reward to the bully. In the majority of cases in which bystanders do intervene, the incident of bullying ends quickly.

Some individuals are targeted for bullying because of personal characteristics such as their race, ethnic background, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, emotional or physical disability, or weight.

For example, studies show that 78 to 86 percent of LGBT students experience verbal harassment in their schools because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Nearly one quarter of LGBT students report being physically attacked in school. Children with a disability have been found to be two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers. One study shows that 60 percent of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly compared with 25 percent of all students.

Bullying is a problem throughout the lifespan, and has the potential for long-term consequences for all involved, including the bully, the victim, and the bystanders. Children who learn how to acquire power through aggression may transfer these lessons to other forms of harassment and aggression, such as workplace bullying and spousal abuse. Children who are bullied are likely to suffer significant emotional and physical consequences, and are at high risk for depression and suicide.

### **Recommended Resources:**

#### **Eyes on Bullying**

Eyes on Bullying in Early Childhood, Kim Storey, EdD, Ron Slabey, PhD. Accessed at <<http://www.eyesonbullying.org/pdfs/eob-early-childhood-508.pdf>>

Eyes on Bullying Toolkit, Kim Storey, EdD. Ron Slaby, PhD., Melanie Adler, Jennifer Minotti, and Rachel Katz, at Education Development Center, Inc. © 2008, 2013. Accessed at << <http://www.eyesonbullying.org/pdfs/toolkit.pdf> >>

#### **Essex County District Attorney**

*Stop Bullying Before it Starts, A Bullying Prevention Project.* Richard Coles, JD, and Nancy Mullin, MEd, Office of Essex District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett, Revised May 2011. Accessed at << <http://www.mass.gov/essexda/prevention-and-intervention/juvenile-prevention/19-20-stop-bly-guide-v10.pdf> >>