



Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES

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Policy Overview

Policy 1 – Program Administration Policy

- The Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth (DRECY) is responsible for the Child & Youth Protection Program, but can delegate responsibilities to others.
- Other UUC leadership groups may provide support, including conflict resolution.
- Parent involvement is critical to the effectiveness of the Program.
- The UUC Coordinating Team approves the Policies and the DRECY develops the associated Rules and Procedures.
- The DRECY will periodically assess the effectiveness of the Program, but is dependent on Volunteers, parents, and other staff members to assure that everyone follows the Policies, Rules, and Procedures.
- If an incident occurs, confidentiality and control of communications are necessary to protect all the parties involved.

Policy 2 – CYRE Staff and Volunteer Recruitment and Training Policy

- CYRE staff (hereafter known as “Staff”) and Volunteers in Leadership positions (hereafter known as “Leaders”) must complete screening applications and sign a covenant agreeing to adhere to the Policies
- The DRECY will perform background checks and evaluate each Staff member and Leader to assess his or her capability to work with our minors.
- The Policies, Rules, and Recommendations will be available for Staff, Leader, Volunteer and parent reference, and appropriate training will be provided as needed.

Policy 3 – Safety & Health Protection Policy

- Parents must complete registration forms for each minor annually, including emergency contact names and numbers, as well as any special needs or restrictions.
- First aid kits will be available and emergency evacuation maps will be posted. A fire drill will be held at least once per year.
- Rules will be developed for Leader-to-minor ratios, safety and health, release of children after CYRE classes or events, and administering medication.
- Facility inspections will be performed annually to find and correct safety and health hazards.
- The Big Four (No use of illegal or controlled substances nor improper use of legal medications, No engaging in sexual relations, No bringing or using weapons, and No use of violence in words and actions) will be enforced with all church functions, on and off-site, including travel to and from the locations.

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Policy 4 – Travel Safety Protection Policy

- Drivers will be qualified to transport minors, and parents will be required to provide written approval for their minor to be transported by a driver who is under age 25.
- Leaders will have emergency information for each minor and will be responsible for the minors assigned to them.
- The DRECY will determine if additional, special Rules are required for the trip and all minors will be trained on any applicable Rules.

Policy 5 – Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse Protection Policy

- Corporal punishment will never be used to discipline a minor.
- Behavioral Rules, based on Unitarian Universalist Principles, will be developed for both minors and for Leaders.
- Neither harassment nor implied physical, emotional or sexual abuse will be tolerated.
- There must be at least two Leaders with the minors at all times, except in special situations where the individual Leader and minor(s) must be in plain sight or hearing distance of other Leaders.
- Any Leader accused of having abused a minor will be treated as a High Risk Individual until the incident has been completely resolved.
- Rules will be developed for publication of minor pictures and names and for supervision of minors during overnight events.

Policy 6 – High Risk Individual Protection Policy

- Known offenders must make their status known to the UUCC Senior Minister.
- The UUCC Senior Minister and DRECY together will be responsible for determining if an individual poses a high risk to our minors, and for developing a plan to assure that they do not come in contact with the minors.
- Anyone who has reason to believe that a High Risk Individual has tried to access minors will advise the UUCC Senior Minister who will take appropriate action to protect the minors.

Policy 7 – Incident Management Policy

- Immediate care will be given to minors who are affected by an accident, health or abuse incident, including seeking professional treatment if needed.
- A written incident report will be filed and the DRECY will take the lead in notifying parents and authorities as required.
- Each incident will be evaluated by the DRECY or the authorities and lessons learned will be documented as part of the incident report.

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Policies Preface

The Child and Youth Protection Policies of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte were developed based on:

- Existing church policies;
- Policies recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association;
- Policy models provided by other churches; and
- The advice of experts in the field of safety, insurance, social services and education.

The Policies were developed by our staff, teachers/advisors, parents and individuals with specialized expertise within our congregation, and were approved by the UUCS Board of Trustees in 2004. (Note: With the change in governance in 2006, the UUCS Coordinating Team replaced the Board as the church's policy approving body.)

Prevention is our major goal in child and youth protection. However, when an incident does occur our response will fall within the areas of truth, compassion, support, affirmation and protection against further harm. These Policies will help protect our minors, and will also protect our Staff and Volunteers from the possibility of unfounded accusations. The policies are intended to assure complete compliance with North Carolina State and Federal laws and, in the case of conflict between the Policies and these laws, the laws will govern.

These Policies, together with the following documents, are integrated into our comprehensive Child and Youth Protection Program:

1. Child and Youth Protection Program Definitions, (Policies Attachment 1), which define the scope of applicability of the Program and clarify the associated terminology
2. Child and Youth Protection Rules which include specific instructions and limitations developed by the DRECY in response to directives from the UUCS Coordinating Team and/or CYRE Team.

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1. Program Administration Policy

A) Program Responsibilities

- 1) The UUCC Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth (DRECY) shall assume primary responsibility for development and implementation of the Program.
- 2) The UUCC Children and Youth Religious Education Team shall resolve any conflicts that may arise between the DRECY and others on the implementation of the Program.
- 3) If an acceptable resolution cannot be achieved when resolving conflict, then the UUCC policies on mediation shall be utilized.
- 4) The DRECY may select others to assist her/him with implementation of the Program and assign responsibilities to them as needed.
- 5) Support shall be sought from UUCC Teams that specialize in areas associated with the Program (e.g., counseling and support and communications).
- 6) Parents shall take an active role in the implementation of the Program as part of the total Minor interaction team.
- 7) The UUCC Senior Minister may assume overall lead responsibility for the Program when the DRECY is unable to do so or is the subject of an incident investigation. If the UUCC Senior Minister is unable to assume this responsibility, then applicable church policies addressing succession shall govern.

B) Program Development and Approval (Refer to Policies Attachment 3)

- 1) The DRECY and the UUCC Children and Youth Religious Education Team shall select a diverse group (Task Force) of parents, teachers, advisors, staff and experts in fields associated with child and youth protection to develop the Program Policies.
- 2) The UUCC Coordinating Team shall approve the Program Policies and any subsequent changes in the Program Policies.
- 3) To develop the associated Program Rules and Procedures, the DRECY may select working groups composed of individuals who implement specific Program Policies. The DRECY shall approve the Program Rules and Procedures and may make changes to them without task force involvement. Any changes will be documented with written justification.
- 4) Anyone implementing the Program may propose Program recommendations for its use. The DRECY may approve any Program recommendations as Rules as well as respond to Frequently Asked Questions. The DRECY may continue to update Rules throughout the year as needed.
- 5) Parents shall sign a covenant agreeing to abide by the Program and to take appropriate actions to assure compliance by their minors.

C) Program Assessment and Improvement

- 1) The DRECY shall lead annual assessments of the Program, with the support of the UUCC Children and Youth Religious Education Team, teams of advisors and/or special task forces. As part of their annual report to the UUCC Coordinating Team, the DRECY shall summarize their findings and recommendations for improvement.

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- 2) The DRECY shall periodically assess the Program implementation to assure compliance by Staff and Volunteers, and to provide clarification of requirements and guidance on best implementation practices.
- 3) Parents, Staff and Volunteers shall assist one another by recognizing situations where the Program is not being properly implemented, and provide feedback to help determine how to address specific situations.
- 4) If concerns about Program implementation cannot be mutually resolved by those using it, then a complaint shall be submitted to the DRECY.
- 5) Church staff and Leaders, as well as parents, have the right to enter any minor function to assure that the Program is being properly implemented.

D) Documentation, Confidentiality, and Communication

- 1) Important documents identified by the DRECY shall be maintained in locked file cabinets for a period of at least 3 years. Access to the documents shall be on a need-to-know basis as determined by the DRECY and / or UUCS Senior Minister.
- 2) The details of a specific accusation or complaint shall be treated in complete confidence with only a need-to-know basis for their release. The DRECY and / or UUCS Senior Minister shall determine the timing and extent of disclosure of information unless directed otherwise by law enforcement, other government agencies or insurance company authorities.
- 3) Communication with the public, (e.g., the media), on specific incidents shall be managed by the UUCS Senior Minister.

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2. Staff and Volunteer Recruitment and Training Policy

The following apply to all staff and Leaders who will work with our children and youth

- a) Each individual shall complete an application providing details for background checks, a summary of their qualifications, a release to perform background checks and a signed covenant stating that they understand and will comply with the Policies.
- b) Each individual shall have been actively associated with the church for a minimum of 6 months before they may begin their work.
- c) A background check shall be performed on each individual to the extent determined by the DRECY.
- d) The DRECY shall perform an evaluation of each individual to determine how they may best work with children and youth, as well as to determine if limits need to be applied to their interaction with minors.
- e) A copy of the Program Policies shall be made available to each family, along with Staff and Volunteers, for self-study.
- f) A copy of the Program Rules and Procedures shall be maintained in the church for reference by parents, staff and Volunteers.
- g) The DRECY shall provide Program training to Staff and Volunteers as needed, based on their specific areas of responsibility.
- h) Visitors wishing to observe church classes or events will be exempted from these requirements provided they are escorted by an approved Staff member or Leader.

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3. Safety & Health Protection Policy

- a) Parents shall complete annual registration forms for each minor, including emergency contacts, insurance information, summaries of allergies, special diet instructions and other key information as identified by the DRECY.
- b) Parents shall advise the DRECY of any concerns associated with their minor. Together, they will work out a plan to address these issues and will advise the appropriate Leaders so that they can be proactive in fulfilling the plan.
- c) First aid kits shall be made available to Staff /Volunteers in convenient, defined locations. Maps showing escape routes shall be posted in key locations so that each group knows what exit to take and where they are to assemble afterwards. Fire drills shall be held at least annually.
- d) Rules shall be established for ratios of Leaders-to-minor, based on such factors as ages of the minors and specific activities.
- e) Staff, Volunteers and minors shall adhere to established safety and health Rules, which shall be posted and explained to them as needed throughout the year.
- f) Release of children to the responsibility of others shall be in accordance with established Rules, as well as in accordance with parental requests.
- g) Medications shall be administered to minors only in accordance with established Rules, including parental permission.
- h) An inspection of the church buildings and grounds shall take place at least annually to assure that the physical surroundings are in compliance with the Program and any applicable insurance company and regulatory requirements.
- i) Rules shall be developed to enforce the Big Four (No use of illegal or controlled substances nor improper use of legal medications, No engaging in sexual relations, No bringing or using weapons, and No use of violence in words or actions).

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4. Travel Safety Protection Policy

- a) Drivers transporting minors shall: have a valid driver's license; have active automotive liability insurance; and be qualified to operate the vehicle that they will drive. The DRECY may perform motor vehicle record searches as needed to assess the driver's ability to safely transport our minors.
- b) Drivers shall obey all traffic laws.
- c) Vehicles transporting minors must be in compliance with North Carolina laws.
- d) Parents must give permission for any minors under 25 years of age to transport their minors.
- e) The DRECY shall determine special child and minors protection Rules for managing minors when traveling and advise all staff and Leaders who will accompany those minors.
- f) All safety precautions and minor behavior Rules shall be reviewed with the Minors before the trip and as needed thereafter.

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5. Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse Protection Policy

- a) Corporal punishment shall never be used to discipline a minor.
- b) The Unitarian Universalist Principles shall be followed by all Staff and Volunteers working with our minors. Behavior Rules, based on UU Principles, shall be established for Staff, Volunteers, and minors.
- c) Staff, Volunteers, and minors shall never emotionally harass any minor or adult, or threaten or imply physical, verbal or sexual action, even in jest.
- d) There shall be at least two adult Leaders with the minors at all times, except in special situations where the individual Leader and minor(s) must be in plain sight or hearing distance of other Leaders.
- e) Anyone accused of abuse or anyone who repeatedly harasses a minor shall be treated as though they are a High Risk Individual until the DRECY has completed their evaluation, which may include investigations by law enforcement, other government agencies and/or insurance authorities.
- f) Publication of minor pictures, as well as listing their names and other pertinent information, (e.g., phone numbers), shall be limited by Rules as well as specific limitations for a minor as requested by their parents.
- g) Staff and Leaders shall adhere to established Rules for supervising minors during overnight events, including appropriate separation of youth during sleep times and other privacy measures.

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6. High Risk Individual Protection Policy

- a) Known Offenders shall make their status known to the UUCC Senior Minister, along with any terms of their probation, parole or special instructions of the Court.
- b) Anyone who knows of a Known Offender in the congregation, or otherwise has reason to believe that an individual should not be in contact with minors, shall advise the UUCC Senior Minister.
- c) The Senior Minister and DRECY, collectively, shall assure that those who they believe could be a possible threat to our minors are not on the list of approved Staff and Volunteers maintained by the DRECY. The Senior Minister shall work with the DRECY to develop a plan for each High Risk Individual to assure that the individual does not have access to our minors.
- d) The UUCC Senior Minister shall take appropriate action to counsel, or refer to other counselors, High Risk Individuals to assist them with coping with their illness, as well as to supervise the adherence to their limited access plan.
- e) Anyone who has reason to believe that a High Risk Individual has attempted to access minors, or otherwise has disregarded Rules that limit their access, shall advise the UUCC Senior Minister.
- f) Should a High Risk Individual fail to adhere to their plan, or otherwise become an unacceptable risk, the UUCC Senior Minister and DRECY, collectively, shall request that the individual not return to the church or any off-site church function.

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7. Incident Management Policy

- a) In all accidents, health and abuse incidents, or intentional violation of the Big Four, the Leaders responsible for the minor shall immediately advise the DRECY.
- b) To the best of their ability, responsible Leaders shall perform first aid and provide emotional support to the affected Minor until further help arrives.
- c) In cases of an accident, the DRECY or assigned Leader shall determine if professional help is required beyond the first aid that can be administered at the time. The medical and/or dental contacts on the minor's application shall be notified. In cases where no contact is provided, the DRECY may choose the appropriate medical or dental professionals.
- d) The parents of the affected minor will be contacted as soon as possible in cases of serious accidents, illnesses, incidents of abuse, or intentional violation of the Big Four. Others not directly associated with the incident shall be advised, on a need-to-know basis, that an incident has occurred and what steps are being taken to address it.
- e) The DRECY, with the assistance of the UUCS Senior Minister and the UUCS Congregational Care Team, shall provide emotional and spiritual support, as well as provide guidance on available counseling services, to the affected minor, Leaders, other minors and parents.
- f) All incidents shall be documented by the DRECY. An incident report shall be completed for all serious accidents, health and abuse incidents and all intentional violations of Rules.
- g) Any serious accidents, health and abuse incidents that are covered by an incident report shall be reported to the appropriate parties (e.g., the UUCS Senior Minister, the UUCS Coordinating Team, the CYRE Team, the insurance company and government authorities).
- h) The DRECY shall investigate all reported incidents and provide Rules for resolving any outstanding issues. The results shall be documented and provided to all receiving the incident report. The evaluation may be supplemented or performed in entirety by government and insurance company representatives as defined by law and insurance policy instructions.
- i) In compliance with North Carolina's mandatory reporting law, any suspicions of abuse or neglect should be reported to the CYRE, who shall follow stated procedures.

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POLICY ATTACHMENT 1
CHILD AND MINORS PROTECTION PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

1. **Parent** – a natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a child or minors.
2. **Staff** – any person hired by the church to work with children and/or minors.
3. **Leader** – any individual approved by the DRECY to be responsible for minors, **including but not limited to teachers and youth advisors.**
4. **Volunteer** – any non-paid person who works with our minors. All Leaders are Volunteers but not all Volunteers qualify as Leaders.
5. **Adult** – a person 18 years and older.
6. **Child** – typically, any minor below the age of 12.
7. **Minors** – typically, any minor between, and including, the ages of 12 and 17, or any minor who is still in high school.
8. **Minor** – both children and youth collectively. When child or youth is noted in lieu of minor, the policy only applies to them and not the other.
9. **Travel** – any church activity away from church property.
10. **Serious Accident or Illness** – one that requires medical or dental care.
11. **Known Offender** – an individual who has been convicted of child abuse, reckless endangerment of a minor, or other related offenses.
12. **Publication** – documents sent through the mail, or similar delivery service; printed in newspapers, or other similar documents; or posted to a web site or sent via email.
13. **Harassment** – verbal or non-verbal abuse or ridicule, offensive physical contact, displaying or distributing pornographic or offensive materials, attempted or actual intimate physical contact, demanding favors (sexual or otherwise), or hazing.
14. **Illegal or controlled substances** - Alcohol, tobacco products or illegal drugs.
15. **Improper use of legal medications** - Over-the-counter medications may only be used with permission and used as directed on the package. Minors may only take a prescription drug if it is listed on his/her permission form.
16. **Sexual relations** - Inappropriate sexualized / intimate touching that is disrespectful to the community and event goals.
17. **Weapons** - firearms, knives, fireworks, or any object that is intended to be a weapon.
18. **Violence** – threatening acts either in words or in physical actions that cause another to feel fear or lowers their self-esteem.



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**POLICY ATTACHMENT 3
CHILD AND MINORS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MAP**

