

Toward a Safer Congregation

Policies and Procedures for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct,
Physical Abuse and Harassment,
and Policies and Procedures for Risk Management



FY 2017

Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst
PO Box 502
121 North Pleasant Street
Amherst, MA 01002

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Acknowledgements

In 2005 the Unitarian Universalists Association of Congregations put out a call to its membership urging them to create Safer congregation Policies. The first official policy of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst was created then by a committee of Tom Fricke, Karen Mack, Susan Barbaro and Alison Wohler.

In addition for this updated version of the policy, we consulted with Kim Sweeney, the New England Region UUA Faith Formation and Safer congregations representative. She guided us to the Religious Institutes website Sexually Safer Best Practice Congregations: <http://www.religioustudies.org/safer-congregations/> from which we also gleaned guidance for this document.

We have worked on this document with the great hope that our whole congregation will read it thoroughly and adhere to its sound guidelines to help us all, to the greatest extent of our abilities, ensure a safe environment for all of our congregation members, most especially our most vulnerable members.

The Safer Congregation Policy Task Force,

Ashley Carter, Karen Fisk, Rebecca Fricke, Tom Fricke, and Susan Barbaro
June 2016

Philosophy

As Unitarian Universalists we strive to create an environment that diligently protects people of all ages from harm even as it joyfully promotes their spiritual and ethical growth. We gather to celebrate both the individual and the communal—neither rising above the other but cohabitating in beloved community.

It is important to remember though that a variety of potential dangers are inherent in operating a meetinghouse. These include hazards in the physical site, including building and grounds; operation of the religious education program; transportation and supervision of children and youth off-site; and instances of disruptive behavior involving guests, members, and/or staff of the UUSA.

It is both uncomfortable and sad that we need to think about potential danger within our meetinghouse, but too often we find out too late what we could have done to protect ourselves and our congregation. We all want to believe that our faith community is a place where everyone acts out of good will and believes in forgiveness, and where nothing bad ever happens. Unfortunately injurious behavior does happen and our congregation has as much potential to contain all the ills of our society as it certainly contains all the good.

We believe our congregation can respond effectively to the challenge of keeping all in the safest possible circumstances, especially if they are aware of the guidelines for best practices. And so this document presents those guidelines for all to keep in mind.

Responsibility and Commitment

As a covenantal society, we make many promises to each other that help each and all of us continue to grow and learn and become better individuals and better community members.

We are aware of the prevalence of sexual and physical abuse and harassment in our culture; it crosses gender, race, and class lines. There are survivors of sexual and physical abuse in our congregation, and statistics indicate that others, including many of our children, are at risk. We as a congregation must address these issues.

We, the Safer Congregation Taskforce, hold that it is the responsibility of the whole congregation to keep us all safe, to pay attention, and to work at preventing especially sexual and physical abuse and harassment. To this end we ask our congregation to accept the responsibility of educating ourselves and our children about sexual and physical abuse, molestation, harassment, and exploitation. We also ask the congregation to pledge to do our best to protect those who are at risk and to support those in crisis.

Simple steps in creating a Safer Congregation include adhering to the policies explained in this document, continuing to offer OWL: Ours Whole Lives Sexuality Education to our members at all levels (K-1, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, Young Adult, and Adult), continuing to explore our personal and communal spiritual development through worship, caring for each other, and putting our faith into action through justice work.

Regarding these issues, the Safer Congregation Task Force pledges to conduct ourselves in a manner that conveys mutual respect and consideration and we seek support from this congregation to also pledge this manner of being.

Our UU Principles and Sexually Safer Practices

This policy manual is grounded in the Principles of our religious community, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Every person's sexuality is sacred and worthy of respect; therefore, it is not to be violated.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

We treat others, as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence are wrong.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

Accepting each other as we are means doing no harm and fostering well-being in one's self and others.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is as important as the responsibility for it.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

As a community and an institution, we are responsible for creating a secure, safe, and non-violent environment.

The goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty, and justice in human interactions, and we can become a model for the rest of society.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

When we respect each person's sexual integrity, we honor the wholeness of life and respect the web of all existence.

What is a Safer Congregation?

A Safer Congregation has put into place policies that strive to make the space within the congregation and activities outside the building with congregational staff and volunteers proceed at the lowest possible risk for sexual misconduct.

Keeping Children Safe <http://www.uua.org/safe/children/23441.shtml>

Safer congregations <http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook>

The UUSA Safer Congregation Policy

1) Guidelines for reporting suspicions of abuse and neglect

Any teacher or youth group leader who suspects abuse should contact both the DRE and the Minister with their concern immediately, so that required actions will be implemented. If a teacher or youth group leader has reason to suspect that a child would be endangered by returning home, and they cannot reach the Minister or the DRE, the adult should contact the police immediately, and then leave an emergency message for the Minister and DRE. The Minister and DRE need to contact the Safer Congregation Ministry to keep them informed.

All paid employees working with children are mandatory reporters. They are required to report suspicions of sexual or physical abuse to the Department of Social Services [DSS] (Tel. 1-800-792-5200). Accordingly they are protected from liability in the event of a false report. Volunteers are not mandated reporters and do not have the same liability protection.

It is not the function of the congregation—neither the minister, the religious educator, the chair of the board or any member—to conduct a formal investigation into a case of alleged abuse. If a child tells you a story, listen carefully and affirm their courage for telling you. Do not ask investigative questions, which can hurt prosecution at a later time. Tell the child that you will contact the minister, the DRE, and the Safer Congregation Ministry and that you will help them get help.

2) Number of adults/youth in RE Classes

- a) At least 2 unrelated adults must be present with children and youth at all times
- b) 1 adult and two youth (ages 13-18) may work with children.
- c) Two youth (ages 13-18) may work with children if there is a responsible adult to check in on them periodically
- d) Adult volunteers to work with youth must be at least 25 years old

3) The only adults permitted to remain in the RE area during RE are:

- a) Trained and screened volunteers
- b) UUSA staff
- c) Invited guests, approved ahead of time by the DRE
- d) Parents with approval from teacher

4) Medical and emergency safety

- a) RE will have an evacuation plan and it should be rehearsed.
- b) First aid kit stocked and accessible and everyone knows where it is. Teachers must know where phones are located
- c) Emergency contact information and medical release form for each child will be a part of registration process. Registration and Visitor Forms will also include requests for allergy information and special medical needs.
- d) The DRE will be the "safety captain." She or he will be in charge in emergencies, have the contact information and medical releases readily available and lead emergency evacuations. DRE will appoint another person to be safety captain when she or he is not there.

5) Toddler bathroom and diaper policy

- a) In the unlikely event that an infant or toddler needs a diaper changed during RE, we will send a volunteer into the service to bring down a parent
- b) A potty trained child who needs assistance in the bathroom will be accompanied by a UUSA staff member or screened volunteer. They will use the east bathroom and leave the door open while they assist the child.

6) Volunteer screening

All adult volunteers for RE programs must:

1. be a Friend or Member of UUSA for 6 months. DRE may waive 6 month rule only in concert with the RE Ministry and must have a signed waiver on file
2. complete and sign Screening Forms and Code of Ethics
3. attend RE Volunteer training program
4. be 25 years of age or older to work with youth

7) RE Volunteer training program will include:

1. Reading on awareness of abuse and signs of abuse
2. Guidelines for reporting suspicions of abuse
3. Clear instruction on the 2 adult policy
4. First aid and emergency evacuation awareness

8) RE staff and volunteer CORI checks - All paid RE staff, including the Minister, and volunteers who work with children or youth outside of regular RE hours will have criminal background checks through the CORI system at least every 3 years. The DRE and the Minister will keep the results of background checks confidential and in a locked file for each volunteer. Companies that conduct background checks: Oxford Document Management Company - <http://www.oxforddoc.com/> and Church Mutual Insurance - http://www.churchmutual.com/index.php/choice/risk/page/rm_SN_04/id/39

Modeling a Manner of Being

We look to the Minister, DRE, and Staff of the UUSA to model a manner of being, showing us all how to be our best selves, striving at all times to adhere to the principles and practices of Unitarian Universalism, and working to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of our congregation. To this end, we ask that all staff be reminded annually of their code of ethics.

Code of Ethics for Minister

The Safer Congregation Ministry will annually read aloud the Code of Ethics together with the Minister and sign this document so that all will remain aware of the congregation's expectations of the minister.

Ethical Standards

I will be honest and diligent in my work to fulfill the offices of ministry according to the stipulations of my call or employment and my best professional judgment.

I will not misappropriate the money or property of the congregations, agencies or enterprises I serve, or of their members, staff or clients.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect the confidentiality of private communications from those to whom I minister.

I will honor the intellectual property of others, assuring that appropriate attribution is given to avoid intentionally creating the impression that the work of others is my own.

I will demonstrate respect and compassion without regard to race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability or ethnicity. Such equitable treatment shall be extended to all to whom I minister regardless of position in the organization, including to those who may disagree with me.

I will work to confront attitudes and practices of unjust discrimination on the basis of race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability, or ethnicity, and to challenge them within myself and in individuals, congregations, and groups I serve.

I will make myself a candidate for a pulpit or other position of ministry only with serious intent, and I will observe the established candidating procedures of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

I will stay informed of the latest rules and policies of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

I will not engage in public words or actions that degrade the vocation of ministry, or diminish among us the esteem of our calling.

I will not engage in sexual contact, sexualized behavior or a sexual relationship with any person I serve as a minister.

Expectations of Conduct

I will share and support the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association, especially as reflected in the UUMA Covenant, Code and Standards.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to respect mine.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation concerning a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately. I will not solicit or encourage negative comments about a colleague or their ministry.

These Expectations of Conduct apply to all forms of public or private media including electronic and internet communications.

I will seek consultation among my colleagues practicing the diverse forms of parish-based and community-based ministry within the same geographical area, so that we may develop a mutually agreed Letter of Understanding regarding our several roles and the ways in which these may and may not intersect.

If I am not a settled, interim or consulting minister of a congregation served by a colleague, I will not offer, and will not accept requests for, ministerial services or public leadership from members of that congregation, or in that congregational context, unless I have a covenant with or until I have consulted with the minister serving there.

If my colleague asks me to refrain from performing such service or appearing in a leadership capacity, I will comply.

Should emergency circumstances make advance consultation impossible, I will render only limited service, and consult with my colleague at the earliest possible opportunity.

If I have occasion to perform ministerial or leadership functions, apart from routine contact with members or clients of my current ministry, in contexts where colleagues are serving, I will make an effort to communicate with those colleagues, and to respect their professional prerogatives and be responsive to their concerns.

Ministers of a congregation hosting District or UUA events will be assumed to have invited colleagues to appear in leadership capacities at such events.

If I am to share the ministry of a congregation with other ministers, I will seek clear delineation of responsibility, authority, accountability and channels of communication before responsibilities are assumed. I will thereafter work in cooperation and consultation

with my colleagues, taking care that changing roles and relations are re-negotiated with clarity, respect and honesty.

I will acknowledge the reality of power differences based on defined responsibilities and authority within congregations, agencies or enterprises. I will acknowledge the reality of privilege arising from differences of social location and historical marginalization. I will exercise the power of my authority and the privileges of my social location in such a way that I do not disadvantage my colleagues on the basis of my or their race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability or ethnicity.

As a supervisor, I will recognize the special responsibility I have to colleagues and staff who I supervise, and I will work justly and compassionately with the authority given to me.

As a minister in a role supervised by a senior colleague, I will work to support my colleague's leadership and the success of our shared ministry.

When my ministry to a congregation has ended, I will refrain from offering or performing ministerial services for members of that congregation, except at the invitation of my incumbent successor colleague(s).

If I belong to or attend a congregation served by a colleague, I will honor the prerogatives of that colleague's responsibility for leadership in that congregation, and in all ways seek to support that colleague's ministry. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) in order to create a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church. If I am a member of a congregation that I once served, this may include the possibility of absenting myself from any presence at all. I will articulate clearly my own hopes and expectations regarding my relationships in the congregation, and my intention to avoid wielding any undue influence among the members. I will only participate in leadership roles that support and benefit the ministry, and at the request and with the permission of the minister(s). I will neither listen to nor volunteer criticisms of my colleague(s). As necessary I will describe appropriate channels of communications to members seeking to express concerns.

If I am a settled minister in a congregation having retired or other ministers as members, I will seek to foster cordial and candid relations with my colleagues in recognition of the value of their presence in the congregation. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about their participation in the life of the congregation. I will bring any concerns arising from the relationship my colleague(s) have with the congregation directly and promptly to the attention of my colleague(s).

If I am elected Minister Emeritus/a, I will recognize that this honor sustains a continuing but changed relationship with the congregation I once served as one of its ministers. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my successor colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church. My successor colleague may choose to include the congregation's

board of trustees in this covenant process. I will honor the prerogatives of my colleague's responsibility for leadership, and in all ways seek to support that colleague's ministry.

If I am a settled minister in a congregation that has elected a Minister Emeritus/a, I will recognize the meaning of the honor that the congregation has bestowed, and the significance of the continuing relationship of ministry it implies. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my Emeritus/a colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about their participation in the life of the congregation. I will bring any concerns arising from the relationship the Minister Emeritus/a has with the congregation directly and promptly to that colleague's attention.

The discovery of ministerial misconduct and the healing of congregations, agencies or enterprises that have experienced such misconduct, take priority over the expectations of collegial courtesy.

In calling attention to any deviation by my colleague(s) from this Code, I will adhere to the processes described in Accountability, below. So doing will not be regarded as a failure of collegial loyalty.

Code of professional practices for Directors of Religious Education

The Religious Education Ministry will annually read aloud the Code of Ethics together with the DRE and sign this document so that all will remain aware of the congregation's expectations of the DRE.

I. Self

*As a professional religious educator, or as a supporter of religious education within the Unitarian Universalist Association, I commit myself to honor the ideals of liberal religious education, and to actively explore and articulate the underlying values and principles that those ideals express.

*I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am called to be faithful both morally and legally to my professional relationships. I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. (Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors).

*I pledge that I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to have read and understood this Code, and to live in accordance with its contents. I expect that my colleagues will do likewise.

*I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to the minister or board. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of Massachusetts regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

*Because the role and the demands on the religious educator require continual updating of professional perspectives, I will seek and maintain outside collegial contacts and continuing education opportunities to provide such professional growth.

*As an individual who brings a complex variety of needs and boundaries to my professional life, I commit to seek any needed personal assistance and counseling from a professional outside of my congregation. Since the demands of others upon me will be many and constant, I will try to keep especially aware of my rights and limits, and if I am not single, of the rights and limits of my family, and of my relation to them as a spouse, partner, parent, or friend.

II. Colleagues

*I will stand in a supportive relation to my ministerial, religious education and staff colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

*I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

*I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

*Since I share the welfare of the congregation or community I serve with the parish minister and/or other staff, I will seek to be part of mutually cooperative and consultative relationships with them as we carry out our shared and separate responsibilities. When difficulties arise, I will seek help judiciously and express my concerns professionally, keeping in mind the worth and dignity of all parties involved.

*I will share leadership opportunities and responsibilities with my colleagues openly, honestly, and ethically. In particular, I will consult with them in advance of any professional or public engagements that I may be asked to undertake in their communities or congregations.

III. Congregation

I will uphold and honor the practice of congregational polity within the congregation I serve, knowing that by educating and modeling the practice of such polity, I am strengthening the experience of free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation or community I serve and will seek changes that reflect liberal religious principles of inclusion in consultation with others in that body.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect the confidentiality of private communications the confidences shared with me by members of the congregation or place of employment keeping in mind that such confidentiality should not contribute to personal or professional misuse of power.

Code of Ethics for Volunteers

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community.

The relationship between children, youth and adult volunteers must be one of mutual respect.

Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore **all Religious Education volunteers will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.**

Volunteers shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

From: <http://www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing>

Mandatory Reporting of Abuse and Neglect

Originally written May 16, 2002, the following clergy letter explains and outlines the effects of the Massachusetts Mandatory Reporting Law.

May 16, 2002

To: The Leaders, Ministers and Religious Educators of Unitarian Universalist Congregations in Massachusetts

On May 3, (2002) Jane Swift, Acting Governor of Massachusetts, signed into law a bill that makes clergy, paid religious educators and other specified individuals mandated reporters of abuse and neglect of minors, which includes sexual abuse. This statute may impose very important reporting obligations on you, and a failure to report is a criminal offense for which a fine of up to one thousand dollars may be imposed. Hence, we are providing you with a brief summary of the law for your information, along with links to other more detailed resources. Consequently, we expect that you will want to review the law's provisions on an urgent basis and take any actions required of you promptly.

We strongly urge you to retain legal counsel and review with her/him your individual obligations and the facts and circumstances of specific situations. The contents of this memorandum are being provided to you for your information. It is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of your own legal counsel regarding any particular situation.

We have summarized in this memo the main provisions of the statute, and have offered some brief information/comments to assist you in interpreting and understanding the statute in italics. However, ultimately whether or not you have an obligation to report or whether the specific facts and circumstances of an incident or situation meet the "reasonable cause" threshold provided in the law should be determined by you in consultation with your own counsel.

Overview of the Law

Massachusetts has required for many years that persons in certain enumerated occupations ("mandated reporters") file reports of child abuse or neglect with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services ("DSS"). Mass. Gen. L. c. 119, § 51A. A report is required when the mandated reporter has "reasonable cause to believe" that a child under 18 years of age is "suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare including sexual abuse, or from neglect, including malnutrition," Reports of abuse or neglect must be filed immediately. A failure to file a report may be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars. In addition, any person who knowingly files a report of child abuse that is frivolous may be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Under section 51A, a mandated reporter is protected from liability in any civil or criminal action. However, if a person who is not a mandated reporter makes a report under the statute, s/he may also be protected from liability, but only if the report was made in good faith. The burden of establishing good faith is on the reporter.

In addition, a mandated reporter is protected from discharge, discrimination or retaliation for a report filed in good faith or testimony in a proceeding involving child abuse or neglect.

The Clergy Amendments

Effective May 3, 2002, the statute was amended to add the following to the list of mandated reporters: "priest, rabbi, clergy member, ordained or licensed minister, leader of any church or religious body, accredited Christian Science practitioner, person performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body that are recognized as duties of a priest, rabbi, clergy, ordained or licensed minister, leader of any church or religious body, or accredited Christian Science practitioner, or person employed by a church or religious body to supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel a child on a regular basis."

The only exception from reporting is information "solely gained in a confession or similarly confidential communication in other religious faiths."

Although all current incidents must be reported immediately, the amendment added a provision requiring that reports be made for past incidents of abuse or neglect within thirty (30) days of the amendment's initial passage. In other words, in the event that a minister or other individual who is required to report due to the amendment has "reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is or was being injured," a report must be filed with DSS if the child remains under 18 years of age, or with the District Attorney and the alleged victim if the child is now over 18.

Mandated Reporters

- **Clergy:** "clergy member, ordained or licensed minister, leader of any church or religious body". *We understand this to mean a member of clergy or person acting in that role. In Unitarian Universalist practice we believe that this category includes all clergy and the primary leader(s) in a lay led society.*
- **Persons Performing a Pastoral Role:** "person performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body that are recognized as duties of...clergy, ordained or licensed minister, or leader of any church or religious body." *How this criteria applies in our tradition is not entirely clear. It may include persons taking on pastoral roles, such as, but not limited to, persons who are part of a lay ministry program making hospital calls.*
- **Employees Working with Children:** "person employed by a church or religious body to supervised, educate, coach, train or counsel a child on a regular basis." *We understand this would involve paid religious educators, paid children or*

youth group advisors, or any other paid staff working with youth on a regular basis.

Child Abuse: The standard for reporting is "a reasonable cause to believe" that a child under age 18 is suffering or has suffered from abuse or neglect. *See the Department of Social Services website listed below for more explanations of these definitions. A recent Massachusetts Appeals Court decision held that a report of abuse must be based on "a presentment of facts that create a suspicion of abuse" and that when the initial precipitating fact giving rise to a suspicion of abuse is only a claim of abuse by the alleged victim that "something more ... [but] not very much more" must be present to support this claim under the "reasonable basis to believe" standard. "[A]ssertions that are impossible, utterly fantastic, plainly fabricated, or made only in jest" do not need to be reported.*

Exemptions: Clergy are exempted from reporting only when the information about abuse or neglect is received solely in the confessional or a similarly confidential communication. *Communications with Unitarian Universalist clergy are not confidential for purposes of this bill simply because someone wishes or agrees that the communication will be confidential or because of where the communication occurs. However, communications that are confessional in nature that seek confidential spiritual guidance may be exempt from reporting.*

Retroactive Provisions: The law requires the reporting of both current and past incidents that meet the "reasonable suspicion" standard. Past incidents of abuse must be reported within 30 days of when the law was signed (May 3). *The requirement to report must be met even if, for example the suspected or known perpetrator is deceased. By our count, reports should be filed by June 3, 2002, the first business day 30 days after passage. If this deadline cannot be satisfied, then reports should be made as soon thereafter as humanly possible.*

Reports: If the suspected victim is currently under 18 years of age, the report must be made to the Massachusetts Department of Social Service (DSS) immediately upon discovery. For past incidents, if the victim is still under 18 years, then the report should be filed with DSS. If, however, the person who you believe was abused as a child is now over 18, the report must be made to the District Attorney of the county in which the suspected violation occurred. Notice of filing must be given to the alleged victim. *Although not required by law, you may wish to provide notice of the report to the person against whom the charge is being filed.*

Obviously these new requirements are stringent and the time frame under which we must understand and act on them is short. Your immediate review and action is critically important.

We have put together and identified the following official resources and materials that should help you to understand and respond to the law appropriately:

1. The abuse and neglect reporting [statute before the amendment](#)
2. The [act itself](#)

Other specifically Unitarian Universalist (UU) resources include the following sites:

1. Information about [Safer congregations](#) and [Our Whole Lives](#) (OWL) materials
2. The report "[Restorative Justice for All](#): Unitarian Universalists Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct"

We hope that the information provided above will be helpful to you as you take the steps necessary to review your situation and to comply with the provisions of the law. We once again urge you to seek legal counsel to assist you.

The new mandated reporting law is complex, but we deeply hope that it will result in more protection for all children and help all of us develop a deeper understanding to the commitments we have made to each other in building and sustaining our religious communities.

Written by:

David P. Hubner, Acting Director of Ministry
Judith Frediani, Acting Director of Religious Education
Tracey Robinson-Harris, Acting Director of Congregational, District and Extension Services

Links updated April 2012

Administering Safer Congregation

Board and Clergy Commitment

The Board will maintain a Safer Congregation Ministry consisting of two board members, one member of the Religious Education Ministry, and one member of the Personnel Committee who will be called annually to witness the reading of the clergy and DRE codes of professional practices and be prepared to oversee the Safer Congregation Policies are upheld.

Online professional training (such as NEARI Debra Hafner) may be required annually for the DRE and Minister : <http://nearipress.org/free-webinars#creating-sexually-safer-congregations>

Process for handling ministerial, DRE, or staff misconduct

<http://www.uua.org/safe/misconduct>

The UUSA recognizes the courage it takes to consider filing a complaint of misconduct against a Unitarian Universalist (UU) religious professional. The Safer Congregation Ministry members contact information will be posted on our website under *About Us>Our Elected Leaders* and if you do not reach them immediately, they will return your call in 24 hours.

If you need to contact the UUA, you can phone Heather Bond, at the UUA Monday-Friday during regular business hours (617) 948-6462. Your call will be answered within 48 hours. Heather offers completely confidential listening and can explain the process for filing a complaint.

Preventing Risks in Religious Education

The Director of Religious Education, with support of the RE Ministry, is responsible for administrating the following safety procedures:

Universal Precautions

- Each classroom and general-use room will be equipped with first-aid kits and latex gloves. Teachers will be instructed in their use.
- Nursery toys and furniture will be cleaned regularly.
- Changing tables will be cleaned after each Sunday. Soiled clothes found will be discarded.
- Shelves and furniture in classrooms will be regularly checked for soundness and either removed or fixed if they are not sound.

Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation

- Chalice will be lit, prayer said, chalice blown out immediately after prayer and placed on a high shelf out of the reach of children. No chalice will be left burning for the duration of class. All matches will be stored in locked cupboards or placed in a high-up safe place if no cupboard is available.
- All classes will conduct fire alarm and safe evacuation of classrooms. This routine will be rehearsed twice throughout the year. The DRE will remind teachers of the timing. An Exit Map will be posted in each classroom — to be updated each year.

Parents' Responsibility for Children

- Before and after Religious Education class time, parents are responsible to supervise their children and youth. We urge parents to take note of where your children and youth are and who they are with.
- All children in the church building will be picked up from class by their parents, and not released until parents arrive.

Behavior/safety Expectations

All children and youth are expected to behave with respect to each other, adults and their space. Any child or youth who is being disruptive or threatening the safety of others or of him/herself will be asked to stop the disruptive or unsafe behavior. If the child or youth will not, then the parent will be called to remove the child or youth from the classroom until the behavior can be amended. All efforts will be made by the DRE and volunteers to help children and youth know what the expectations are. Each class will create together a behavioral covenant.

Medical Release Form

All children and youth must have a completed permission slip in order to participate in any off-site activity. This form will be signed by parents and reviewed by the DRE and volunteers to help ensure any special needs are noted as is appropriately within confidentiality guidelines.

Policies for safety in the meetinghouse

Disruptive people policy

<http://www.uua.org/safe/44145.shtml>

While openness to diversity is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's Purposes and Principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. Concern for the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual.

The following policy shall guide us in actively and promptly addressing situations in which individuals' behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of our members and friends. The privacy/anonymity of the allegedly offensive individual will be maintained at all times, except in cases in which he/she poses a threat to others. The fellowship will follow all applicable state laws and reporting procedures for child sexual abuse.

Since it is serious business to file a formal complaint against a fellow member, doing so should never be taken lightly. Every attempt should be made to resolve disruptive situations by addressing them directly, with compassion and concern, before resorting to the use of this policy.

When a person's disruptive behavior requires an immediate response, it will be undertaken by the minister and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called.

- Anytime such actions are required and the Minister is not present, then the Minister and President of the Board of Trustees must be notified as soon as is practicable.
- A follow-up letter or document detailing what steps must be taken by the offending party or parties before he/she/they may return to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister to the offending party or parties.

For ongoing situations and those not requiring an immediate response, the process begins with a written, signed explanation of the disruptive behavior and its impact, from the person or people who witnessed it, to the Minister. The Minister will determine whether he/she wishes to handle the situation privately, or request the formation of a Safer Congregation Ministry appointed by the Board of Trustees, (that committee shall include the Minister and at least two other members of the fellowship), to further investigate the matter. When appropriate and whenever possible, the Minister will inform the person that a complaint has been filed and is being investigated.

The Minister and/or the committee will respond to situations as they arise, using their own judgement, without defining acceptable behavior in advance.

- People and situations will be dealt with individually.
- Stereotypes or stereotyping will be avoided.
- The Minister or the committee will collect any additional information required to obtain a complete picture of the situation and research any applicable laws.
- When the ad hoc committee considers such information essential to performing its task, the Board shall authorize funds to pay costs for a professional background check, to provide such facts as the correct identity of the person in question and records of past criminal activity involving threats, harassment, or actual harm to other persons or property.

Note: Unitarian Universalists have a long history of public engagement with issues of individual freedom and social justice. Therefore, acts of conscience or civil disobedience which may have resulted in criminal charges or convictions will receive distinct consideration and careful attention under this policy.

The following questions must be considered by the Minister or the committee:

- **Dangerous:** Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property, including himself or herself?
- **Disruptive:** How much interference with church functions is occurring?
- **Offensive:** How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?

The following questions may be considered by the Minister or the committee:

- **Causes:** Why is this disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the fellowship? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
- **History:** What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
- **Probability of Change:** How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

The Minister or the committee will respond on a case-by-case basis. Mediation by a neutral party is also a possibility. The following levels of response are options the Minister or the committee can implement:

- **No Action:** It may be determined that the complaint is not warranted, and the minister will explain and discuss this with the person who filed the complaint.
- **Warning:** The minister or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern and expectations for future behavior.
- **Suspension:** The offending individual is excluded from the fellowship and/or specific activities for a limited period of time, with the reasons and the conditions of return made clear in writing.
- **Expulsion:** The committee recommends that the offending individual should be expelled from membership in UUSA following a Board vote and appeals **process to be developed.**

Policy for welcoming a known sexual offender

Known sexual offenders must process outlined in the Form for Welcoming a Known Sex Offender

Policies for religious education volunteers and activities, including sleepovers and field trips

Overnights sponsored by the UUSA

Policy to come

Policies for digital safety

Guidelines for Church Website Content

A. Guidelines for Web Content

The web newsletter is accessible to the entire world and open to scrutiny from all. For this reason, it is often inappropriate to put certain sensitive information there.

It is advisable that an editor goes through the content of the newsletter with an eye toward protecting the privacy of those served by the congregation. The following guidelines relate to privacy issues:

1. No last names of minors should be published
2. No phone numbers, addresses or email should be published except for church staff members
3. Phone numbers and email addresses of contact persons for special events of interest groups may be published with their permission.
4. Personal news of interest to the congregation only but not to the entire world should not be placed on the web. Examples would include items such as “Among Ourselves,” “Joys and Concerns” or other columns which serve similar functions.

When making a decision about what to post on the web, ask the question: “Who is the intended audience?” Besides offering a convenient option for people who already receive the printed or email version of your newsletter, is it the aim of a web newsletter to attract visitors to the church?

Active Shooter

TO BE DEVELOPED

Forms for staff

Annual Agreement: Minister and Safer Congregation Ministry
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Code of Ethics for Minister

The Safer Congregation Ministry will annually read aloud the Code of Ethics together with the Minister and sign this document so that all will remain aware of the congregation's expectations of the minister.

Ethical Standards

I will be honest and diligent in my work to fulfill the offices of ministry according to the stipulations of my call or employment and my best professional judgment.

I will not misappropriate the money or property of the congregations, agencies or enterprises I serve, or of their members, staff or clients.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect the confidentiality of private communications from those to whom I minister.

I will honor the intellectual property of others, assuring that appropriate attribution is given to avoid intentionally creating the impression that the work of others is my own.

I will demonstrate respect and compassion without regard to race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability or ethnicity. Such equitable treatment shall be extended to all to whom I minister regardless of position in the organization, including to those who may disagree with me.

I will work to confront attitudes and practices of unjust discrimination on the basis of race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability, or ethnicity, and to challenge them within myself and in individuals, congregations, and groups I serve.

I will make myself a candidate for a pulpit or other position of ministry only with serious intent, and I will observe the established candidating procedures of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

I will stay informed of the latest rules and policies of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

I will not engage in public words or actions that degrade the vocation of ministry, or diminish among us the esteem of our calling.

I will not engage in sexual contact, sexualized behavior or a sexual relationship with any person I serve as a minister.

Expectations of Conduct

I will share and support the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association, especially as reflected in the UUMA Covenant, Code and Standards.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to respect mine.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation concerning a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately. I will not solicit or encourage negative comments about a colleague or their ministry.

These Expectations of Conduct apply to all forms of public or private media including electronic and internet communications.

I will seek consultation among my colleagues practicing the diverse forms of parish-based and community-based ministry within the same geographical area, so that we may develop a mutually agreed Letter of Understanding regarding our several roles and the ways in which these may and may not intersect.

If I am not a settled, interim or consulting minister of a congregation served by a colleague, I will not offer, and will not accept requests for, ministerial services or public leadership from members of that congregation, or in that congregational context, unless I have a covenant with or until I have consulted with the minister serving there.

If my colleague asks me to refrain from performing such service or appearing in a leadership capacity, I will comply.

Should emergency circumstances make advance consultation impossible, I will render only limited service, and consult with my colleague at the earliest possible opportunity.

If I have occasion to perform ministerial or leadership functions, apart from routine contact with members or clients of my current ministry, in contexts where colleagues are serving, I will make an effort to communicate with those colleagues, and to respect their professional prerogatives and be responsive to their concerns.

Ministers of a congregation hosting District or UUA events will be assumed to have invited colleagues to appear in leadership capacities at such events.

If I am to share the ministry of a congregation with other ministers, I will seek clear delineation of responsibility, authority, accountability and channels of communication before responsibilities are assumed. I will thereafter work in cooperation and consultation with my colleagues, taking care that changing roles and relations are re-negotiated with clarity, respect and honesty.

I will acknowledge the reality of power differences based on defined responsibilities and authority within congregations, agencies or enterprises. I will acknowledge the reality of privilege arising from differences of social location and historical marginalization. I will exercise the power of my authority and the privileges of my social location in such a way that I do not disadvantage my colleagues on the basis of my or their race, color, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability or ethnicity.

As a supervisor, I will recognize the special responsibility I have to colleagues and staff who I supervise, and I will work justly and compassionately with the authority given to me.

As a minister in a role supervised by a senior colleague, I will work to support my colleague's leadership and the success of our shared ministry.

When my ministry to a congregation has ended, I will refrain from offering or performing ministerial services for members of that congregation, except at the invitation of my incumbent successor colleague(s).

If I belong to or attend a congregation served by a colleague, I will honor the prerogatives of that colleague's responsibility for leadership in that congregation, and in all ways seek to support that colleague's ministry. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) in order to create a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church. If I am a member of a congregation that I once served, this may include the possibility of absenting myself from any presence at all. I will articulate clearly my own hopes and expectations regarding my relationships in the congregation, and my intention to avoid wielding any undue influence among the members. I will only participate in leadership roles that support and benefit the ministry, and at the request and with the permission of the minister(s). I will neither listen to nor volunteer criticisms of my colleague(s). As necessary I will describe appropriate channels of communications to members seeking to express concerns.

If I am a settled minister in a congregation having retired or other ministers as members, I will seek to foster cordial and candid relations with my colleagues in recognition of the value of their presence in the congregation. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about their participation in the life of the congregation. I will bring any concerns arising from the relationship my colleague(s) have with the congregation directly and promptly to the attention of my colleague(s).

If I am elected Minister Emeritus/a, I will recognize that this honor sustains a continuing but changed relationship with the congregation I once served as one of its ministers. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my successor colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about the role I am to play in the church. My successor colleague may choose to include the congregation's board of trustees in this covenant process. I will

honor the prerogatives of my colleague's responsibility for leadership, and in all ways seek to support that colleague's ministry.

If I am a settled minister in a congregation that has elected a Minister Emeritus/a, I will recognize the meaning of the honor that the congregation has bestowed, and the significance of the continuing relationship of ministry it implies. I will initiate an open and direct conversation with my Emeritus/a colleague(s) to enter a mutually agreed covenant, expressed in a Letter of Understanding, about their participation in the life of the congregation. I will bring any concerns arising from the relationship the Minister Emeritus/a has with the congregation directly and promptly to that colleague's attention.

The discovery of ministerial misconduct and the healing of congregations, agencies or enterprises that have experienced such misconduct, take priority over the expectations of collegial courtesy.

In calling attention to any deviation by my colleague(s) from this Code, I will adhere to the processes described in Accountability, below. So doing will not be regarded as a failure of collegial loyalty.

Title	Print Name	Signature	Date
Minister			
Board Member			
Board Member			
RE Ministry Member			
Personnel Committee Member			

Code of professional practices for Directors of Religious Education

The Religious Education Ministry will annually read aloud the Code of Ethics together with the DRE and sign this document so that all will remain aware of the congregation's expectations of the DRE.

I. Self

*As a professional religious educator, or as a supporter of religious education within the Unitarian Universalist Association, I commit myself to honor the ideals of liberal religious education, and to actively explore and articulate the underlying values and principles that those ideals express.

*I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am called to be faithful both morally and legally to my professional relationships. I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. (Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors).

*I pledge that I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to have read and understood this Code, and to live in accordance with its contents. I expect that my colleagues will do likewise.

*I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to the minister or board. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of Massachusetts regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

*Because the role and the demands on the religious educator require continual updating of professional perspectives, I will seek and maintain outside collegial contacts and continuing education opportunities to provide such professional growth.

*As an individual who brings a complex variety of needs and boundaries to my professional life, I commit to seek any needed personal assistance and counseling from a professional outside of my congregation. Since the demands of others upon me will be many and constant, I will try to keep especially aware of my rights and limits, and if I am not single, of the rights and limits of my family, and of my relation to them as a spouse, partner, parent, or friend.

II. Colleagues

*I will stand in a supportive relation to my ministerial, religious education and staff colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

*I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

*I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

*Since I share the welfare of the congregation or community I serve with the parish minister and/or other staff, I will seek to be part of mutually cooperative and consultative

relationships with them as we carry out our shared and separate responsibilities. When difficulties arise, I will seek help judiciously and express my concerns professionally, keeping in mind the worth and dignity of all parties involved. *I will share leadership opportunities and responsibilities with my colleagues openly, honestly, and ethically. In particular, I will consult with them in advance of any professional or public engagements that I may be asked to undertake in their communities or congregations.

III. Congregation

I will uphold and honor the practice of congregational polity within the congregation I serve, knowing that by educating and modeling the practice of such polity, I am strengthening the experience of free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation or community I serve and will seek changes that reflect liberal religious principles of inclusion in consultation with others in that body.

Within the limitations of law, I will respect the confidentiality of private communications the confidences shared with me by members of the congregation or place of employment keeping in mind that such confidentiality should not contribute to personal or professional misuse of power.

Title	Print Name	Signature	Date
Director of Religious Education			
Board Member			
Board Member			
RE Ministry Member			
Personnel Committee Member			

Forms for volunteers

Screening forms listed in Letter to Volunteers

- 1) UUSA Religious Education Volunteer Application
- 2) Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children
- 3) Agreement to Teach form
- 4) CORI form for all adult volunteers and staff

Files on each volunteer and staff

All screening files will be kept on file, confidential, and accessible to the DRE and minister.

Insert UUSA Letter Head

Dear Volunteer:

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst is committed to ensuring the safety of our community members. It is our practice, therefore, to require all volunteers who are likely to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults to provide information that will help us fulfill this desire.

- 1) Complete the “UUSA Religious Education Volunteer Application” form that authorizes the Director of Religious Education to explore your background sufficiently to document that there is no cause for concern about your suitability for paid employment or volunteer work within our congregation.
- 2) Read and sign the “Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children” and complete the “Agreement to Teach” form.
- 3) Complete the CORI background authorization [every 3 years]

We thank you for your willingness to serve our congregation, and for your role in assuring it is a safe and nurturing place.

Sincerely,

Chair, Safer Congregation Ministry

UUSA Religious Education Volunteer Application

<http://www.uua.org/safe/children/appendices/23515.shtml>

Name

First:

Middle:

Last:

Date of birth:

Have you ever used a different name? No () Yes ()

If yes, please list with dates:

How long have you been attending this congregation?

Address:

Street:

Town, State, Zip:

Number of years at current address:

If you have not lived at this address for at least 5 years, please list any previous addresses with dates:

What states have you lived in since you were 18 years old?

Home phone:

Work phone:

Place of work:

Number of years at current employment:

May we call your current employer for a character reference?

No () Yes ()

If not, please tell us why:

History

A. Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please explain:

B. Have you ever been accused of any crimes against a person, including rape, incest, sexual exploitation of a minor, or sexual or physical assault of a minor?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

C. Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by any employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

D. Have you ever been convicted of any crimes against a person, including rape, incest, sexual exploitation of a minor, or sexual or physical assault of a minor?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

E. Other than the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children and youth?

No () Yes ()

If yes, please provide details:

Congregation History and Prior Work with Children and Youth:

List congregations you have attended during the past five years:

Name of congregation:	City, State	Dates of attendance

List all previous work involving children and youth (list name, type of work performed, person you were responsible to):

Please list two references who are not relatives who have known you for at least three years and who are familiar with your character as it pertains to your experience with children or youth:

1) Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to you: _____

2) Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to you: _____

I authorize the congregation to contact references and other congregations to obtain information about my background regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. I authorize references to provide such information about me. I hereby release and hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information. I also agree to hold harmless this congregation, its trustees, employees and volunteers.

Further, I understand that a member of the staff may check the sex offender registry and/or contact the local police for more information about my background.

The congregation may deny employment, paid or volunteer, to any person who answers "yes" to any one of questions 1-5. If hired and the congregation later discovers circumstances that would indicate a "yes" answer to any of the above questions, employment may be terminated immediately.

The congregation may terminate employment or volunteer services of any person if that person is found, regardless of when discovered, to:

- 1) have a history of complaints of abuse of a minor;
- 2) have resigned, been terminated or been asked to resign from a position whether paid or unpaid, due to complaint(s) of sexual abuse of a minor, youth, or vulnerable adult; and/or
- 3) have falsified or omitted information in this disclosure statement.

This information will be available only to those responsible for screening staff or volunteers or participating in a response team, or as required by law.

I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Date:

Agreement to Teach Form for Religious Educators and Volunteers

Name _____

I have read and understand our congregation's policies on keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe. This includes the policy of having a minimum of 2 adults work with children and youth at all times in the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst.

I agree to uphold this policy in my work with Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst children, youth, adults, and families.

I have signed the Code of Ethics statement.

I affirm that I have never been accused of, convicted of, or pled guilty to any sexual crime. I also have not pled guilty to a lesser charge after having been charged with a sexual crime. I have never engaged in any form of child abuse, including sexual abuse. I have never been determined to have engaged in any sexual offenses in any civil, administrative, or ecclesiastical forum or other forum.

If there are any facts or circumstances in my background that call into question my being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, I have met to review this information confidentially with the Minister and the Religious Educator.

Further, I agree to notify the Minister and the Director of Religious Education immediately should I be accused of sexual abuse, sexual offenses, sexual harassment, or other sexual improprieties in the time that I am working with children and youth in this congregation.

Signature _____ Date _____

Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community.

The relationship between children, youth and adult volunteers must be one of mutual respect.

Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore **all Religious Education volunteers will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.**

Volunteers shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations, and actions.

Name (printed):

Name (signed):

Date:

Form for Welcoming a Known Sex Offender

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst 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 our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

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:

1. Please do not talk with children.
2. Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
3. Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.
4. If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
5. Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.
6. I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION
7. I have reviewed this covenant 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.
8. I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

_____	_____
Signature	Date
_____	_____
Witness	Date
_____	_____
Minister	Date
_____	_____
Director/Minister of Religious Education	Date
_____	_____
Board Chair	Date

One Page Notice for Safer Congregation

NOTICE REGARDING THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES OF “SAFER CONGREGATION”

All members of the UUSA carry a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social, and intellectual growth is encouraged.

We will achieve these goals through the implementation of the “Toward a Safer Congregation” policies and procedures. A complete copy of this document is available from the church office. Some important highlights are:

- Staff and volunteers working with children and youth will have attended the UUSA regularly for at least 6 months and will have been through the appropriate screening and training process.
- Two appropriately screened adult supervisors will be present at all times in the Nursery, Children, and Youth Religious Education Classes, and during any UUSA-sponsored activity involving children and youth.
- No children will be dismissed from class without appropriate supervisory parent or guardian.
- UUSA functions providing childcare require at least two youth (13-18) and one supervising adult.
- All furniture and equipment in the classrooms will be cleaned regularly and inspected for safety.

***If it comes to the attention that any of the Safer Church and Congregation policies are not being complied with, please inform our Minister, DRE, or a member of the Board of Trustees*

In Case of Emergency

In Case of **EMERGENCY**

Dial: 911 for Fire, Ambulance or Police

You are located at:

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst
121 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002
Phone: 413-253-2848

In the event of an emergency, accident, illness, etc., please **call 911 first**, then **please notify one of the following individuals:**

- Office Administrator: Judy Mitrolka (home) 413-584-8433
(cell) 413-531-6662
- Minister: Alison Wohler 413-256-0638
- Director of Religious Education: Rebecca Fricke (cell) 413-687-8722

Other numbers:

- Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Cooley Dickinson Hospital: 413-582-2000
- Baystate Medical Center, Springfield: 413-794-0000
- Franklin Medical Center, Greenfield: 413-773-0211

Definitions

The terms used in this document will have the following meanings:

- **Abuse:** includes non-accidental conduct that involves bodily injury or impairment, or offensive physical or sexual contact; including physical or sexual abuse, physical or sexual harassment, physical or sexual molestation, or physical or sexual contact.
- **Physical abuse:** includes activity that causes bodily injury or impairment or offensive physical contact
- **Sexual abuse:** means any sexual touching of a child, youth, or adult that causes a person to engage in any sexual act or conduct without that person's consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health, mental state, or the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- **Physical harassment or molestation or exploitation:** means activity that places a person in fear of bodily injury by such acts as threatening or tormenting behavior, compelling a person by force or threat of force to engage in conduct from which the person has a right to abstain, knowingly restricting substantially the movements of another person without that other person's consent, communicating to a person or entity where the natural consequence of the threat is place that person in fear or cause that person to engage in conduct in which that person otherwise would not engage, or similar repeated offensive physical or verbal conduct.
- **Sexual molestation and sexual exploitation:** means activity that places another person in a situation where that person feels compelled to engage in sexual conduct to which that person would not voluntarily consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health, mental state, or the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- **Sexual harassment:** means making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors to another person, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, 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.