



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

General Purpose Statement

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation (UUC) in Stamford seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of **The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford** from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child”, “children”, “minor”, and “minors” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in a classroom or childcare setting, in overnight activities involving minors, in off-site day trips or field trips involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is a person 18 years of age, or older, and has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for their own care and/or protection. While the focus of these policies is children’s programming, it should be understood that all policies and procedures listed below are also applicable to working with vulnerable adults.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities (including, but not limited to, Religious Education (RE) programming) will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with **The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford** for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous UUC Stamford affiliation, employment information, and consent to a background check (see below), as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at UUC Stamford office.

c) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and “volunteers” as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing UUC Stamford to run the check. If an individual declines to



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

sign the authorization form, they will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by **the Minister (Rev. Terri Dennehy Pahucki) and Coordinator of Religious Education & Communications (Andrew Laro)** on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, sexual assault/harassment, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the UUC Stamford Office

Two Adult Rule

It is required that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors (or vulnerable adults) to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Pastoral Counseling/Mentoring

In general, the minister or the Coordinator of Religious Education are responsible for pastoral counseling or mentoring of minors. Permission from the child's parent or guardian must be obtained before counseling/mentoring can take place. In the event that a child would like to speak with another volunteer in a counseling/mentoring setting, permission from the child's parent/guardian as well as the minister must be obtained.

The preferred location for a counseling/mentoring session with a minor is in a public space, such as a coffee shop. However, in instances where this is not possible, the conversation can take place in an office or other private space at the UUC, provided that the door to the space is left open and someone else who understands the importance of maintaining confidentiality and keeping children safe (such as a church administrator) is working nearby and within earshot.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 15.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at UUC Stamford. Parents/guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether or not their child should participate in UUC/RE activities. In general, children with the following symptoms should stay home:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Anyone (child or adult) who tests positive for COVID-19 should remain home until they have completed the Center of Disease Control's recommended quarantine procedure and until they test negative. If a child or volunteer tests positive for COVID-19 24 hours after an RE event, please inform **the Minister (Rev. Terri Dennehy Pahucki) and Coordinator of Religious Education & Communications (Andrew Laro)** to inform other RE families for self-testing purposes.

We encourage all RE children and volunteers to be vaccinated.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of UUC Stamford not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian at home. Parents/guardians are reminded of our sick child policy. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents/guardians of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents/guardians of such children should address their situation with the Coordinator of Religious Education and Communications (Andrew Laro) to develop a plan of action.

Restroom Policy

Children should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Transportation

Parents/guardians shall be informed of details of any event that takes place off the premises of UUC Stamford, and shall give permission for children and youth to participate in programming that take place away from the congregation. Leaders shall see that parents/guardians are informed of any changes made in transportation plans otherwise published, even at the last minute. Note that the Two-Adult Rule (see page 2) is still in effect in vehicles, unless all persons in the vehicle are family members.

Volunteers providing transportation for children, youth, or vulnerable adults must:

- Be 25 years of age or older
- Hold a valid driver's license and valid insurance. Documentation will be sent to the Coordinator of Religious Education and Communications (Andrew Laro) and will be kept on file in the UUC Stamford Office
- Not have more than two moving violations in the past three years
- Use a vehicle in good mechanical condition
- Carry no more people that can be secured in seat belts or appropriate restraints. Seat belts must be used at all times.
- An approved relief driver must be provided for out-of-town trips lasting longer than two hours driving time and complete appropriate application



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

Social Media Policy

Due to the unique challenges of texting and social media, it's recommended that volunteers avoid using these means to communicate with youth. In instances where this is necessary, please follow these rules:

- Never engage in any electronic communication with a child/youth unless there is at least one other adult (parent, guardian, or UUC staffperson) copied on the email or put into the group text/message.
- Conversations should be reserved for in-person interactions (and must follow the two-adult rule). Pastoral/counseling/mentoring conversations that necessitate being one-on-one should be done in a public place (coffee shop, etc.).
- Methods of electronic communication that do not leave a record of messages sent (e.g. Snapchat, BeReal) are not allowed to be used to communicate with youth under any circumstances. Do not use Snapchat, BeReal, or similar platforms to converse with youth, and do not add them as friends on these platforms.
- Volunteers should not play online games with youth unless the youth has received permission from their parents or guardian and a parent/guardian or another background checked adult volunteer is present in the game.
- Do not use electronic communication with youth after 9 PM.
- Volunteers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities. If you are questioning whether or not a message you want to send is appropriate, err on the side of caution.
- Any disclosures or suspicions of abuse, or other safety concerns, discovered through electronic communication or social media must be immediately reported to the Minister (Rev. Terri Dennehy Pahucki).

Training

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.



Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Stamford Child/Youth Safety Policy

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this congregation becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under their care, this should be reported immediately to the minister (Rev. Terri Dennehy Pahucki) for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. In the event of suspected abuse by the minister, a report should be made to the Board President (Lynne Lane) and to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).