

Unitarian Church in Westport Safe Congregation Practices And Policies

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 10, 2010

The UCW will have a standing safe congregations committee, which will include one of the parish ministers, the DRE, a member of the Board of Trustees, and at least two members of the congregation appointed by the chair of the committee. Members of the congregation will be advised of the members of the committee annually and invited to approach them or the ministers about any concerns about sexual misconduct or harassment by other members.

Rev. Debra Haffner chairs the safe congregations committee. Other members of the committee are Rev. Frank Hall, Kristen Leddy, Perry Montrose, Dr. Frances Sink, and Lyn Hamilton. Any person in the congregation who has a concern or knowledge of sexual abuse or sexual harassment involving a congregant of the UCW is urged to contact a member of the committee.

All staff have CT background checks. All new staff proposed hiring will be subject to CT background checks and completion of the screening form; this will be the responsibility of the Business Manager. New hires will be contingent on clean reports *about sexual offenses*.

All adult RE teachers will complete the screening form and sign the ethics policy at the time they sign up to teach or before they begin teaching. All adults who provide services to children pre-K and nursery will have background checks. Other background checks will be done as needed.

Minors who work in RE must attend an education session on child abuse prevention and sign the ethics form. Starting in fall 2010, the Director of RE will compile a list of youth who are approved to babysit at UCW functions. All approved babysitters will also attend the session on child abuse prevention and sign the ethics forms. Only babysitters on the approved list will be paid by the UCW. Babysitters will also be encouraged to take a community babysitting course."

Training in sexual abuse prevention will be held each year for RE teachers. Volunteers for the RE program will attend the UCW for at least one year prior to their RE service, unless prior experience and recommendations allow the DRE in consultation with the chair of the Safe Congregations Committee to determine otherwise.

A workshop for adults on child sexual abuse prevention will be held each year.

Information for children on child sexual abuse prevention will be included in K-2 and 5-6 OWL classes. Information will be included in the 8th grade OWL program and at least every other year in high school.

There will be two teachers in all RE classrooms at all times; this may necessitate a parent volunteer staying if one of the adult teachers is not present.

The DRE will rotate during Sunday mornings through classes.

All drivers to RE activities must provide copies of driver's licenses and insurance. Two unrelated adults will be in any car transporting unrelated minors. If this is not possible, there will be at least two unrelated children in a single driver's car, and rest stops will be coordinated with other drivers.

It is expected that a member of the congregation or a potential member/participant with a history or active accusation of sexual misconduct/abuse/sexual offense, will make that history known to one of the Congregation ministers, who will follow the procedures below.

Any person accused of a sexual offense of any kind will be placed on a limited access agreement* without prejudice. The Safe Congregations Committee will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or any member of the Safe Congregations Committee to develop the agreement (which may be subsequently revised upon more information). The limited access agreement will remain in effect until all charges are dropped or confirmed (in which case see below.) Persons will not continue to attend or participate in any programs or services of the UCW until a limited access agreement is drawn up.

Any person convicted of a sexual offense or a history of known sexual offenses will be placed on a limited access agreement without prejudice. The Safe Congregations Committee will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the minister, the DRE, or any member of the Safe Congregations Committee to develop the agreement upon consultation with the person's parole officer and/or treatment provider if it is determined that they can participate in the adult life of the congregation safely.

Any person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses who will not sign the Limited Access Agreement will be denied access to any programs or services at the UCW.

For further procedures on responding to a person accused, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses, the UCW will follow the procedures outlined in Balancing Acts.

*The template for a limited access agreement can be found at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/balancingacts/index.shtml>

These procedures will be posted on the UCW web site, conveyed at the annual meeting, be reviewed annually with all RE volunteers, be reviewed annually by the Safe Congregations Committee, presented in the annual report to the congregation, including notice of the number of persons currently attending who have signed a Limited Access Agreement.

Draft Limited Access Agreement—Confidential

Checklist Format

Introductory paragraph in cases of allegation:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the children and youth in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Minister, the Religious Educator and the members of the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team. It will be kept in a locked file in the office

Introductory paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:

The NAME OF CONGREGATION affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who choose to worship 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 in ways to ensure the safety of our children and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Agreement:

You understand that you will not be allowed to volunteer or chaperone events for children and adolescents, including children's religious education classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people.

The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your participation.

- Worship services
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Coffee Hour
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir
No () Yes ()
- Adult meetings without children in building
No () Yes ()
- Have a key to the building
No () Yes ()

- Intergenerational church activities
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Intergenerational group outings such as ice skating, baseball games, etc
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Alone in building with minister or other staff
No () Yes ()
- Access to church computer
No () Yes ()
- Social activities in other member's homes with children present
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Other:
 - Activity:
No () Yes ()

*A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where children and youth may be present.

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 POSITION IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

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

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: