

# Health and Safety Policies and Guidelines for The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene Children & Youth Programs

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**Forms and Additional Sections available at the church office:**

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|---|-----------------------------|
| Program Registration  | Accident/Injury Report      |
| Fire Evacuation Plan  | Fire Extinguisher Locations |
| Visitors Sign In  | Field Trip Permission Slip  |
| Field Trip Information  | Field Trip Driver Data      |
| Code of Ethics  | Youth Rules and Guidelines  |
| Youth Agreement for Attending Overnights                            |                             |
| Job Description/Agreement for Religious Education Teachers/Advisors |                             |
| Information/Agreement for Caregivers at UUCE                        |                             |
| Volunteer Recruitment and Screening Process                         |                             |

## A. General Information

1. The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE) is concerned with the health and safety of children and youth, as well as with spirituality, religious education, and community building. The Religious Education Committee (REC) has developed the following policies and procedures to ensure a safe, healthy, and respectful environment.
2. Definitions:
  - a. “Caregivers” are individuals aged 18 or older, who volunteer or are hired by church staff to care for children (generally age 11 and under) for a specific time period or event.
  - b. “Assistant caregivers/volunteers” are persons age 12 and up who are hired to care for children or assist volunteer teachers. Persons under age 18 must always be in the room with an adult and must not be left alone with children.
  - c. “Teachers” are individuals who contract (verbally) with religious education staff to teach designated classes of children and youth.
  - d. “Advisors” is another term for teachers of high school and middle school youth.
  - e. “Mentors” are adults, age 25 or older, who have been screened, interviewed, and matched with individual youth as part of the “Coming of Age” program.
  - f. “Sponsors” are adults, age 25 and over, who serve in the role of chaperone at youth classes, meetings and events. Sponsors must be approved by the DRE.
  - g. “Youth leaders” are youth enrolled in the RE program who have significant influence on, or responsibility for, other youth enrolled in the program.

## B. Program Times and Pick-up

1. Early drop-off is available for children age 5 and under, as well as children with special needs at 8:45 and 10:45. All children/youth are welcome in the service. Children/youth in Kindergarten – 8th grade begin Sunday programming upstairs in the Sanctuary with the rest of the congregation, unless supervised by an adult in the classroom. Teachers are not responsible for children until the program begins. Approximately 15 minutes after the service begins, children and youth will be dismissed to their classes.
2. Children ages Pre-K age 5 and under are to be escorted to their appropriate class by parent/guardian/designee. Unregistered newcomers/visitors of all ages should also be brought to class and checked in until they have completed the registration form. (See Guest section L)
3. The RE Program runs from 9:15-10:15 and 11:15–12:15. The Sr. Youth group meets 11:00-12:15. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to attend social hour during the overlap time. Parents/Guardians are also invited to unobtrusively visit their child’s class. Please allow the classes to finish their closing before removing the children/and youth.

4. Dismissal and pick up for children will work as follows:
  - Ages Infant to Preschool/Pre-K will be held in their classes for parents to pick up. On some occasions, the teachers/volunteers may bring the children upstairs to their parents. Children must be picked up by 15 minutes after the service so the caregiver can supervise the playground.
  - Grades K-8 will be dismissed to the playground at 15 minutes after the service ends. Children will be allowed to go upstairs to find their family. It is the family's responsibility to discuss expectations with their child around checking in.
5. Parents/Guardians who will not be in the church building during church school or other church-sponsored activities are required to leave a phone number at which they may be contacted, or a name and phone number of an alternate contact person. Children in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger, must either be with an older sibling or paired with another family or individual who will be the on-site adult contact.

## **C. Playground**

1. When possible, a paid playground supervisor will be available until 10:40 for first service and 12:40 for second service. If children are not on the playground, the supervisor may return to the classrooms. When children have left supervision, parents are responsible for them.
2. Children are expected to play safely and respect the playground equipment. Our church community values a safe environment for all. Children, youth and adults are asked to refrain from war games/violent play on the church property. This includes using church toys and other materials as weapons.
3. The boundaries of the playground are the areas within the playground fencing...up to the bathrooms; and under the breezeway/play area within the fenced area whether the gates are open or closed! Children must remain in visual range of an adult. Children and youth are not allowed behind the church building or in the wooded area unsupervised.
4. Children must check in with the responsible adult before proceeding upstairs.
5. Teachers, sponsors and caregivers are responsible for children only during program and special church events.
6. It is expected that parents/guardians will go over playground rules with their children.

## **D. Health Concerns**

1. Parents of children and youth who have serious medical concerns and allergies are requested specify issues on the program registration form. It may also be advisable to discuss the child/youth's condition with the teacher(s). Parents are responsible for providing updates to insure information is current.

2. We wish to take steps to limit the spread of contagious diseases among children and youth attending church school. Therefore, parents are requested to keep children home when they display the following symptoms:

- diarrhea, vomiting or fever (above 100.4°F) within the past 24 hours;
- thick greenish-yellow mucus or pus draining from the eye;
- sore throat, especially combined with fever or swollen neck glands;
- rashes unrelated to diapering, heat, or other known non-communicable diseases;
- unusual tiredness, paleness, lack of appetite or irritability.

*(excerpted from the “Good Growing” newsletter of Children’s Hospital and Medical Center, Fall 1997)*

3. When a child or youth has a serious illness, which may prevent the child from attending church school for two or more weeks, parents are requested to inform the Director of Religious Education (DRE) or the child’s teacher. Parents/Guardians are also requested to let us know if there is any support or assistance which can be provided to the child, youth or family by the religious education staff.
4. If a child comes down with a communicable disease (i.e., chicken pox) shortly after attending church school, please notify the church school staff.

## **E. Confidentiality**

Information about the health or abilities of any child or youth, or a family’s status will be considered confidential. Such information will only be shared with staff or volunteers as necessary to meet the needs of the child/youth, or upon family request.

## **F. Injury and Accident Prevention**

1. Well-stocked first aid kits are stored in rooms 2 and 3. These are well marked with a red cross symbol. Ice is available in the freezer in room 4 and in the upstairs kitchen.
2. Access to the first aid kit is readily available during church school. When an event or activity for children and youth is scheduled outside of normal church school hours, it shall be the responsibility of the sponsors of the event to provide access to the first aid kit.
3. A first aid kit shall be carried by each driver on church-sponsored field trips. If the driver does not already own one, he/she may borrow a to go kit from the church school office. These *must* be returned after each event. Notice should be given to the DRE if any items need to be re-stocked.
4. Regular Religious Education Staff shall have up-to-date CPR and First Aid cards.
5. All caregivers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger caregivers (under 18) must always be assisted by an adult and never left alone to care for children. *(see exception Section N)*

6. Emergency telephone numbers, as well as information about the location of the church, are posted by the telephone located in room 1.
7. Toddlers and young pre-schoolers are requested not to bring toys with small parts into the classroom.
8. Toys and supplies in the classrooms of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers are reviewed, sorted and cleaned periodically. Those which are broken or unsafe are discarded.
9. Alcohol and illegal drugs are not permitted at any events for children and youth. If alcohol is served at a family or intergenerational event, it is the responsibility of parents, teachers, caregivers and sponsors to assure that it is not served to minors.

## **G. Injury and Accident Response**

Occasionally, accidents and injuries do occur despite close supervision of children and youth. In such cases, the following steps shall be taken by the teacher, sponsor, or caregiver:

1. Determine if the injury is an emergency (i.e., severe bleeding, possible neck or spine injury, compound fracture, difficulty breathing, etc.). If so, call 911 as quickly as possible. Do *not* move the victim in cases of possible head, neck or spine injury.
2. Administer first aid if qualified.
3. In case of injury, notify the parent/guardian or contact person. The parent will make the decision regarding how to handle the injury (i.e., they will come to get the child/youth, they will request transport to a hospital or doctor, etc.).

*In the case of a head injury, please notify the parent even if the child/youth seems to be okay.*

4. Complete an Accident/Injury Report form. Give one copy to the parent and one to the DRE or the church school office. Reports should be completed for all accidents, even minor scrapes and bruises, and possible poison oak contamination.

## **H. Fire and Other Emergencies**

1. Fire extinguishers are installed in four locations on the ground floor.
2. A map showing the location of telephones, first aid kits, fire extinguishers and fire exit routes is posted in each classroom, as well as in the church school office.
3. Fire evacuation plans are reviewed at teacher training, and a fire drill is conducted during both church school sessions once per year.
4. In the event of a fire or fire alarm, teachers shall lead children out of the room, taking the Daily Sign-In Sheet with them. They shall ensure that *all* children are out of the room. Teachers and children shall gather in the designated meeting place. The DRE or his/her designee shall check in with all teachers prior to a return to the classroom or, in the event of a serious fire, at a designated safe location.

5. UUCE's fire extinguishers and the fire alarm system are maintained by the custodian or administrator.
6. UUCE is a non-smoking facility, and is posted as such.
7. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, children will be taken out according to the fire evacuation map if circumstances permit.
8. Children will be released only to parents or guardians.

## **I. Behavioral Guidelines**

1. The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene principles respect the uniqueness of each individual and support the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means. Our church school classes and church-sponsored activities endeavor to provide engaging opportunities for young people with a wide range of temperaments, interests, and learning styles.
2. We expect children and youth to behave in ways which respect the feelings, opinions, and actions of others, as well as any property belonging to others and to the church community.
3. A concern for safety predominates. Behavior that risks or inflicts physical harm to oneself or to others is never an acceptable choice.
4. Teachers, sponsors or caregivers who see children or youth making inappropriate choices of behavior shall discuss it with them. Alternate choices may be offered, along with potential consequences. Sometimes the only effective means of intervention is to empathize and then to re-state behavioral expectations. If necessary, the individual may need to be separated from the group and brought to their parent/guardian/family.
5. We will make reasonable accommodations as appropriate to meet the needs of children and youth with special needs.
6. Teachers, sponsors and caregivers shall bring to the attention of the DRE and the parent any patterns of inappropriate behavior on the part of a particular child or youth, so that they may work together to seek a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

## **J. Supervision**

1. Children and youth shall not be permitted to gather in or wander about the church building or grounds or to hold classes or meetings unless they are supervised by a parent, teacher, caregiver or adult sponsor. Groups shall not be left unattended in a classroom.
2. There shall be at least two adults present at every church-sponsored youth event, with a recommended ratio of one sponsor per every 10 youth. (*Exception: The "Coming of Age" program offers opportunities for youth and mentors to meet on a one-to-one basis with parental permission.*)

3. Rules and guidelines have been developed with regard to events and activities for middle and high school youth. See the following forms and hand-outs at the back of this manual:
  - a. Youth Events Rules and Guidelines
  - b. Parental Permission Slip
  - c. Youth Agreement for Attending Overnights
4. Any social event taking place outside the church, attended by church youth, that does not have approved sponsors is *not* a church-sponsored event. Parents retain responsibility for their own youth in these situations.
5. If a child or youth leaves or “disappears” from a class, meeting, event or activity, a reasonable attempt will be made to find him/her. If a child in 8<sup>th</sup> grade or under has not been found within 10 minutes, parents will be contacted and, if necessary, the police will be called. If a youth in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older has not been found within 30 minutes, parents/guardians will be notified.

## **K. Guests**

1. Church school classes, meetings, events and programs are designed primarily to benefit and engage the children and youth of UUCE members and friends. Parents are requested to register their children and youth once per year to attend our church-sponsored programs.
2. Guests (children and youth who are not registered) are welcome to visit 3 times. Parents/Guardians are asked to bring visiting children to their class and sign the visitor’s log each visit until they have filed out a registration form.
3. Guests are expected to conform to the same policies, procedures, and code of conduct as those who are registered for UUCE programs.
4. Guests must register before attending overnights for children or youth.
5. Guests may only attend field trips or out of town trips if an adult who knows them is present.

## **L. Field Trips**

1. A Field Trip Permission Slip signed by a parent, guardian, or other adult responsible for the child, is required for each child or youth to participate in an off-premise event. Permission slips shall be prepared, distributed, and collected after parent signature by the teacher, sponsor, chaperone, or caregiver. (Note: some church school classes may have an “ongoing” permission slip for short walking trips away from church on Sundays.)
2. The destination, time of departure, and expected time of return shall be posted in the church school office (or on the office door). A list of children/youth attending, drivers, and chaperones, along with vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers, shall also be posted. (See “Field Trip Information” form.)

3. Each driver shall carry copies of the permission slips for each child/youth in his/her car. The designated leader for the trip shall carry originals of all permission slips for the entire group participating, as well as names, vehicle descriptions, and license plate numbers of all drivers and chaperones.
4. Children 60 pounds and under shall be restrained in age-appropriate car/booster seats. All passengers and drivers must wear seat belts. If the front passenger seat is equipped with an automatic air bag, young children shall not be seated there. (To be safe, front seat passengers need to be tall enough to see over the dashboard, or approximately 4 to 4<sup>1/2</sup> feet tall, depending on the vehicle.)
5. All drivers shall have a current driver's license and personal automobile liability insurance which meets or exceeds the requirements of Oregon State law. Drivers shall sign a Field Trip Driver's Data form and Safety Agreement, which will be kept on file. Teachers will be responsible for ensuring that a form is on file for *all* drivers for a particular trip.
6. Written parental permission is required for children or youth to ride with *any* driver under 21 years of age. It is recommended that parents arrange for youth to be transported to/from church-sponsored functions, conferences at other churches, and district youth events by *adult* drivers.
7. At least two adults, when possible, shall be present on each field trip. In cases where there is only one adult per vehicle, it is recommended that vehicles travel in pairs, keeping within sight of one another at all times.
8. Children or youth must have attended church school regularly (average of twice per month) for 3 months before they may attend a field trip or out-of-town trip without a parent/guardian.

## **M. Personal Safety and Prevention of Abuse**

The Children & Youth Programs RE Committee and the religious education staff are committed to creating and maintaining a church community in which all people can worship, learn, and play together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Such behavior is unethical and will not be tolerated within our programs.

We seek teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors who promote a spiritual community that affirms the UUA principles and demonstrate personal integrity. We seek individuals who nurture, care for, respect, and support children and youth, and are worthy of our trust.

All people engaged in children, youth, and family programs at The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions upon the individuals with whom they engage.

With the above guidelines in mind, we have developed the following policies and procedures relative to personal safety:

1. All teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors are interviewed in person or by telephone and approved for service by the DRE. Caregivers, Mentors and persons who have been attending UUCE less than six months must provide references.

2. All youth advisors, caregivers, and mentors are required to complete a Criminal History Background Check form.
3. If a once-active individual ceases to participate in the church community for a significant period of time and then wishes to re-establish a relationship in the church community with responsibility for children and youth programs, steps 1 and 2 may be required anew.
4. Youth advisors, mentors, and sponsors must be 25 years of age or older and an active “member,” or “friend,” of the church in good standing. Care givers and lead teachers must be 18 years of age or older. Care givers and teaching assistants under age eighteen must always be in the presence of an adult. Written procedures and expectations of length of affiliation with UUCE for volunteers has been established. (See “Volunteer Recruiting and Screening Procedures)
5. Teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors must review and sign a Code of Ethics on an annual basis. The Code of Ethics specifically prohibits verbal, emotional, and physical abuse and sexual involvement with children and youth. If there is an alleged violation of Code of Ethics, the DRE will consult with the Safe Congregation Committee (*see Teacher Handbook or The UUCE Policy Book*), or take other appropriate actions.
6. Supervision standards:
  - a. Church school classes are generally taught by a team of at least two persons.
  - b. Every attempt shall be made to assure that at least one male and one female adult are present at church-sponsored overnights.

*(Note: See additional standards for supervision in Section L, Field Trips and Section N, Childcare.)*
7. Training on preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting child and sexual abuse and harassment shall be offered each year. All persons working with children and youth, whether staff or volunteers, are considered mandatory reporters, and as such are expected to contact protective services.
8. The “Our Whole Lives” program is offered to middle school and high school youth on a rotating basis. Leaders will be screened by the DRE and the district training team and must have satisfactorily completed a District or UUA-approved training program.

## **N. Childcare**

1. Church-sponsored childcare is provided by paid and volunteer caregivers as follows:
  - a. To infants and/or toddlers and/or pre-schoolers during Sunday morning church services,
  - b. To multi-age groups of children during church events such as meetings, membership orientation classes, adult education classes, and adult-oriented social events.

2. Caregivers shall be at least 18 years of age and shall be screened according to the procedures stated above (see section M. *Personal Safety*).
3. Assistant Caregivers under 18 must be supervised by an adult and will not be left alone with children. An exception is when a youth is caring for four children or less and the parents are in the very next room. If no other childcare provider is available to assist, the youth may care for the children if the door is kept open and/or a frequent check-in is made by an adult from the group. Two youth may care for 8 children if no more than one child is an infant. Parents must be informed if someone under 18 is caring for their children.
4. There shall be a minimum of two caregivers in all situations, at least one of which must be 18 years or older. An exception shall be made for small groups of children (numbering four or fewer) when childcare is provided on the premises within hearing range of the parents or guardians. Minimum ratios for children: caregivers shall be as follows:
 

<i>Infant and preschool children:</i>	<i>two caregivers.</i>
<i>4–10 children, with no more than two under age 2:</i>	<i>two caregivers.</i>
<i>4–10 children, with two or more under age 2:</i>	<i>three caregivers.</i>
<i>10 or more children:</i>	<i>three or more caregivers, based on ages of children enrolled.</i>
5. Church-sponsored childcare shall utilize the following procedures, detailed above:
  - a. *Visitors Registrations (for non-registered children), and Accident/Injury Report forms.*
  - b. *Caregivers shall have easy access to a telephone and first aid kit.*
  - c. *Field trip policies and procedures shall be followed by caregivers.*
7. Caregivers shall receive information about childcare and emergency procedures at the church. A summary information sheet for caregivers shall be readily available.

## **O. Snacks**

1. Snacks for Toddlers through High School will be provided each Sunday. Snacks are not to be considered a meal.
2. Parents/Guardians are responsible for alerting the program to special allergies or dietary needs. There is a place on the registration form and the Guest Log for this information. If information changes throughout the year, parents/guardians are to contact the DRE. Families of children/youth with special dietary conditions should bring their own snack, or communicate easy to purchase alternatives to the DRE. The DRE may ask the family to supply the snacks if the dietary needs are complicated.