

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie

**Safe Congregation Policy
And
Procedures**

**Including:
Right Relations
Children and Youth Protection
Limited Access Covenant**

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Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie Safe Congregation Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Congregational Covenant with one another

Unitarian Universalists choose to covenant with one another. Our covenant is not a creed or doctrine. It does not dictate correct or specific belief or dogma. It does describe our relationships with one another. It is a voluntary and unconditional agreement to act in ways that express the values of our Unitarian Universalist principles.

We, the members of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, believe that our commitment to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; spiritual growth; and the use of a democratic process within our congregation compels us to try to create and maintain a safe environment that protects children and adults from harm and promotes their spiritual growth.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, our District, and UUA

We recognize that religious communities, which should be dedicated to the creation of safe environments for all members, are vulnerable to incidents of sexual, physical, emotional, or verbal abuse or misconduct. Generally congregations promote a high level of trust, a welcoming spirit, and a strong reliance on and need for volunteers, especially in child and youth programs. We realize that entities operating in the best possible manner, with all due concern, still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free setting, and thus we need to adopt policies of “reasonable precaution” regarding these incidents.

- The Unitarian Universalist Association and the Ohio Meadville District have policies that are intended to prevent sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in their communities and at congregation sponsored events.
- The UUCE has taken advantage of the recommendations of the UUA and of the support of an OMD facilitator, in the development of these procedures.

Rationale Congregational Responsibility

In drafting this document, the safe congregation committees accepted the responsibility to develop recommendations to protect our congregation from 1) financial liability, and 2) even more importantly, from the emotional repercussions that could occur should we fail to do our best to provide a safe place for our children, youth, and adults.

Scope:

- I. Right Relations
- II. Child and Youth Protection
- III. Limited Access

I. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie Right Relations

Introduction:

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie (UUCE) strives to be an inclusive congregation, welcoming visitors and members to join us in the practice of our faith. Right Relations is a way to describe how we expect to interact with each other in our religious community. Recommendations are predicated on the regular practice of the UU Principles. The purpose of this document is to provide a covenant of right relations for our congregation that expands on our principles, to provide guidance for those experiencing conflict, and further to help with conflict resolution, if needed.

Covenant:

The covenant is a written promise we make to treat one another with compassion and dignity. The recommended covenant was developed by the All Souls Church, Unitarian (Washington, D.C.). (See page 5.)

Reconciliation:

When we are in conflict with someone in our congregation we must challenge ourselves to look beyond our own concerns and work toward resolving our differences. Reconciliation requires those in conflict to engage in a direct process with each other. (Practice of Reconciliation by Paula Cole Jones, management consultant and member of All Souls Church.)

Mediation:

If the conflict continues, congregation sponsored mediation may be necessary. "...concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges of an individual. To the degree that *the conflict* compromises the health of the congregation, our actions must reflect our commitment to maintaining the safety of our community." If the conflict is "perceived to threaten the safety of any adult or child, is disruptive of church activities or diminishes the appeal of the congregation to its potential or existing members", the UUCE must deal with the inappropriate behavior directly. (Quotes are taken from the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, OH.) (Conflict Resolution: Guidelines and Suggestions for Success from All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist, Battleboro, VT.)

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie Covenant of Right Relations

We covenant to practice the following behaviors:

Welcoming and Hospitality:

We practice hospitality, welcoming all those who enter.

Furthering Diversity:

We work to foster a multicultural and multigenerational community that sees diversity in all its manifestations as a sign of our strength.

Listening and Speaking:

We listen with respect and attention and speak with care.

Serving our congregation community:

We serve our congregation community with generosity and good humor, and we acknowledge the services of others.

Working through Conflict:

We resolve conflicts directly, using openness and compassion.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation:

We acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings and are willing to forgive those of others.

Solidarity and Accompaniment:

We support each other in times of joy and need.

If the covenant is broken between individuals, we further agree to use the *Practice of Reconciliation*, and if the conflict cannot be resolved to use the *Conflict Resolution: Guidelines and Suggestions for Success* (both documents as found at <http://www.uuworld.org>).

II. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie Child and Youth Protection

Policy Scope

Abuse of any kind cannot be tolerated within our congregation community. Of these, our children and youth are most vulnerable to abuse, and because of this, these procedures focus specifically on abuse of children and youth.

Section I. The Policy

The members and friends of UUCE accept the responsibility to define abuse, educate our congregation about it, and implement policies and procedures that will create a climate of safety, love, and awareness.

A. Defining Abuse of Children and Youth

- Abuse can be mental, emotional, physical or sexual. People may be guilty of abuse if they personally inflict the abuse, or if they cause or permit a child to be in a situation, or fail to do our best to protect a child from a situation that results in the abuse.
- A mental or emotional injury is one that "results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development or psychological functioning."
- A physical injury is one that results in substantial harm to the child.
- Sexual abuse is any sexual conduct that is potentially harmful to a child's mental, emotional or physical welfare.

B. Education

The successful implementation of these procedures requires that we educate our congregation about what constitutes sexual abuse, situations at our congregation that could put people at risk, and the rules and procedures that we have adopted together. As we educate people, we need to make sure that we do so in a way that emphasizes love, awareness and action. It is important that we avoid creating an environment of fear or suspicion.

The UUCE Board of Trustees shall:

Establish a UUCE Safe Congregation Committee for child and youth protection which would be responsible to:

- Create, keep up to date, and make available a UUCE Safety Handbook that provides education for age 5–youth, including information about child sexual abuse prevention, an explanation of inappropriate behavior, unsafe situations to avoid, and what reporting is required if abuse occurs
- Make available the current Child and Youth Protection Policy for the congregation library
- Obtain and make available the Pennsylvania statutes addressing child abuse and mandatory reporting of child abuse
- Provide a representative of the Safe Congregation Committee to the UUCE new member orientations to present an overview of these procedures
- Provide an overview of this procedures to be included in the new member packet

For our Children and Youth, the RE Committee will provide:

- Age appropriate classes on development and sexuality to be taught on a regular basis using a curriculum such as “Our Whole Lives”.
- Sunday school class time to go over the UUCE Safety Handbook information.

For our RE Teachers and other Volunteers working with children and youth, the RE Committee will provide:

- Copies of the current UUCE Child and Youth Protection Policies, and the Pennsylvania statutes addressing child abuse and mandatory reporting of child abuse.
- Copies of the Code of Conduct for Adults and Youth

C. Selection and Screening of Staff & Volunteers

Religious Education (RE) teachers and other volunteers working with children and youth:

- Will be at least 25 years of age to work with high school youth.
- Will be at least 21 years of age to teach other RE classes (an 18-20 year old may teach as the second adult with someone who is 21 or older).
- Will be at least 18 years of age to provide childcare.
- Will have been an active participant in UUCE for at least six months or have childcare references from the public or private sector.
- Will have completed a screening form (see appendix).
- Will meet with the Director of RE to discuss expectations.
- Will have had two references checked
- Will have passed the UUCE standard for criminal and child abuse background check.
- Will have participated in at least one training session on child abuse.
- Will have read, understood and signed the Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth or the Code of Ethics for Older Youth Working with Younger Youth and Children (See appendix).
- Will have valid driver’s licenses, liability insurance, and current state safety inspection stickers on their vehicles if they are to transport children/youth to congregation-sponsored activities.

Paid staff members who work with children will also meet the above criteria.

Exceptions to the above criteria may be approved by the UUCE Board of Trustees.

D. Supervision

Events where the congregation provides programs for children and youth and assumes responsibility for children and youth:

The “two adult rule” will be used and is defined as requiring at least two adults be present during any activity where the congregation is taking responsibility for the care of children/youth.

The minimum age of the adults is to be consistent with the RE Teacher guidelines above. Youth under the age of 18 may work as helpers with younger children, though they cannot be used to satisfy the “two adult rule”.

While our congregation is not responsible for screening members of other congregations, we do require that our safety policies such as the “two adult rule” be followed.

Adults who accompany youth from other UU congregations to attend district youth activities held at UUCE will be screened by their home congregations according to their own policies.

Programs that involve children and youth shall always include adequate supervisory personnel or they will be cancelled or postponed. Supervision shall be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Procedures shall be implemented for the nursery that clearly identifies the child and the child’s parent or guardian. Children shall only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.

Events where the parents provide programs or activities for their own children and youth:
The “two adult rule” defined above does not apply to congregation events where the parents have responsibility for their own children and youth.

Before and after congregation programs where parents assume responsibility for their children and youth:
The “two adult rule” does not apply to situations where the parents have responsibility for their own children and youth. However, the children, youth, and adults are expected to remain in the open public areas.

With written parental consent, one adult driver, meeting the criteria above in section C, may transport two or more children or youth to and from a congregation-sponsored event. The “two adult rule” still applies during the destination activity.

E. Reporting

Situations of suspected child abuse are seldom simple and straightforward. Religious leaders and congregational members should be guided by a commitment to the overriding priority of protecting the children. They should also be sensitive to the harm that can be done by false or mistaken accusations.

State Law: Mandatory Reporter

If a UUCE member or friend of the congregation has a suspicion that a child has been abused, either while involved in congregation programs, events and activities, or at other times, that person must report the incident to state authorities, defined in Pennsylvania as the Pennsylvania Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (PRS) or law enforcement.

In Pennsylvania, “a person having cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately

make a report...” As such, all persons are termed “mandatory reporters” by law and reports may be made anonymously to the state. The Pennsylvania abuse/neglect hotline number is (800) 932-0313. The congregation is also under the local law enforcement jurisdiction of the Office of Children and Youth who may be contacted at 814-451-6600.

Reporting Within the Congregation

If the person with the concern believes the abuse occurred during a congregation program, event or activity, the individual should report his or her concerns to the minister, or the Director of Religious Education.

Any person who has concerns about inappropriate behavior by teachers, child care workers, or other adults or older youth in our congregation community should report their concerns immediately to the minister, or the Director of Religious Education (DRE). Inappropriate behavior may include such things as failure to follow the “two adult rule” or physical/verbal interaction with a child that could be construed as sexual in nature (e.g. an adult resting his/her hand on a child’s thigh). Such behavior, which is not in itself abuse, is not in the best interest of our children and needs to be addressed and monitored in order to protect both the child and adult involved.

False Accusations

The protection from false or mistaken allegations of adults who teach in the RE program or otherwise interact with children at UUCE is also an important goal of this policy. A key way to prevent false or mistaken allegations is to abide by the prevention guidelines outlined in these policies, as well as the Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth and the Code of Ethics for Older Youth Working with Younger Youth and Children. We should be sensitive to the disruption and damage a false accusation may cause to both the adults and the children involved. This is true even when the accusation is one due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of what seems a child’s straightforward report of an event.

Section II. Organizational Structure

Safe Congregation Committee

The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the minister and DRE, will appoint a Safe Congregation Committee of 4-6 qualified and knowledgeable people who will be responsible for the implementation of these procedures. These persons will be selected by qualification and willingness to serve. Qualifications include:

1. Professional or volunteer experience in working with children and/or child abuse issues or through special training in said areas;
2. Knowledge about available resources and reporting procedures for children, inclusive of applicable Pennsylvania State laws.

These members must meet the same screening requirements as all other child/youth volunteers.

Response Team

The Board of Trustees will determine who is on the response team. When a specific situation arises a Response Team will be formed consisting of the DRE, the minister, and two individuals from the Safe Congregation Committee. If the incident or allegations involve any of these individuals or their family members; they will not be members of the Response Team.

The Response Team does not have the legal authority, expertise or training to determine guilt or innocence. Its overall purpose is to protect children and youth, and to ensure that they and the accused are treated with dignity and respect.

Section III. Implementation of Policy

A. Education

Documentation

The Safe Congregation Committee must ensure that supporting documentation exists to record the occurrence of educational activities on a yearly basis. The documents can be computer generated and saved in a locked file.

B. Selection and Screening of Staff and Volunteers

Interview

The DRE will meet with potential volunteers to describe the duties and screening requirements and determine the genuine interest of working with children and youth.

Documentation

The Safe Congregation Committee must ensure supporting documentation exists demonstrating thorough screening of staff and volunteers who will work with children or youth, including: verification of minimum age, time active at UUCE or work references check, signed Code of Conduct, screening form, DRE interview notes, personal references checked, and criminal background check completed.

Reference Checks

All personal and organizational references provided by the applicant will be contacted via phone by the Safe Congregation Committee. A written record of each contact will be made which will include the following: the date and method of contact, the person making the contact, and a summary of the reference's remarks. These records will be kept with the original application. The primary question to be explored is whether in the opinion of the reference, the applicant is suitable for working with youth and children.

Criminal Background Check

A confidential criminal background check will be conducted in accordance with recommendations from the UUCE Board of Directors. The background check will be at the expense of the UUCE. The Safe Congregation Committee will review these background check reports and will be given criteria on which to base approval status for each applicant. All relevant laws pertaining to confidentiality and destruction of documents will be strictly followed.

Disqualifying offenses

Any applicant who has ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, or who is currently on probation or received deferred adjudication or who is presently pending any criminal charges for any disqualifying offense against a child or youth, will automatically be given a “non-approval” recommendation by the Safe Congregation Committee.

C. Supervision

Documentation

The DRE will monitor the appropriateness of the volunteers’ interactions with the children or youth.

D. Reporting

Response to suspicious behavior

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult staff member or volunteer worker and a child or youth shall be reported to the Minister, the Director of Religious Education (DRE) or the President of the Board of Trustees. They will immediately investigate and provide prompt warnings, when appropriate, and monitor closely. Counseling and support will be offered. The volunteer’s services will be terminated immediately for continued violation of such warnings, or for a single violation of sufficient gravity.

Response to an allegation of abuse

When an allegation of child abuse occurring during a UUCE program, event, or activity is reported, the responsible person receiving the allegation must take the following steps:

- Take immediate action to ensure the protection of the child or youth
- Report the incident to the appropriate state authorities in accordance with Pennsylvania law.
- Report the incident to the Minister, DRE, or chair of the Safe Congregation Committee
- Document the allegation in writing using a Safe Congregation Incident Form (see appendix) and submit this to the chair of the Safe Congregation Committee.
- The Chair of the Safe Congregation Committee will notify and provide the incident Form to the Response Team.

Response Team

The team responding to the allegation will keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. **Safety of the Children** – The safety of the children in the congregation program should be of primary importance. Reasonable and timely actions should be taken to ensure their safety based upon the credibility and severity of the allegation and other pertinent factors. All allegations will be taken seriously.

2. **State Law** – Copies of the applicable Pennsylvania state laws will be kept in the Child and Youth Protection Policies book and shall be referenced when an incident is reported. Appropriate and timely reporting will be made to the appropriate local or state law enforcement agency or the Pennsylvania Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

3. **Investigation** –The Response Team conducts an internal investigation to gather information about the incident.

4. **Other Inappropriate Behaviors** – Some incidents or allegations in the RE or other child or youth programs may involve behaviors that are not clearly child abuse, but may be in other ways deemed inappropriate by a parent, the DRE, Minister or the Safe Congregation Committee. In such cases, a Response Team may be called together to review the situation and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

5. **Who to Inform** – When the investigation is completed the Response Team will forward the report to the President of the Board of Trustees.

Board of Trustees

1. **The President of the Board** will review the findings of the Response Team with the Board of Trustees, in a closed session, at the earliest appropriate time.

2. **Notification of Executive Committee and District** – The President of the Board of Trustees will notify the Ohio Meadville District Executive:

- That a Response Team has been convened
- About the nature of the issue
- That a report has been or will be made to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

3. **Spokesperson** – The President of the Board will designate one person to act as a spokesperson for the congregation. That will be the only person authorized to speak for the congregation regarding the situation.

4. **Confidentiality** – In order to ensure that the safety of our children and youth is our highest priority, we must encourage the responsible reporting of all concerns or suspicions of child abuse. To this end, all reports will be considered confidential. In this context, “confidential” means that the identity of the child or youth, the accused and reporting person, the details of the concern or suspicions, and any other identifying information will be kept confidential among the chair of the Safe Congregation Committee, the Minister, the DRE, the members of the Response Team and the Board of Trustees. This information will not be disseminated to the congregation.

5. **Restrictions with Children** – In order to protect the children and youth in our programs from potential risk and to protect the accused from further suspicion, decisions about removing the accused from interacting with children or youth in the RE program, or other congregation events and activities will be made by the Board of Trustees after review of the Response Team’s recommendations.. A decision should be made and action taken in a timely manner based on the possible threat to the children or youth, the credibility and seriousness of the allegation, and other related factors.

APPENDICES

1. UUCE Screening Form
2. Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Youth and Children
3. Code of Ethics for Older Youth Working with Younger Youth and Children
4. “Possible Indicators of Child Abuse” handout – to be used in teacher training.
5. Incident Reporting Form

1. UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF ERIE
SCREENING FORM FOR CHILDREN OR YOUTH WORKERS
(THE INFORMATION OBTAINED IN THIS FORM WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL)

This screening form is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form. Persons seeking a position in the congregation as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. This form is being used to help the congregation provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs.

If you need more space for any of your responses, please use additional sheets of paper.

PERSONAL

Name _____ Date _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Identity must be confirmed with a state driver's license or other government-issued ID.

Do you have a current driver's license? _____ If yes, DL# _____ Issuing State _____

Present Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone # _____

Previous addresses for the last 10 years _____

In what area of youth/child work are you interested? _____

What date would you be available to begin? _____

Respond to the following with Yes or No:

Have you been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? _____ If yes, please explain.

Have you ever committed, or has any civil action ever been filed against you for reasons related to, sexual misconduct or child abuse? _____ If yes, please explain.

Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by an employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? _____ If yes, please explain.

Other than the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that might call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of children and youth? _____ If yes, please explain. _____

CONGREGATION HISTORY AND PRIOR YOUTH WORK

(Please list organizations' names, addresses, and type of work performed and dates)

Please list any congregations that you have attended regularly during the past 5 years.

Describe any congregation volunteer work over the past 5 years.

Describe any youth work (at congregations or other organizations) over the past 5 years.

In what ways have you participated in the life of the UUCE over the past 6 months?

Please list any training or education in youth-related work _____

PERSONAL REFERENCES (not former employers or relatives)

1. Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ How they know you _____

2. Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ How they know you _____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this screening form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or congregations listed in this form to give UUCE any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this screening form by UUCE, I hereby release any individual, congregation, youth organization, charity, employer, reference or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information.

I (check one):

- waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.
- do not waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Code of Conduct and policies of UUCE in the performance of my services on behalf of the congregation. I understand that UUCE will obtain information relating to my criminal history record. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudication. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review that criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received.

I the undersigned do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify the UUCE and each of their officers, directors, employees, and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorneys' fees, court costs, and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer or staff member. I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT.

This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

Print Name _____

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

2. Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth

UUCE Position Statement

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith, have a crucial and privileged role. To help our children grow up to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person. It is important to recognize that this role carries with it both power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone, child-care worker, teacher, minister, mentor, or any other role, the adult has special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways that are affirming and inspiring to the young people and to the adult. Adults who work with children and youth at UUCE events are expected to always have the best interests of children and youth at heart.

Expectations

Adults are expected to nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of children and youth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and fun. Our charge to children and youth workers is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness.

We intend to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and communities. We expect that one person's enjoyment will not be at the expense of another person's health or self-esteem. In light of this, there are some specific expectations that the UUCE has of adults working with children and youth. They are as follows:

- **“Friendship” with Youth** – Although we hope that youth and adults will have genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for “friendship” is not sufficiently mature to be in a position of responsibility over them. A “friendship” is reciprocal, where neither person has more responsibility for the health of the relationship than the other. This is antithetical to the adult/youth relationship, where the adult is the one who assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is expected that relationships that an adult has with youth who have grown to adulthood will not become exploitative.
- **Unofficial Contact With Youth** – Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. These can be not only healthy, but also transformative for both. However, it is our concern that a “predator,” who does not have the best interest of the youth at heart, will try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a youth as a mentoring relationship. Therefore, if you wish to be in contact with a youth outside the normal channels of congregation sponsored events, it is imperative that your behavior both be and appear to be above reproach. Any relationship you develop with a youth outside of congregation-sponsored events must be with the knowledge and consent of the parents. Furthermore, you should let the Director of Religious Education know what you are doing. This is for the protection

of the youth from potential predators, but also for your own protection. You will best protect yourself from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the parents and the Director of Religious Education informed of your actions.

- **Sexualized behavior** – Adults play an important part in helping our youth develop healthy identities as sexual beings. Children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care. It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is not appropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for example, or to make “double entendres.” Physical expressions of affections such as hugs have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged.
- **Confidentiality** – Adults who work with children and youth under the auspices of the congregation are responsible not only to the children and youth, but to the congregation as well. **Remember: you are acting both ethically and as an authorized agent of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie.** Sometimes you will learn that a child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug problem, etc. **YOU MUST NOT KEEP SUCH INFORMATION TO YOURSELF.** For this reason, never give children or youth the impression that you will keep secrets for them. **CONFIDENTIALITY IS NOT SECRET KEEPING.** For the most part, a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when the information is of a major crisis nature, encourage the child or youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure. In addition, you yourself **MUST** consult with a person of greater authority in the congregation, which in this situation means the chair of the Safe Congregation Committee, the DRE, or the Minister, about an appropriate course of action.

Accordance with This Code of Conduct

Any UUCE staff or volunteer working with children or youth who disagrees with any provision of the code is free to discuss their opinions with the chair of the Safe Congregation Committee, the DRE or the Minister. However, until such a time as the congregation chooses to alter any portion of its provisions, the worker must abide by the code as written.

By signing below, I indicate that I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it. Further, I agree to refrain from any conduct that may constitute verbal, emotional, sexual or physical abuse. If I violate any of these provisions, the congregation leadership will take appropriate action, and I may become ineligible to work with children or youth at UUCE.

Print Name _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)
Signature _____ Date _____

3. Code of Ethics for Older Youth Working with Younger Youth and Children

Underlying Purpose: When ever we gather together at congregation, we are each involved with our own spiritual journeys as we strive to develop a healthy sense of self-worth, identity, and mutual respect. Older youth who are in leadership roles need to be aware of the underlying purpose that we have in our gatherings at congregation and the special responsibilities that come with your new role in the classroom.

Responsibilities:

1. Respect.

The children and youth in our care are still forming who they are and what they believe. As you enter into relationship with the children in your care, ensure that you bring respect of those around you and that you expect others to respect you, so that everyone's positive potential can be realized. When we are not respectful, we can end up being abusive. A person may be guilty of abuse if they personally inflict the abuse, or if they cause or permit a child to be in a situation that results in the abuse. Abuse can be mental, emotional, physical or sexual.

- A mental or emotional injury is one that "results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development or psychological functioning."
- A physical injury is one that results in substantial harm (or the genuine threat of substantial harm) to the child.
- Sexual abuse is any sexual conduct that is harmful.

2. Development

Your actions and conversations have a direct impact on how others feel about themselves, how they feel about being at our congregation, what they value, and what they believe. Two key areas of personal growth are a) self-worth and b) a healthy identity as a sexual being. Research shows that children and youth suffer damaging effects when leaders or mentors become abusive or sexually involved with young persons in their care.

3. Agreement:

Therefore, I will not harass or engage in behavior with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. Furthermore, I agree that I will not engage in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children or youth. I agree to be respectful of those around me, to expect others to be respectful of me, and to use my skills to be kind, truthful, respectful, and nurturing.

Print Name _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Signed _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

4. POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

Children do not always tell someone they are being abused. They may have been threatened into silence or be too embarrassed or horrified to talk about what is happening. They may exhibit extreme behaviors such as abusing animals, other children, or their dolls, or they may completely withdraw from family and friends. There are both physical signs and behavioral clues that may indicate child abuse or neglect. These indicators are warning signs to look further, ask questions, or seek assistance from a professional.

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained fractures, burns, bruises, cuts, welts, or bite marks.
- Explanation for an injury that is inconsistent with the injury.
- Self-destructive and destructive behavior.
- Extreme behavior: fear, aggressiveness, withdrawal, or regression.

Sexual Abuse

- Sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge relative to the child's age.
- Pain or itching, bleeding, or bruises in or around the genitals.
- Self-destructive and destructive behavior, such as alcohol or drug use, running away, or promiscuous behavior.
- Extreme behavior: withdrawal into fantasy play and away from peer relationships, depression, or passivity.

Emotional Abuse

- Impaired sense of self-worth.
- Delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development or failure to thrive.
- Self-destructive and destructive behavior, such as alcohol and drug abuse.
- Extreme behavior: unusual aggression or passivity, hyperactivity.

Neglect

- Constant hunger or fatigue, inappropriate dress, or poor hygiene.
- Lack of supervision over long periods of time.
- Unattended physical or dental problems.
- Self-destructive and destructive behavior, such as alcohol or drug use.

(Taken from the UUA brochure "Honoring the Children – What We Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse" by Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Jade Angelica)

5. INCIDENT REPORT FORM

TODAY'S DATE _____

DATE AND TIME OF INCIDENT _____

YOUR NAME _____

NAME OF PERSON WHO INITIATED REPORT _____

NAMES OF CHILD(REN) OR YOUTH AND ADULT(S) INVOLVED IN INCIDENT

WHERE DID THE INCIDENT OCCUR? (BE SPECIFIC)

DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED (Use more paper if necessary)

HAS THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD(REN) OR YOUTH BEEN ASSURED? HOW?

WHO HAS BEEN NOTIFIED ABOUT THIS INCIDENT? (LIST NAMES AND DATES/TIMES, AND PHONE NUMBERS)?

III. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie (UUCE)

Confidential Limited Access Covenant

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a congregation open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles.

However, we also have the responsibility to do our best to protect the health and safety of members and friends of the UUCE, especially our children and youth. Because of our commitment to the Safe Congregation Policy and procedures (including Right Relations, Child and Youth Protection, and Limited Access) we want to enter into a limited access covenant with you because: (check one of the following)

_____ A serious complaint or allegation has been made about you to the proper UUCE entity and an investigation is under way. In order to protect you from further suspicion and the children and/or youth from potential risk, you are asked to sign the agreement, which will remain in effect until the complaint/allegation has been resolved.

_____ It has been brought to our attention that you have been involved with the legal system in situation(s) that we feel may compromise the health or safety of our children and/or youth. In order to continue to worship at the UUCE you are required to sign the Limited Access Covenant.

_____ You have shared with us issues/situations involving children and/or youth with which you struggle. We appreciate your honesty and desire to maintain the health and safety of our children or youth. In order to continue to worship at the UUCE you are required to sign the Limited Access Covenant.

This Limited Access Agreement is a **confidential** document.

This document will be made known only to the President of the Board of Trustees, Minister, Director of Religious Education, and applicable teachers. The document will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Within the requirements of the agreement, the UUCE welcomes your participation in adult worship services and activities, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, and supervised intergenerational events.

You are not to have contact with children and/or youth on the grounds or at any UUCE service or event.

Read the attached agreement and sign and date the form. Failure to abide by the agreement will cause your access to the UUCE functions and property to be denied. Thank you.

Board President's Signature _____ Date _____

Minister's Signature _____ Date _____

Director of Religious Education _____ Date _____