

---

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

---

Religious Education Safety

---

### **DATE INITIATED**

---

### **DATE REVISED**

---

30 August 2012, 21 April 2014

---

### **PURPOSE AND HISTORY**

---

The purpose of this policy is to assure a safe physical and emotional environment for children, youth, and adults. The Board of Trustees recognize the leadership of the Religious Education Council and staff to increase awareness and understanding of safety and healthy boundaries in relationships between adults, youth, and children in the religious environment.

Trustees created a Safe Congregation Policy Task force charged to review all USNF safety policies, including the RE Safety Policy. This revised policy and procedures is a result of that 2012 review. The procedures are based on a 2008 RE Council revision of the 2004 Code of Ethics for Adults who Work with Children and Youth.

---

### **SCOPE & RESPONSIBILITY**

---

Volunteer and professional staffs sign a covenantal agreement to assure commitment to abide by RE Safety Procedures that are detailed in this policy and procedure document. Procedures may be revised by the RE Council.

Document pertains to: All who need dedicated use of all or a portion of the USNF building.

---

### **POLICY OVERVIEW**

---

It is the policy of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence to require staff and volunteers in our religious education program to comply with the RE Safety Policy and Procedures to assure that children and youth in our Religious Education program may "...safely learn and grow."

---

### **DEFINITIONS & BACKGROUND**

---

#### **PART I: POLICY SUMMARY AND COVENANTAL AGREEMENT**

---

##### **COVENANT OF EXPECTED BEHAVIOR**

As a religious institution which affirms the worth of the individual and the sacred value of the community, we do not take our responsibility lightly, and recognize that we have a special responsibility to ensure that there are structures and policies in place that will protect our children and youth from harm and abuse from within or without our congregation. We require that all compensated and volunteer staff, as leaders and role models in the Religious Education program at USNF, covenant to adhere to the following policy and procedures while interacting with children and youth in the Religious Education program and any affiliated activities.

**TWO KEY RULES** - Our policy may be simply summarized:

1. **Two sets of eyes.** Ensure that our children have "two sets of eyes" looking out for their wellbeing at all times to assure they may safely learn and grow.
2. **If you see something, say something.** Speak to the Director of Religious Education (DRE), or if not available, the Minister, if you have any concerns for safety.

**SIGNED COVENANTAL AGREEMENT**

As I engage in the shared ministry of religious education I covenant to apply the following principles to all relationships with children and youth at UNSF. I will:

- Be mindful that spiritual growth, both my own and that of others, encompasses all of the following aspects of relationship: emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual;
  - Be consciously gentle and non-threatening in all physical contact and proximity with children, youth, and adults;
  - Communicate in a manner that is positive and affirming, as feelings and ideas are shared most honestly in a safe environment;
  - Refrain from all behaviors, verbal and physical that are in any way erotic, suggestive or sexual in nature; including sexual suggestiveness and joking; and
  - Report to the Director of Religious Education or Minister any risk to the safety and well-being of our children and youth and any observed or suspected abuse.
- If it is safe and prudent to do so, take action to help protect anyone at risk of imminent harm.

I have read and understand the following Safety Procedures for Children and Youth in the Religious Education Program. I agree to abide by these procedures in order to create an environment that is safe from the potential for abuse or harm and to honor and preserve the trust placed in me by the members of this community. I understand I will be required to review specific rules to refresh my understanding of safety procedures in advance of my accepting a new RE responsibility. By signing below, I certify that I have not committed, been legally accused, or convicted of a sexual offence or violence against any person. (If so please disclose this to the Minister or DRE and discuss how you may participate in our congregation.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name of Volunteer  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature  
Date

---

**PART II: THE VOLUNTEER'S CRITICAL ROLE**

**Boundaries** - It is important that volunteers maintain meaningful relationships with the young people with whom they work. This means exercising good judgment in using their influence with children and youth and refraining from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with persons older than themselves, and may find it difficult to speak out about any behavior of their leaders, teachers, and caretakers that makes the young person uncomfortable. Because of this, it is the responsibility of adult volunteers and staff to maintain appropriate boundaries.

**Nurturing Leadership** - Adults and older youth in leadership roles are in positions of stewardship in fostering spiritual development. It is especially important that those in leadership positions provide appropriate nurture, care, and support. Spiritual growth in human beings involves physical, emotional, intellectual, and sexual identities.

**Communication Risks** - Please be mindful that all communication has the potential to carry harmful messages. Communication includes body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, as well as the choice of words in written and verbal expression. Children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders engage in physical, emotional, verbal, or intellectual abuse of any kind. In addition, behavior that is coercive, seductive, suggestive, or contains sexual innuendo can be especially damaging.

### **SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING**

**Pay Attention** - Safety is everyone's responsibility. We ask that members, friends, adults, and older youth helping out in the RE program commit both to learning about the "red flags" signaling possible child abuse or other distress (please see Part III, G Appendix) and participating in annual RE trainings about such warning signs and how to handle them.

**Speak Up** - We also ask that all volunteers helping out in the RE program voice their concerns should they notice a child behaving in a way that causes concern or should they notice an adult behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of these guidelines, putting young people and the congregation at risk. We ask that volunteers and teen staff share their concerns promptly with the DRE, or with the Minister.

---

## **PART III: SAFETY PROCEDURES**

---

### **A. RE CLASSROOM SAFETY PROCEDURES - Always Two Sets of Eyes**

1. **Public settings** - Religious Education volunteers shall minimize opportunities whereby children can be subject to any kind of abuse. This would include arranging activities so that children are not left alone with a single adult. This can be accomplished by always making sure that classes and events take place semi-publicly (either in eye-shot of others, or with the door remaining open).
2. **Two volunteers or open doors** - In classrooms at the Society, we strive for at least two adult volunteers at all times when possible. One adult volunteer is permitted in classes with average attendance fewer than 8, as long as they meet in a room with a door that is windowed and unobstructed, or if the door into the hallway remains propped open.
3. **At least two adults when away from other USNF adults** - Two adults must always be present with a group in any setting where there are not other USNF adults in the immediate vicinity. This includes, but is not limited to, classes that meet at ILI and trips to the park (see below). In addition, in groups that have activities off the Society grounds, or outside the typical Sunday morning RE class time, there must be 1 adult per every 4 young people (younger students through grade 6). Older students have different adult/youth ratios in different settings, articulated below in Part III, B.)
4. **DRE discretion** - Upon the discretion of the DRE, any class which needs more adult support to experience the time together as safe, sacred, and fun, may require more adults interacting with the class at all times, regardless of overall supervision requirements.
5. **No unauthorized private meetings** - No person working with children or young people should arrange a meeting with a child or young person away from the church premises without the presence of the parent (or other authorized adult), or the authorization of the parent. Coming of Age Mentor relationships are likely to require such meetings, and these are arranged by mentors, their COA'er, and parents. There is a specific Mentor agreement that must be reviewed and signed by COA'er, Mentor, Parents, and DRE,

- before such a meeting can take place. (This rule refers to relationships that include the adult doing the work of the Society. It does not refer to private and prior relationships between families.)
6. **Off-site permission slips required** - Any offsite trips or activities (off Society Grounds), for any age of child or youth, require permission slips signed by parents/guardians. (This includes spontaneous trips to local coffee/ice cream shops and youth over age 18 who still reside with their parents or guardians.) For this purpose, "Society Grounds" is defined as including our lawns, Pulaski Park, and International Language Institute (ILI). Registration of children in the RE program constitutes permission for them to accompany their class within the USNF building and on the front/side lawn, in Pulaski Park, and to ILI.
  7. **Travel Offsite** - When the congregation sings children out from the Great Hall on Sunday mornings, offsite-bound students will gather outside the side door with coats to wait for their teachers.
    - a) **All travel together** - Everyone must travel with the class. Students must stay together with the group, and stay on the path. Always travel with one teacher in the front and another teacher in the back of the group. Cross the street at the crosswalk in a large group, students wait for the teachers before entering the building, and go directly to classrooms.
    - b) **Limited bathroom access** - Children should go to the bathroom before the beginning of the worship service. Essential trips to the ILI bathrooms require the whole group to go, or a teacher to accompany a smaller group.
    - c) **Expectations of parents** - Safety Policies require that parents be in the Society building the entire time her or his child is in class at ILI.
  8. **Parent and Guardian Pick-Up Procedures** - Children and youth attending RE classes and programs at USNF must be picked up by an authorized parent or guardian according to the following age-based guidelines:
    - a) **Toddler - Grade 3** - On Sunday mornings, authorized parents or guardians of children in T-2/preschool and K - 3rd grade classes must pick their children up at their classrooms at the conclusion of class. In addition, parents of T-2 and Preschool children must sign them in and out.
    - b) **Grade 4 - 8** - Parents or guardians of children in grades four and above may elect to have their children meet them at a prearranged location on USNF premises at the conclusion of their classes.
    - c) **High School Youth** -- Members of the youth group are supervised while on the premises of USNF for program activities; youth and their parents are responsible for making arrangements for arrival and departure. Youth are expected to arrive and depart the premises no more than fifteen minutes before or after the end of a scheduled activity.
  9. **Bathroom Visits** - In the event a child needs to use the bathroom, follow these procedures:
    - a) **Toddler and Preschool children** will go to the bathroom in groups led by the teacher of the class. The exterior door to the restroom will remain open during toileting. If the child needs assistance in the bathroom, the teacher shall provide the assistance necessary, first encouraging the child to handle as much of the process as he/she can. The teacher will assist all children in hand washing.
    - b) **Kindergarten - 3rd grade children** may go to the bathroom with a buddy.
    - c) **4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students meeting in the Society building** will be permitted to go to

and from the restroom as needed.

- d) **4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade children meeting offsite** will always go to the restroom, which is a full building away, with the buddy system.

10. **Evacuation procedures** - In the event of a fire alarm or other emergency (e.g., gas leak or imminent threat of violence) during RE classes or youth group, immediately follow the evacuation procedures below.

- a) **Teachers lead children to Pulaski Park** - Teachers will pick up attendance books and accompany classes to Pulaski Park where they will circle up. We will lead them behind Memorial Hall to Pulaski Park.
- b) **Parents** pick up children at the park from the teacher and make sure the teacher checks their name off the attendance sheet so we know they are safe. Parents must not attempt to go downstairs to retrieve them as this will block their exit ways. Do not congregate in the fire lane/driveway. Parents need to meet their children at the Park and consult with teachers before leading their children away. Parents must not take children from within the building during a fire emergency anywhere except to the park.
- c) **Record attendance** - Teachers will check them off in the attendance book as they are picked up in the Park. We must be able to account for each child otherwise the fire department will have to search for the child.
- d) **Obey fire or safety personnel** - By state law, when the alarm sounds, the building becomes the 'property of' the Fire Department. Do as directed by Fire Department personnel without delay.
- e) **Evacuation procedures for other events at the Society** - When children are not under the care of teachers in RE classes, parents are primarily responsible for safely evacuating *children first* from the building.

#### 11. Accident, injury, or allergies

- a) **Render first aid or seek help** - In the event of any accident or injury, first aid will be rendered as soon as possible. If an injury is beyond the scope of the adult volunteer, they will seek help immediately. If there is blood involved, they will use universal precautions if they have been trained to do so. If they have not been trained in universal precautions, they will get the DRE, a member of the RE Council, or another adult who has been trained in Universal precautions to come and do clean up appropriately.
- b) **Report incident** - The adult volunteer will fill out an Accident Report immediately following the event, with a copy to the injured child's parents and a copy to the DRE.
- c) **Allergies** - If a class or event includes a child with food allergies, teachers should remind parents to bring snacks that the allergic child can consume. Parents of children with allergies should communicate clearly with the DRE and classroom teachers about acceptable foods. Because some children react adversely, snacks should not contain sugar, artificial colors and flavors, or artificial sweeteners. Allergens specific to each class are identified on the snack sign-up sheet. Because of the severity of allergic reactions, no peanuts or tree nuts will be allowed in any food offered to children during religious education programs. This rule does not apply to adult or congregation events, such as social hour. Those bringing food for these functions are advised to label items that may contain allergens.

12. **No Tobacco, Drugs, Alcohol, or Illegal Activity** - Religious Education volunteers shall not permit or encourage the use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, weapons, or any illegal activities among children or youth.

13. **Lighted Chalice Safety** - The safe lighting of the chalice is a vital part of our religious

heritage and life together. RE classes, youth group events, and other events often include chalice lighting. In RE classes.

- a) **No flames in preschool** - Pre-school classes will use creative non-fire chalices such as feathers or tissue paper flames, or a small electric tea light.
- b) **K-5th grade classes** most often use electric tea lights. Teachers may choose to light chalices which will then be extinguished or placed on a high shelf away from flammable materials until the end of class when they are extinguished. Teachers are expected to use extreme caution about permitting children to handle matches.
- c) **6th - 8th grade chalices**, when these groups meet at the Society, may remain lit as long as the groups' activity will not promote a dangerous level of movement or materials near the flame.
- d) **Matches** are kept in the RE office, and children may not get or carry them. Adults must always closely supervise the lighting of chalices, and return the matches to the RE office.
- e) **No flames at ILI** - All classes meeting at ILI must use a small electric tea light as a chalice. No flames are permitted.
- f) **No-flame situations** - There may be situations where it is determined by a RE volunteer, RE Council member, or staff member not to be safe to light a chalice. In these circumstances, a small electric tea light will be used.

#### 14. Traveling

- a) **Seat belts** - Children and youth traveling in cars must always wear seat belts. No mini-bus or van should be used which is not provided with seat belts for all passengers and children must wear them.
- b) **Adult driver's license and insurance** - Volunteers driving RE children or youth must have a valid drivers' license and insurance with suitable coverage. Youth may not transport other youth.
- c) **Permission slips** - No child is to be transported in any car without prior written parental permission. Each car must carry the permission slips of all occupants; children may not switch cars mid-trip. Adults present will determine if children or youth may return to the Society after the field trip by riding in another car. If they do so, the adult drivers must ensure that they have exchanged permission slips with medical and contact information on them.
- d) **Refreshment and rest stops** - Travel to get refreshments or visit rest rooms will be done in groups with at least one adult accompanying the group and other adults remaining with the other young people. One adult will be present in the restroom area if a stop is made along the trip.
- e) **Public transportation** - If public transportation is used, one adult will be identified as the head counter getting on and off public transportation. Children will not be permitted to change cars mid-trip, including subway cars.

#### B. EVENTS OUTSIDE SUNDAY MORNING

Events that happen outside the regular RE hours are highly prized by children and youth. Overnight and offsite events are central to the community building and social justice components of Religious Education. In all cases, adults are expected to enforce the ground rules of the group and these rules. Written parental permission is required, regardless of age, both for liability reasons and because it is how we ensure that parents/guardians know about events and we know how to contact them.

1. **Off-Site Daytime Events** - Field Trips, Arcadia Day, and trips to public places such as concerts or sporting events
  - a) **Keep together** - On all field trips, all children and youth will remain with the group.

- b) **Adult-to-child ratio** - There must be at least two adults present for any event. For 6th grade and below, there must be 1 adult for every 4 children; for 7th and 8th grade, 1 adult for every 5 children. For youth, there must be 1 adult for every 8 youth. For youth, adults may include Youth Advisors, Youth Director, and Youth Chaperones.
  - c) **Enforce travel rules** - Adults must enforce travel procedures (pages 6-7).
2. **Field Trips – Daytime**
- a) **Keep together** - On all field trips, the expectation is that all children and youth will remain with the group.
  - b) **Enforce travel procedures** - Adults must enforce travel procedures (Part III, A-14).
3. **On Site Large Group Events**
- a) **Adult-child ratio 1:10** - There must be one adult per 10 children for any time limited day or evening activities at USNF such as a dance, a party, or workshop. If the group will at any time be divided on both floors of the building simultaneously, additional adults will be required for supervision, however it should be noted that most activities of our RE program are intended to be "whole group" activities and these instances are likely limited to events and orientations where parents or mentors are present as well.
  - b) **Youth Group meetings** - If 1-15 youth are expected, 2 adults are required; if 16-40 youth are expected, 3 adults are required. Adults should include at least 2 Advisors and the Youth Director, or 3 Advisors. Trained chaperones may be substituted for an Advisor in cases of last minute schedule conflicts.
4. **Overnight Events**
- a) **Balance safety and autonomy** - Adults should balance young people's need for autonomy with their need for structure and safety, providing support and structure in as non-intrusive manner as possible.
  - b) **Two sets of eyes** - Adults should make every effort not to be alone with children/youth in private areas such as a private room. If, for reasons of physical or emotional crisis, an adult is in a private area with a single child/youth, another adult should be called for, sending one or two of the other youth to fetch the second adult. This adult will attend to the other children/youth in the area, as well as provide a second set of eyes.
  - c) **Two awake adults** - During the night, two unrelated adult chaperones/advisors must be awake and attending to safety and supervision at all times.
5. **USNF-Site Overnight Lock-Ins**
- a. **Adult-child ratio 1:7** - USNF Overnight "lock-ins" are held by Coming of Age groups and the High School Youth Group, and potentially other gatherings of teens. These events require a ratio of 1 adult to every 7 young people, with special safety considerations following. The adults should include a minimum of 3 who work with the group as teachers, advisors, or Youth Director. Trained Youth Chaperones or parent chaperones (in the case of COA) may make up the remaining required adults. In addition, these guidelines apply to Youth and COA lock-ins:
  - b. **Youth Group Guidelines** - The Youth Group identified their own set of guidelines which we expect adults to fully support, and which are applied to COA lock-ins as well.
    - i. Come to have a good time. Leave all the negative vibrations behind!
    - ii. Don't leave the building without permission of the Advisors.
    - iii. No drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or weapons.
    - iv. No sexual or exclusive behavior.

- v. No electronic devices, including mp3 players for personal use (parents are given advisors cell #s for emergencies.)
- c. **Adult supervisor responsibilities** - In addition to supporting the group guidelines, these adults will have various responsibilities, including but not limited to: attending to
  - i. **General safety concerns** (i.e. ensuring that there is a completed, signed permission slip for each young person before the parent departs, cooking safety, the possibility of fire, locked and latched doors, intruders).
  - ii. **Supervision of physical safety** (ensuring all young people are with the group, following safety guidelines, playing and interacting safely, enforcing off-limits areas (elevator, private classrooms, offices).
  - iii. **Supervision of emotional and spiritual safety** (ensuring all young people are engaging in the activities of the group in collaborative ways, that the young people are holding one another accountable to follow their own guidelines for lock-ins, intervening as necessary) Where the Youth Group may have elected a chaplain, or a member of the YAC who holds responsibilities to attend to emotional and spiritual well-being during the lock-in, the adult chaperones will consult with him/her as appropriate).
- d. **Co-ed sleeping** - Sleeping may be co-ed, but only when sleeping is part of the communal event, and in a large communal room only. Two unrelated adult chaperones/advisors will be awake and attending to safety and supervision (in the categories above) at all times. The One Person-One Sleeping Bag rule is always in force.

#### 6. Offsite Overnight Trips for 8-12th Graders

We have off-site overnight events, such as the COA trip to Boston or the YRUU camping trip, for 8<sup>th</sup> - 12 graders only. The following rules apply only to these events:

- a) **Adult-to-child ratio** - One adult is required for every five young people. If more than 15 young people attend, at least three of the adults must be Youth Advisors or COA leaders; the remainder may be Chaperones. If fewer than 15 young people attend, a minimum of two of the adults must be Youth Advisors or COA leaders.

#### 7. Offsite Trips Involving Sleeping at Hotel/Hostel

- a) **Gender-group housing** - Youth will be housed in groups. Boys and girls will sleep in separate quarters; however any gender configuration of young people who are dating will sleep in separate quarters from one another. Any young person who identifies as transgender or has other concerns that warrant different sleeping arrangements will have a conversation with the leaders and the DRE prior to departure in order to develop an appropriate sleeping plan that takes into account both group and individual needs.
- b) **Awake adult in corridor** - Adult supervision will be provided at during sleeping areas by the presence of one awake adult outside each corridor housing USNF young people.

#### 8. Offsite Trips that Involve Sleeping at Camping Facilities

- a) **Sleeping in tents** - Tents will be set up in close proximity, with a common area/fire pit. Boys and girls shall be segregated during sleeping time. Any gender configuration that is dating will sleep in separate quarters. Any young person who identifies as transgender or has other concerns that warrant different sleeping arrangements will have a conversation with the leaders and the DRE prior to departure in order to develop an appropriate sleeping plan that takes into account

- both group and individual needs.
- b) **One awake adult** - One adult will remain awake and in the common area (not in a tent) at all times during the night. Trips must have enough adults that no adult is required to be awake all night, and all adults are able to get at least 4 hours of sleep one night, and, if a second night, 8 hours of sleep the other night. If it is raining and there is no tarp or other dry spot in the common area for an adult to remain outside, two adults must be awake and attentive at all times, but they may remain in their tent.
  - c) **General safety** - In addition to supervision, adults will be especially attentive to fire and animal safety.
  - d) **Trips to restrooms** - If a group must use public rest rooms within eyeshot, the young people may travel to and from in a group. If rest rooms or shower facilities are outside of eyeshot, young people will travel in a group with at least one adult.

**C. SUMMARY OF REQUIRED ADULT TO CHILD RATIOS FOR RE ACTIVITIES**

<b>Activities with age and group-size variations</b> (With section numbers)	Adult to Child ratio	Minimum USNF adult presence
Part III, A, 2 Any RE activity		2
Part III, A, 3 Any group away from other USNF adults		2
Part III, B, 1b Off-site daytime activity (e.g., field trip): grades 6 & under	1:4	2
Part III, B, 1b Off-site daytime activity: grades 7 & 8	1:5	2
Part III, B, 1b Off-site daytime activity: 15 or less youth	1:8	2
Part III, B, 1b Off-site daytime activity: more than 15 youth	1:8	3
Part III, B, 3a On-site large group event (e.g., dance, party, workshop) : grades up to 8	1:10	2
Part III, B, 3b On-site large group event: 15 or less youth	1:15	2
Part III, B, 3b On-site large group event: more than 15 youth	1:15	3
Part III, B, 3b At least 2 advisors and youth director or 3 advisor (trained chaperone may substitute for an advisor in case of last-minute schedule conflicts)		
Part III, B, 5a USNF site overnight lock-in: 15 or less	1:7	2
Part III, B, 5a USNF site overnight lock-in: more than 15	1:7	3
Part III, B, 5a Off-site overnight trips (e.g., COA trip to Boston or YRUU camping): 8-12 grades Part III, B, 5a At least 2 adults must be youth advisors or COA leaders	1:5	2
Part III, B, 6a Off-site overnight trips 8-12 grades: More than 15 At least 3 adults must be youth advisors or COA leaders	1:5	3
<b>Child care for USNF functions (not RE worship)</b>		Minimum childcare providers
Part III, E Events in social or downstairs meeting rooms	1:4	1
Part III, E Events in great hall or parlor	1:4	2

#### **D. COMING OF AGE MENTOR-MENTEE AGREEMENT - Mentoring the COA class Mentor Roles and Responsibilities<sup>1</sup>**

**Mentors** - A Mentor is a trusted adult who works with an 8th grade student in our Coming-Of-Age Program. Mentors may help their Mentees select and work on service projects, think about and write their credo of what religion/spirituality/values/belief means to him/her, and maintain their confidence while recognizing parents needs' for basic information and communication.

The Mentor has been selected by the young person themselves, or by the DRE in consultation with the Coming-Of-Age teachers. The Mentor is a respected adult of our congregation, over age 25, who brings integrity, honesty, and ethical interaction to their work with young persons.

**Background checks** – All prospective mentors must agree to a state CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) check. Authorizations forms are available in the office and should be completed and signed by prospective mentors prior to meeting mentees. The forms are submitted to the Congregational Administrator, who performs the screening.

#### **Mentors will adhere to the following, best practices:**

- Maintain and model healthy personal boundaries with their Mentee
- Share information and knowledge with the Mentee as is appropriate
- Assist the young person to come to their own understanding of religion, avoiding imposing the Mentor's own beliefs
- Respect the dignity and rights of each individual child and adult
- Create an environment free of fear
- Create an environment free of verbal, emotional, and physical mistreatment or abuse
- Create an environment free of illegal drugs, firearms or other weapons, and the illegal use of drugs or alcohol
- Affirm that he/she will carefully supervise and advise the Mentee while interacting in the Mentor/ Mentee relationship in a manner that encourages growth while avoiding dangerous situations or decisions

#### **Requirements for Mentor/Mentee Activities:**

**Public places** - We require that the Mentor meet the Mentee in public places, (e.g., Starbucks or Haymarket) or share an activity with another Mentor/Mentee pair. There may be specific situations in which Mentors and Mentees need to be alone together (i.e. transportation). Mentors must clear any other "alone" situations in advance with the Mentee's parents and the Mentee.

**Parent communication and role** - We require that the Mentor communicate clearly with the Mentee's parents the arrival and departure times and locations of activities and events. This responsibility is shared with the Mentee, but ultimately rests with the adult Mentor. We encourage parents to play a role in overseeing their children's participation in COA activities as appropriate.

**Mentee rights** - We require that Mentees exercise their right to decline to participate in any activities they feel uncomfortable with or activities they feel do not fall within these guidelines.

**Signatures required** - We require that the Mentor, the Mentee, Parents, and DRE sign this

---

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for Mentor Mentee Activities Revised June 2004.doc Religious Education Council approved — June 2004

document, and that Mentors sign the Child Safety Standards of the Religious Education Program.

By signing this document, I acknowledge and agree to follow these guidelines. I further understand that any violation of these guidelines may lead to the termination of the Mentor/Mentee relationship. I also understand that I should direct any safety questions or concerns I have over the course of the year to the DRE, the COA leaders, and /or parents.

Mentor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Mentee's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

DRE's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
DRE's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

#### E. CHILDCARE AT UNITARIAN SOCIETY EVENTS

**Childcare for off-site congregational events** - Organizers of events, such as offsite Congregational meetings or retreats, organizers should consult the RE Council's Safe Kids subcommittee or, if that subcommittee is inactive, with the RE Council co-chairs, as they plan for children's supervision and activities. The Safe Kids subcommittee will be responsible for ensuring that organizers have the information they need about these Safety Standards in order to implement the Childcare Policy.

#### **Childcare for on-site congregational events**

**Employ only trained providers** - Anyone planning USNF events at which childcare will be provided will contact childcare providers who have been trained by the DRE.

**Follow all RE Safety procedures** - Childcare providers will follow all RE Safety procedures within this policy.

**Sign in and out** - All children must be signed in and out of childcare.

**Provider-child ratio: 1:4** - There may be no more than four children per childcare provider. If child care is being provided for an event which is being held in the Parlor or Great Hall, there must be two providers regardless of the number of children who utilize the service.

**Pulaski Park outings** - For daytime meetings only, providers may bring children to Pulaski Park, ONLY if there are two or more providers and no more than four children per provider.

**Stay inside in evenings** - Childcare providers may not take children outside the building in the evening.

**Parents must remain in building** - Parents or guardians must remain in the Society building at all times while their children are in USNF childcare.

## **F. ENFORCING LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENTS**

**Limited access policy** Our congregation has a policy to respond to individuals with a history or allegation of sexual offences. Such an individual may be permitted to attend congregational events with a signed Limited Access Agreement that strictly limits access to children. The Minister or Safe Congregation Committee will alert the DRE and co-chairs of the RE Council to any individuals with Limited Access Agreements. While enforcing a Limited Access Agreement is primarily the responsibility of the Minister, Safe Responders, and sponsors assigned to the individual, the DRE and co-chairs will be alert for, and immediately report to the Minister any violations of such an agreement.

## **G. APPENDIX: RED FLAG BEHAVIORS**

Volunteer leaders in the USNF Religious Education program must notify the DRE if they witness behaviors that may indicate that an adult is at-risk to harm a child. Volunteers are expected to be familiar with the “red flag” behaviors which may indicate risk.

Any interaction between a child and adult that causes discomfort or concern must be interrupted and discussed with the DRE, Youth Director, and/or Minister.

The UUA looks to the sexual abuse prevention organization Stop It Now! as a resource. Volunteers are expected to be familiar with the following tip sheets, and to utilize the Sample Journal Entry form to record concerns and guide necessary conversations.

### **Behaviors to Watch for When Adults are With Children**

[http://www.stopitnow.org/files/tip\\_sheet\\_behaviors\\_to\\_watch\\_for.pdf](http://www.stopitnow.org/files/tip_sheet_behaviors_to_watch_for.pdf)

We all have personal likes and things that make us uncomfortable. “Personal space” is the private area of control inside an imaginary line or boundary that defines each person as separate. Ideally, that boundary helps us stay in charge of our own personal space. It helps keep out the things that make us uncomfortable - unsafe and unwanted feelings, words, images, and physical contact. Solid social rules strengthen the boundary. Behaviors that routinely disrespect or ignore boundaries make children vulnerable to abuse. Do you know an adult or older child who doesn't seem to understand what's acceptable when it comes to:

#### **Personal space**

- Makes others uncomfortable by ignoring social, emotional or physical boundaries or limits?
- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits? Uses teasing or belittling language to keep a child from setting a limit?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this physical contact or attention?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?

#### **Relationships with children**

- Turns to a child for emotional or physical comfort by sharing personal or

- private information or activities, normally shared with adults?
- Has secret interactions with teens or children (e.g. games, sharing drugs, alcohol, or sexual material) or spends excessive time emailing, text messaging or calling children or youth?
- Insists on or manages to spend uninterrupted time alone with a child?
- Seems “too good to be true, i.e. frequently babysits different children for free; takes children on special outings alone; buys children gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors?

#### **Sexual conversation or behavior**

- Frequently points out sexual images or tells dirty or suggestive jokes with children present?
- Exposes a child to adult sexual interactions or images without apparent concern?
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating)?

#### **Signs That an Adult May Be At-Risk to Harm a Child**

[http://www.stopitnow.org/signs\\_adult\\_risk\\_harm\\_child](http://www.stopitnow.org/signs_adult_risk_harm_child)

Someone you care about may be acting in ways that worry or confuse you. The behaviors below may indicate a possible risk of sexual abuse to a child, but may also be a way for this adult to ask for help.

Many people with sexual behavior problems believe that others already suspect and often wish someone would ask what's going on or advise them where to call to get help. Remember, you can start a conversation by pointing out harmful impacts on a child without accusing someone of abusive intentions. Do you have concerns about someone you know in these areas of daily life?

#### **Relationships**

- Misses or ignores social cues about others' personal or sexual limits and boundaries?
- Often has a "special" child friend, maybe a different one from year to year?
- Spends most of his/her spare time with children and shows little interest in spending time with someone their own age?
- Encourages silence and secrets in children?

#### **Sexual Interactions**

- Links sexuality and aggression in language or behavior, e.g. sexualized threats or insults, like “whore” or “slut”?
- Makes fun of children's body parts, describes children with sexual words like “stud” or “sexy” or talks again and again about the sexual activities of children or teens?
- Masturbates so often that it gets in the way of important day-to-day activities?
- Has an interest in sexual fantasies involving children and seems unclear about what's appropriate with children?
- Looks at child pornography or downloads/views Internet pornography and is not willing to show whether children are involved?
- Asks adult partners to dress or act like a child or teen during sexual activity?

**Personal Safety/Responsibility**

- Has been known to make poor decisions while misusing drugs or alcohol?
- Justifies behavior, defends poor choices or harmful acts; blames others to refuse responsibility for behaviors?
- Minimizes hurtful or harmful behaviors when confronted; denies harmfulness of actions or words despite a clear negative impact?

**Sample Journal Entry ([http://www.stopitnow.org/files/sample\\_journal\\_entry.pdf](http://www.stopitnow.org/files/sample_journal_entry.pdf))**

If you are concerned about the safety of a child, we encourage you to trust your gut feelings. Sometimes vague feelings of discomfort or the sense that “something just isn’t right” can be an indication that something less visible is occurring in the background. Please take time to explore the situation further. Use this form to keep track of the behaviors that concern you. You can use this information to then talk with the DRE about what you've witnessed.

Date of observed behavior(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Time of day: \_\_\_\_\_

Child’s name & age if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of adult, teen or child at risk to abuse, or suspected (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Describe activity and people involved (e.g., nap time with siblings, games at family picnic):

Additional resources regarding the signs and prevention of child sexual abuse are available within the Safe Congregations area of the UUA website (<http://www.uua.org/safe/children/index.shtml> and at [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)).