

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH
SAFE CONGREGATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(Revised April 30, 2007)

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We thank the following churches whose policies we drew upon:

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, TN

Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester, NH

Emerson Unitarian Church

Southwest Unitarian Universalist Conference

UUA Safety/Abuse Clearing House Packet

Balancing Acts by Reverend Debra W. Haffner

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PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

We, the members of First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations. This compels us to create a safe environment that protects children and adults from potential and actual harm.

First Unitarian Church Pittsburgh, as a religious community, takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment. We recognize the reality of child sexual and physical abuse in our society and the potentially devastating effect on individuals, families, society and congregations. Religious communities are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit, and the strong reliance on and need for volunteers, especially in children and youth programs. Recognizing this vulnerability, it is necessary to adopt “every reasonable precaution” and take positive steps that will reduce the likelihood of child abuse occurring. We further realize that institutions operating in the best possible manner with all due concern for safety still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free setting.

While the principle reason for implementing child abuse policies is to improve the safety of children, youth and adults at church, addressing child abuse openly in our congregations gives Unitarian Universalists an opportunity to extend compassion to child victims and adult survivors.

This policy is designed to:

1. Improve the safety of children in our church programs by implementing preventive steps and by providing guidelines regarding appropriate behavior with the children and youth of our church;
2. Through preventative steps, reduce the likelihood that allegations (true or false) will be made against church staff and volunteers; and
3. Establish procedures to effectively respond to alleged incidents and incidents that may occur, whether during a church activity or at other times;
4. Provide a safe physical environment for all children by ensuring all appropriate building and physical plant safety procedures are in place and enforced.

This policy applies to all members, friends and congregants that function under the auspices of First Unitarian Church, including use of the building for denominational activities.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation, in partnership with parents, to create and maintain a safe environment that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth in our church programs. However, this policy is devoted primarily to situations in which children are in a supervised relationship with congregants other than their parents.

I. SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

A. Particular Requirements – Building

1. First aid kits and fire extinguishers shall be readily available within the church building at all times. These items shall be maintained by the sexton.
2. The Director of Ministries with Children and Youth (DRE) and Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee shall develop and maintain a fire drill plan and, along with the Fire Dept., cause at least one churchwide fire drill, with alarm bell, to be held yearly by the church school. Evacuation plans shall be posted by each exit within each classroom and at each exit within the church building.
3. Illicit drugs and weapons are not permitted at church events or on church grounds at any time.
4. The RE wing will be in compliance with building and fire codes.

B. Training of Staff and Volunteers

1. First Aid/CPR training from a certified first aid instructor shall be mandatory for the DRE and RE assistant and optional for the Minister. The church shall pay any fee required for this training and retraining to maintain current certification.
2. Staff and volunteers will be informed of the location of first aid kits and fire extinguishers.
3. Teachers will be trained on procedures required for drills and emergencies.
4. Teachers will be required to work with children in RE classes on safety procedures.

II. PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE, HARASSMENT, AND OTHER INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT TOWARDS CHILDREN

A. Prevention through Screening

1. Staff and volunteers who provide direct care or supervision to children or youth at First Unitarian must meet the following criteria:
 - a) Will have been an active participant at First Unitarian Pittsburgh or another District UU church for at least six months or have references from other UU churches that include either the Minister or RE director. Active participants are church members or contributing friends who are involved with church committees, activities and/or events.
 - b) Advisors and mentors for Middle School and High School youth must be at least 25 years of age. Volunteers age 18-25 may serve as secondary youth advisors with direct supervision from an advisor 25 years of age or older.
 - c) All other volunteer religious education teachers and child supervisors must be at least 18 years old with exceptions made at the discretion of the Director of Ministries with Children and Youth.

- d) Staff and volunteers under 18 years old may be used as paid helpers for event childcare as long as they have completed the Red Cross Babysitter's Training or equivalent.
 - e) Will complete a screening application form approved by the Board of Directors (see Appendix 1 for current application form). Read this policy and sign the Code of Ethics (Appendix 4) included in this policy.
 - f) A notice will be placed in the Order of Service at least twice a year indicating that a copy of the Safe Congregation Policy and Procedure Guidelines is available for review in the church main office and in the RE office. Congregants may request a copy for their own perusal.
2. Staff and volunteers who work with adolescent youth including youth group leaders, leaders of *Our Whole Lives*, and *Coming of Age Program* mentors will:
 - a) Complete a Volunteer Application and Screening Form.
 - b) Sign the Code of Ethics.
 - c) Have successfully passed both criminal and child abuse background checks, or have received an exemption carefully worked out in exceptional circumstances by the Safety Team. Such background checks may also be conducted, at the discretion of the RE Council, for teachers and other adult volunteers working with children. These documents will be considered confidential, will be kept in a locked file in the church office, and will be reviewed only by the Minister, the Director of Ministries with Children and Youth, and the President of the Board of Trustees.
 3. All paid staff must meet the First Unitarian Personnel Policy requirements that may include criminal and child abuse background checks, and supply two references who have known the applicant for at least three years, preferably in relation to previous work with children or youth. A photo ID, such as a driver's license, must be presented.
 4. Individuals who have been convicted of, are under current indictment for, or self disclose any act of sexual misconduct involving a child or of child abuse are precluded from participation in the RE program and other church activities primarily involving children or youth, under the guidelines of a limited access agreement (Appendix 7).

B. Prevention through Training and Education

Most organizations that use volunteers working with children have recognized the need for education and training in some form of child abuse prevention or child protection. Greater understanding of the complexities of sexuality and abuse will help us to avoid situations that could lead to abuse or false accusations. The DRE will see to the implementation of the following educational program:

1. Before working with children or youth, all RE teachers, advisors and mentors:

- a) Shall receive a copy of this Safe Congregation Policy Statement and acknowledge receipt of it in writing.
- b) Will have attended at least one training session to understand:
 - the positive roles adults can play with children and youth in a religious community (see Appendix 2);
 - definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct (see Appendix 3);
 - church policies that govern working with children or youth;
 - the rationale behind screening procedures; and
 - reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct.

This training session may be incorporated into a broader orientation session for teachers or youth leaders, and will be offered at least once annually by the DRE.

- c) Will have read, understood, and signed the "Code of Ethics."
2. Teachers will be trained by the DRE, OWL Facilitators and/or Safety Team to provide for our children and youth:
 - a) A yearly, age appropriate lesson on sexual abuse prevention that has been described in writing to parents beforehand.
 - b) Children and youth will learn about this during at least **one** session a year within their normal RE classrooms. The congregation's OWL facilitators in conjunction with the Safety Team will lead youth sessions.
 - c) This training will be in the form of an in-service conducted in the fall of the church year.
 3. For the entire congregation, the Board will make available information regarding this policy.
 4. For new members of the church, the Membership Committee will include a summary description of this policy that includes information on where the full policy is located in all new member packets.
 5. Copies of this policy will be available in each RE classroom, in the main office, in the RE office and on the website.

C. Prevention through Supervision

1. GENERAL SUPERVISION GUIDELINES
 - a) Parents or guardians of children in Sunday school are responsible for supervising their children before and after classes. Parents of preschool through third graders

must pick up their children promptly after the formal church service ends. Parents of fourth and fifth graders may make arrangements with the teacher to have their child dismissed independently.

- b) Preschool parents must fill out an pick-up authorization form the first day they bring their child(ren) to RE classes.
- c) Parents of Nursery age children must fill out a Visitor form, Special Needs form and sign in and out of the room with the Nursery caregiver. There must be at least one caregiver for every four toddlers in the Nursery. Parents will be asked to volunteer to stay in the nursery to meet this ratio if needed.

2. SUNDAY MORNING GUIDELINES

- a) At least two adults, including childcare workers, should be present in each classroom on Sunday mornings, and during any church-related activity involving children or youth including trips. Exceptions to this guideline require written permission from parents (for example, to transport children from one location to another).
- b) If any one adult is alone with a group of children at First Unitarian, the window coverings will be open or the door to the classroom will remain open. The DRE or her/his designated representative will check in with the group.
- c) Corporal punishment or abusive language will not be used under any circumstance.
- d) The building will not be open to children or youth for any activity until two adults are present. Parents are responsible for supervising their children or youth until two adult supervisors are present in the church building for any church-sponsored activity.
- e) A roaming supervisor (like the DRE) will be present in the RE Wing during Sunday school to provide supervision for children going to the lavatory.

3. TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES

- a) Generally, parents or guardians of minor children must supervise their children at all church outings. Volunteers and compensated employees are not allowed to be alone in a car with one child or youth except by prior parental arrangement and notification of the DRE.
- b) There shall be at least one adult (age 25 or older) for every six Junior High youth at overnights and one adult for every eight Senior High youth. There shall be at least one adult for every five children for church-sponsored field trips.
- c) Drivers who transport children must be at least 25 years old.
- d) If transporting children off-site for more than one day chaperones must have permission slips and medical release forms for each child.
- e) Leaders must have a list of names, emergency contacts, and medical conditions with them at all times.
- f) Every driver of any vehicle used to transport children or youth must have proof of auto insurance.
- g) Every person in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt at all times.

III. REPORTING PROCEDURE - ADDRESSING AN INCIDENT OR POSSIBLE PROBLEM

Should we suspect or be confronted with an incident or disclosure of sexual abuse or harassment we aim to respond rationally, compassionately, and with unity of purpose.

One of the first steps in creating a healing community is to create an environment of trust within which both victims and offenders feel safe enough to speak about what has happened. Given the obstacles that victims and offenders must overcome in order to speak up, any disclosure must be met with an appropriate and supportive reaction on the part of the person who has heard the disclosure and the community.

With this concern in mind, we have established a "Safety Team" that is charged with responding to Sexual Misconduct and Abuse.

A. The Safety Team

The Safety Team will be comprised of the Minister, DRE and three additional members appointed by the Board of Trustees. It will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of the church. These people will be qualified by their (1) professional or volunteer experience in working with children and/or child abuse issues or through other special training such as the *Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence workshops*; (2) understanding of this policy and other UUA "Safe Congregation" material; and (3) knowledge about available resources and reporting procedures for children, including applicable Pennsylvania state laws. Members of the Safety Team will have Act 33/34 clearances and sign a Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix 6). There will be three year staggered term limits for Board appointed members.

The Safety Team serves three purposes:

1. Their function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice and counsel, with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The team may be used as a resource for children or adult survivors of sexual abuse, victims of violence, and perpetrators in treatment as they look to their religious community for support until a professional is identified.
2. The second purpose is to aid in filing a report to Children, Youth and Families (CYF) or (Child Line) if a member of the congregation observes or has reasonable cause to suspect behavior they believe constitutes physical or sexual abuse of a child, or if someone discloses such abuse.
3. The third purpose is to periodically review this Safety policy.

B. Suspicion of Child or Youth Abuse

If a worker, volunteer or any other adult suspects abuse of a minor during a First Unitarian program or event, the person must immediately report it to the DRE, the Minister or a Safety Team member. The DRE will keep a written record of who reported the suspected abuse and the circumstances described by the observer.

C. Confidentiality

We recognize that while we must encourage reporting of all concerns or suspicions of child abuse, harassment, or other inappropriate conduct, reporting must occur with a guarantee of maximum confidentiality so that no one need fear retaliation or recrimination. Please see Appendix 5 for a fuller explanation, with examples, of why confidentiality is so important.

Anyone who is involved in church activities: a child, youth, teacher, volunteer, staff member, congregant or associated person may have a safety concern that should be reported to the DRE, Minister, or a Safety Team member. This includes a situation in which it is discovered that a person who is attending the church has a history of abusive behavior.

The congregant who raises a concern will ensure maximum confidentiality in the initial discussion and written documentation of a report. All written documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

The DRE, Minister, and all Safety Team members will sign a confidentiality agreement for matters related to this Safety policy (again, see Appendix 6).

1. Confidentiality is maintained at all times within the following groups. The level of disclosure is determined by the DRE and Minister, based on the seriousness of the allegation.
 - a. At the lowest level, only the DRE, Minister, and one other Safety Team member who originally received the report (if any) will have knowledge of a report.
 - b. At the next higher level of concern, the DRE and Minister will discuss the details of the concern or allegation with the full Safety Team, and will inform the President of the Board of Trustees that a confidential report has been made. However, in this case the DRE and Minister will discuss the circumstances of the report without including identifying information.
 - c. At the next level of concern, the DRE and Minister will discuss the details of the concern or allegation and identify those involved with the Safety Team, and will inform the President of the Board of Trustees that a confidential report has been made.
 - d. At the highest level of concern, the DRE, Minister, Safety Team and President of the Board of Directors will all have identifying information and a report will be made to CYF by the DRE or Minister, allowing for as much confidentiality as permissible by law.

2. The DRE and Minister will strongly encourage the victim, the alleged perpetrator and the reporting person to maintain maximum confidentiality within appropriate legal constraints.
3. When it is deemed necessary to make a report to the Safety Team at levels C or D, the reporting person will meet in person with the Safety Team within 24 hours of the concern being raised. In order for the Safety Team to respond appropriately and fairly, all members of the Safety Team shall make every effort to be present for the initial interview. The meeting will be held if 60% of the team is present. All members must make every effort to attend all further meetings.
4. Except for compelling circumstances, no identifying information about the victim, alleged perpetrator or third party reporting person, or information about the circumstances of the abuse, will be released to members of the congregation at large. Compelling circumstances include, but are not limited to, actions that would constitute a crime, criminal charges have been filed, or disregard by the accused of measures that the Safety Team has deemed necessary (i.e. no involvement with activities involving children).

D. Ethics of Adult Leaders

Anyone who has concerns about inappropriate sexual conduct, violence, or physical abuse by child-care workers, teachers or other people working with children or youth in this congregation will also be able to receive direction from the Safety Team. See Appendix 3 for initial guidance.

E. Youth Who May Be Abusers

One of the most difficult possible situations is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of inappropriately sexually touching a child in the congregation. If an older child forces sex on a younger child or exposes his or her genitals to a younger child, both of these children will need professional help. If an older child demonstrates inappropriate sexual interest in younger children that doesn't extend to these behaviors, the situation should be further investigated

After such an incident comes to the attention of the minister, DRE, or member of the Safety Team, they should initiate contact individually with the parents of both children to discuss the allegation and next steps. Depending on the state law and the nature of the incident, it may be necessary to call Child Protective Services. Regardless, before the initiator is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive an extensive assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist with experience with children with sexual behavior problems. It is NOT the responsibility of the minister or the response team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place.

It may make sense to remove the child from religious education during this time. It would certainly be prudent for the child not to be allowed unsupervised time with other children until the assessment is complete.

If an evaluation by a trained professional indicates that the child has a sexual behavior problem that is likely to be repetitive, the minister, the Religious Educator, the safety team, and the parents need to meet to decide how and if the child can safely be involved with the Religious Education or Youth Group program. A modified Limited Access Agreement should be developed and signed by both the child and the parents. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the young person continued involvement with other children until treatment is completed and to consider alternative ways to provide religious education, such as through individual sessions with a Religious Educator or home schooling.

In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for sexual offenses back into the congregation after treatment is completed. In such cases, the steps for involving an adult offender can be followed, including a Limited Access Agreement signed by both the youth and their parents. In any of these cases, pastoral care and support for the families involved is crucial. This will be very difficult for the parents involved, and they will need the support of their church community, especially the minister and the Religious Educator. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential, as is the ongoing offer of ministry.

F. False Accusations

Protecting adults who teach in the RE program or otherwise interact with children at church from false or mistaken allegations 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 the Prevention portion of this policy. 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.

G. Other Inappropriate Behavior

Some incidents or allegations in RE or other children or youth programs may involve behavior that is not clearly child abuse, but may be in other ways deemed inappropriate by a parent, by the DRE or by the RE Council. In such cases, a Response Team, including the DRE, the Minister and appropriate members of the RE Council may be called together to review the situation and decide what action to take.

IV. RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF A POTENTIAL PROBLEM

A. Role of a Congregant Who Receives a Report of Abuse

Abuse, neglect or violence may be self reported by a child or may be suspected by the child's behavior or physical signs. Teachers, childcare workers, or other adults in our community should bring their concerns to the DRE, the Minister, or other member of the Safety Team immediately.

Children most often make abuse disclosures to trusted adults. Sometimes, when the child does not realize the circumstances of the abuse are abnormal, the disclosure is made in the course of play or discussion about something completely unrelated. This circumstance generally occurs with very young children. More often, the child realizes the circumstances of the abuse are abnormal. The child typically bears a great deal of shame around the abuse, feeling he or she somehow caused or is to blame for the abuse. It is critical in these circumstances to make the child feel safe to disclose the abuse.

Although it is vital to have concerns brought to the DRE, Minister, or a member of the Safety Team, the most important support a teacher can give to a child revealing abuse is to listen, fully and carefully. They must provide an appropriate, safe setting and accept the child's story. A teacher should not dispute the story, point out inconsistencies, or point out how unlikely it seems. One should always affirm the importance of a child's telling their story.

B. Role of the Minister or DRE, or Other Safety Team Member Who Receives a Report of Abuse

When an allegation of child abuse occurring during a church program is reported to the Minister or DRE, the Minister and DRE will determine the level of concern as outlined above in the Confidentiality section and proceed accordingly (see Appendix 8 for diagram of process). The first priority, however, is to ensure protection of the children, and if indicated, the Minister or DRE needs to take immediate, appropriate action such as removing an alleged perpetrator from contact with the child or youth. If reported to another Safety Team member, the responsible person receiving the allegation should take the necessary steps to:

1. Inform the Minister and/or DRE
2. Take appropriate action to ensure protection of the children in the church.
3. Convene a meeting of a Safety Team if, after consulting with Minister and DRE, the level of concern warrants.
4. Abide by Pennsylvania law on reporting child abuse.

C. Reporting to Police in Response to Criminal Behavior

When an allegation of misbehavior constitutes a crime, a report must be made to the police.

D. Leave of Absence and 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 alleged perpetrator from interacting with children in the RE program or other church programs will be made by the Safety Team, including the DRE and the Minister. A decision should be made and action taken in a timely manner based on the possible threat to the children, the credibility and seriousness of the allegation, and other related factors. If the reported abuse involves a worker or volunteer at First Unitarian, the DRE will immediately relieve that person of any duties involving supervision, care or teaching of children and youth at First Unitarian until the matter is resolved. Actions other than permanent removal from teaching will be given full consideration depending upon the situation. Alternative actions might include additional training, review of the policy or changing classrooms.

1. Even if an allegation is not reported to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (CYF), the adult against whom the allegations are made may be asked to refrain from teaching or otherwise interacting with the child or children in question for the adult's own protection.
2. If a report is made to CYF, this leave will be mandatory.
3. The Safety Team may also determine, even without an accusation of abuse made, that they have reason(s) for concern that a volunteer's contact with children or youth in our congregation potentially places both the volunteer and the children at risk of incident or accusation. For this reason the Safety Team is authorized to restrict an individual from teaching in the RE program, volunteering or chaperoning children's events, or being present at RE or youth activities, or otherwise restricting contact with children and youth.
4. If disputes arise out of the actions taken by the DRE, the Minister, or the Safety Team, the matter may be taken to the Board. However, the DRE and the RE Council (together) retain the independent right and responsibility to screen and authorize volunteers for teaching in the RE program, while the DRE and the Safety Team will make final decisions about removing a teacher or otherwise restricting an individual's contact with children and youth on church property or at church-sponsored events.
5. We must assure that the convicted sex offender does not have the opportunity in our congregations to re-offend again. This includes avoiding situations where they can be accused falsely. The fact is that a person with a history of sex offense against children should never be allowed to be with children, work with children and youth, or socialize with children at the congregation. No person who has been convicted of, or who has an unresolved accusation of, any sexual misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any religious education or youth group activities.

If the offender refuses to restrict his or her activities, it is then appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property. An offender who refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement should know that if they enter the congregation or its property, they will be asked to leave by a member of the Safety Team or the Board of Trustees. If the person further refuses, the local police will be called for

assistance.

6. The Safety Team should meet at least quarterly with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If the minister or the Religious Educator changes, as well as the chair of the Board of Trustees, it is important that the departing person inform the new person of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved.

REASONS FOR EXCLUDING A PERSON FROM ALL CONGREGATION ACTIVITIES

- Refusal for the minister to contact the treatment provider and parole officer.
- Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism.
- Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

Once an individual decides that they can comply with these conditions, the process would begin again to reassess the individual and see if they could be welcomed into the life of the congregation anew.

E. Role of the Safety Team in Response to a Report of Abuse

The Safety Team does not have the legal authority or the expertise to determine guilt or innocence. Instead, it is called upon to protect members of the church community, and to ensure that the victim and accused are treated with dignity and respect.

The Safety Team has a broad continuum of possible resolutions to a situation. In the most serious cases, they will be sure that it is reported to CYF and the accused is removed from working with children and youth. Also, in the most serious cases, when CYF has determined that abuse did in fact occur, it may be necessary for the team to inform the Board and parents of other children who have had contact with this person. Where concerns are less serious, options such as additional supervision or training for the adult or not asking the person to teach again is a possible outcome. In cases where a misunderstanding seems to be the problem, the Safety Team will encourage, and can offer to facilitate, communication between the parties; they may also facilitate extra training for a teacher.

If the complaint is against a member of the Safety Team, or a relative, that person will be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternative. If the complaint is against a paid staff member, including the Minister or DRE, the Ohio-Meadville District Executive will be considered a member of the First Unitarian Safety Team. If the

complaint is against the Minister, Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association (UUMA) policies and procedures apply (see <http://www.uuma.org/Documents/guidelines.html>).

F. Role of the Board

The President of the Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh will be informed about any allegation of sexual abuse in which the Safety Team is involved. Depending on the level of concern, identities of the victim, accused and reporter may be withheld. In the most serious situation, in which a staff member violates the policy, the Board will make the final determination of any additional consequences appropriate to the violation of this policy, including, but not limited to, termination of a staff person (except for Minister). Violation of this policy by the Minister or DRE shall constitute good cause for discipline under the terms of the Minister's or DRE's contract.

The Board shall also inform the following of any determination of serious violations by the Minister of this policy:

- § The Ohio-Meadville District Executive
- § The Director of the Department of Ministry of the UUA
- § The Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA
- § The Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

G. Involvement by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

The Minister and the DRE are mandated reporters, so are required by law to file a report to the State when they suspect a child in the place of their employment has been abused. However, if a church member, friend or staff person suspects that a child has been abused, either while in the church program or at other times, the person with the suspicion can report the incident to State authorities with the support of the Safety Team.

In Pennsylvania, the Child Protective Services Law {CPSL}{23 Pa. C.S., Chapter 63}, child abuse must involve a child (a person under 18), a perpetrator, and an act of abuse. A Perpetrator is a person who has committed child abuse and is: a) a parent of a child, b) a paramour of a child's parent, c) an individual 14 years of age or older residing in the same home as the child, or d) a person responsible for the child's welfare.

Anyone may make a report to Child Line and is protected under the Child Protective Services Law from criminal and civil immunity. Child Line - 1-800-932-0313-is a toll-free, 24-hour, 7-day-a-week hotline established by PA Department of Public Welfare to receive reports of suspected abuse and neglect of children. The reports are forwarded to the local office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) for investigation. You may report anonymously; however giving your name assists CYF if they have questions about the report or need to verify information. In Allegheny County, you can also contact the local Office of Children, Youth and Families' Intake Office directly: 412-473-2000.

What information must be given to CYF? Identifying information on the child, the child's family, and the alleged perpetrator as well as information regarding the suspected abuse.

APPENDIX 1
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION AND SCREENING FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

Thank you for your interest in working with the children and youth of our congregation. Our congregation takes seriously our responsibility of assuring the safety of our youth. Please fill out this form and give it to the Religious Educator. Thank you for your support in providing a safe and secure environment for all of the congregation's children and youth.

Please complete form, sign it, and return it to: _____ by: _____

Name _____ Home Phone (____) _____

Work Phone (____) _____ Mobile Phone (____) _____

E-mail _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Have you ever used a different name? ___NO ___YES If yes, please list with dates:

How long have you been attending this congregation? _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your experience working with children/youth?

2. What skills and interests do you bring to this volunteer position?

3. What volunteer experience do you bring to this position?

4. a. Do you have a valid driver's license? YES NO
License number _____ State issued _____

- b. Has your license ever been revoked or suspended? YES NO
If yes, please describe the circumstances:
5. a. Do you have a current PA Act 33 or 34 Clearance? YES NO
If yes, date granted _____ (Please attach copy)
- b. Have you had clearance from another youth-serving agency in the past year?
YES NO
If yes, date granted _____ (Please attach copy)
6. Background screening:
- a. Do you currently use illegal drugs? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- b. Do you abuse the use of alcohol? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- c. Have you ever been accused or convicted for the use or sale of drugs? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- d. Have you ever been accused or convicted of child physical or sexual abuse or neglect?
YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- e. Have you ever been accused or convicted of any crimes against a person, including rape, incest, sexual exploitation of a minor, or sexual or physical assault of a minor? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- f. Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by any employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
- g. Have you ever been accused or convicted of a criminal offense other than those listed in c or d? YES NO
If yes, provide details:
7. Other than the above matters, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of young people? YES NO
If yes, please explain:

Character References: Please list two character references. A spouse, immediate family member, or member of First Unitarian Church should not be used as a character reference. Please include complete names, addresses, phone numbers and relationship of reference to applicant (i.e. friend, co-worker, supervisor, etc.):

1. **Name** _____
Address _____
City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____
Phone _____
Relationship to Applicant _____

2. **Name** _____
Address _____
City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____
Phone _____
Relationship to Applicant _____

Comments/Explanations:

I, the undersigned, understand that the information I have provided may be verified by contacting persons or organizations named on this form, or by doing a criminal history check, and I hereby release from liability any person or organization that provides information concerning me to the representatives of the Children and Youth Ministries program of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh. I also understand that I will be automatically suspended, pending further investigation, from participating as a volunteer if in the future there is any question regarding my violation of the Code of Ethics or local, state, or national laws. In signing this form, I affirm that the information I have given herein is true and correct.

I, the undersigned, have received a copy of this Safe Congregation Policy Statement and acknowledge receipt of it by my signature.

Your Signature _____ **Date** _____

APPENDIX 2
CODE OF ETHICS FOR ADULTS AND OLDER YOUTH
WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association 1986

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential is to be realized. Among the most important areas of growth are those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates and research shows that children, youth and adults may suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care.

Therefore, I will not engage in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. I will not sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

I have read and understand the above Code of Ethics for leaders of children and youth, and I am in agreement with its spirit and purpose.

Signed _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 3

THE ROLE OF ADULTS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUR CHURCH

Adapted from the UUA Congregational Handbook, 1995

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one that can carry a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone, childcare worker, teacher, choir director, Minister, or in any other role, adults have a special opportunity to interact with young people in ways that are affirming and inspiring to young people and adults.

Adults can be mentors, role models, and trusted friends of children and youth. They can be teachers, counselors, and Ministers. Helping our children grow up to be safe and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person.

While it is important that adults be capable of meaningful friendships with the young people with whom they work, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and young adults and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about inappropriate behavior by adults.

Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with young people in ways that affirm the Unitarian Universalist Association principles. Good communication skills, self-awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude are important attributes. Additionally, adult religious leaders need to be people who:

- i) Have a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation and self-esteem; and
- ii) Are willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation that requires expert help or intervention.

APPENDIX 4

WHAT COUNTS AS INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT TOWARDS CHILDREN OR YOUTH IN OUR CHURCH?

*Revised in part from the UUA pamphlet Honoring the Children and
the UUA recommended resource "Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church"*

The UUA defines child abuse as "an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust that harms or threatens to harm a child's well-being or physical or mental health." Child abuse is also against the law.

There are four categories of child abuse according to the UUA:

1) Physical Abuse

Deliberately inflicting bodily harm to a child. Instances of child abuse include violent assault with hands, feet, a knife, or other implement, or burns, fractures, and bruises resulting from being beaten, shaken, or thrown. Brief passive restraint for the purpose of protecting children and youth is not considered abusive.

2) Sexual Abuse

Engaging in sexualized behavior, verbal or physical, with a child; using a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child. Any time a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or a significantly older child, abuse has occurred. The child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. Sexual abuse can include fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in sexual acts, incest, and exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution. Child sexual abuse is illegal regardless of whether the child "consents" or not. Consent is not an issue. The offender bears the entire responsibility for the abuse whatever form it takes.

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of sexual abuse that involve touching include:

- i) Sexual fondling
- ii) Oral, genital, and/or anal penetration
- iii) Intercourse
- iv) Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- i) Verbal comments such as statements intended to seduce or stimulate children, comments calling sexual attention to body parts, or references to sexual activity
- ii) Pornographic videos
- iii) Obscene phone calls
- iv) Exhibitionism

3) Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may be very difficult to identify and document. Emotional abuse deeply affects a child's self-esteem by subjecting a child to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It can include close confinement, inadequate nurturance, extreme discipline, or deliberately permitting destructive behaviors such as drug or alcohol abuse.

4) Neglect

Children have basic physical, nutritional, and environmental needs that must be supplied. Chronic withholding of food, clothing, medication, and proper living quarters, as well as abandonment are all acts of neglect. Neglect can include physical, emotional, or educational neglect through such actions as inadequate supervision, health hazards in the home, refusing to seek treatment for illnesses, providing inadequate emotional nurturance, and deliberately permitting chronic truancy.

NOTE: In writing these definitions, the authors noted that, "We were sensitive to the danger of relying on only a legal definition. If we only prohibit what the state can realistically respond to, we are not protecting the children."

APPENDIX 5
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

To be signed by: All members of the Safety Team including the DRE and Minister as well as the President of the Board of Trustees and any other Board member who may be entrusted with confidential information.

Abuse and issues of inappropriate conduct are highly sensitive matters. In order to respect the identity of victims, the accused, reporters and their families, members of the Safety Team, including the Minister and DRE, will not disseminate to the congregation (except in compelling circumstances as determined by the Minister in consultation with the Safety Team):

- 1) the identity of the victim, the accused and/or the reporting person
- 2) the details of the allegation
- 3) any other identifying information

If a report is made to the President of the Board of Directors, those Directors who have received any identifying information will not disseminate the information to any members of the congregation.

All information, either written or communicated verbally, which pertains to sexual abuse of congregation members, is confidential information, and must not be shared with anyone without written consent, except at the highest level of concern, when a report must be made to CYF. Mandated reporters (the Minister and DRE) will follow PA State law in supplying information at the time of reporting.

I understand and agree to follow the confidentiality procedures of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh.

Signed _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 6

BALANCING CONFIDENTIALITY WITH THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED AND CONSULTED

1) **Why protect the confidentiality of an alleged victim or a reporter?**

The primary reason to protect confidentiality is that many cases of abuse will not be reported otherwise. This is the reason that many states, including ours, have laws allowing confidential and anonymous reporting. Thus, PA laws make explicit that the prevention of abuse has a higher priority than the right of an accused perpetrator to know a third party accuser. If we refuse to offer confidentiality to victims of abuse in our church, we will increase the likelihood of ongoing and repeated abuse. We will, thereby, increase our liability.

2) **Why do victims feel the need for confidentiality?**

Abuse is grounded in secrecy, fear, and shame. While a primary goal of reporting abuse is to stop the victimization, coming forward actually increases the risk to the victim in the short run, with no guarantee that the abuse will be stopped. The risk is vastly increased when confidentiality is breached, and people who know little about the circumstances and the nature of abuse spread their misinterpretations. One extremely common misinterpretation is to blame the victims.

The risks to the victim range from not being believed (a form of re-victimization) to retribution by the abuser or his/her supporters. A victim's reputation, self-respect and safety that are endangered by the abuse itself are further endangered when coming forward. In addition, because this is a church, a victim is at risk of losing a primary community and spiritual resource at a time when he/she is most in need of such. If a victim can report what has happened privately, this significantly reduces the increase in risk.

3) **Why do reporters of abuse need confidentiality?**

There are two principal reasons for protecting the identity of reporters. First, the identity of the victim often may be deduced from the identity of the reporter, unnecessarily creating the risks described above. Second, while the reporter may not be at risk of abuse in the same way as the victim, the reporting of abuse may expose them to the same risks to reputation, self-esteem, safety and community. The motives of supporters are often questioned in the same way as those of victims. Harassment and ostracism may result. In addition, those who observe this punishment of reporters will be less likely to report abuse.

4) **What are examples of times when abuse would not be reported if we did not protect confidentiality?**

- a) A Sunday School teacher, who was abused as a child, notices one of the children in her class is exhibiting symptoms that remind her of her own abuse. The child has bruises many weeks (more than other children in the class) and is losing weight. She suspects the parents. The teacher is traumatized by her own memories and is unsure about her suspicions. She wants to be sure the child is all right, but is afraid of her own history of

abuse becoming public knowledge and worries about the safety of the child if what she says is handled badly. So she tries to ignore it and hopes for the best.

- b) A 14-year-old girl is being harassed by one of the older boys at Church. She is trying to figure out ways to stay away, and tells her friend, "I'll just die if anyone finds out I told about this."
- c) A man new to the community starts coming to the Church, only to discover that a man who abused him when he was a teen-ager is a member. He does not want to confront his perpetrator. Moreover, he needs to devote what time and energy he has to a new job. But the more he thinks about it, the more he worries about the safety of the teenagers in the Church. If he knew that his name would not be breached, he would call the Minister, but he is not sure and so he doesn't.

APPENDIX 7
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH
LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh has reason for concern that your contact with children and/or youth in our congregation places both you and them at risk of incident or accusation. First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh thus stipulates the policy guidelines in the Limited Access Agreement. Within these guidelines, First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh welcomes your participation in **adult only activities** such as worship services, committee meetings, adult discussion groups, and adult social events. The guidelines for activities which includes children follows:

- 1) Avoid all interaction with children and youth on church property or at church-sponsored events, including coffee hour and intergenerational events. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) Refraining from any physical contact with children and youth.
 - b) Not participating in, volunteering or chaperoning events for children or youth, including religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events and driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
 - c) Remain in the presence of another adult who knows your situation at all times when children are in the church building.
 - d) Not entering into conversations with children.
- 2) You may not enter the RE wing on Sundays before all children have been dismissed from classes.
- 3) First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh must provide safety for a variety of groups that use the building during the week. To that end, you may not enter the church building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session. You may not possess or borrow a key to any church building.
- 4) First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh will respect your privacy and right to confidentiality. Our primary responsibility, however, is to ensure that the church is a safe place for children and youth. Please consider the Minister and the Director of Religious Education as your points of contact should further developments or questions arise. You are required to contact them in advance of the service or activity.
- 5) Any person affected by this process has the right to petition the Safety Team for appeal. The Safety Team will convene within ten days to consider the petition. The decision of the Safety Team in this regard is final upon a majority vote at a legally constituted meeting.

6) This agreement will be reviewed every three (3) months.

I have reviewed this policy and agree to abide by it or I will be required to relinquish my participation and membership in this church and be denied access to congregation functions and church property.

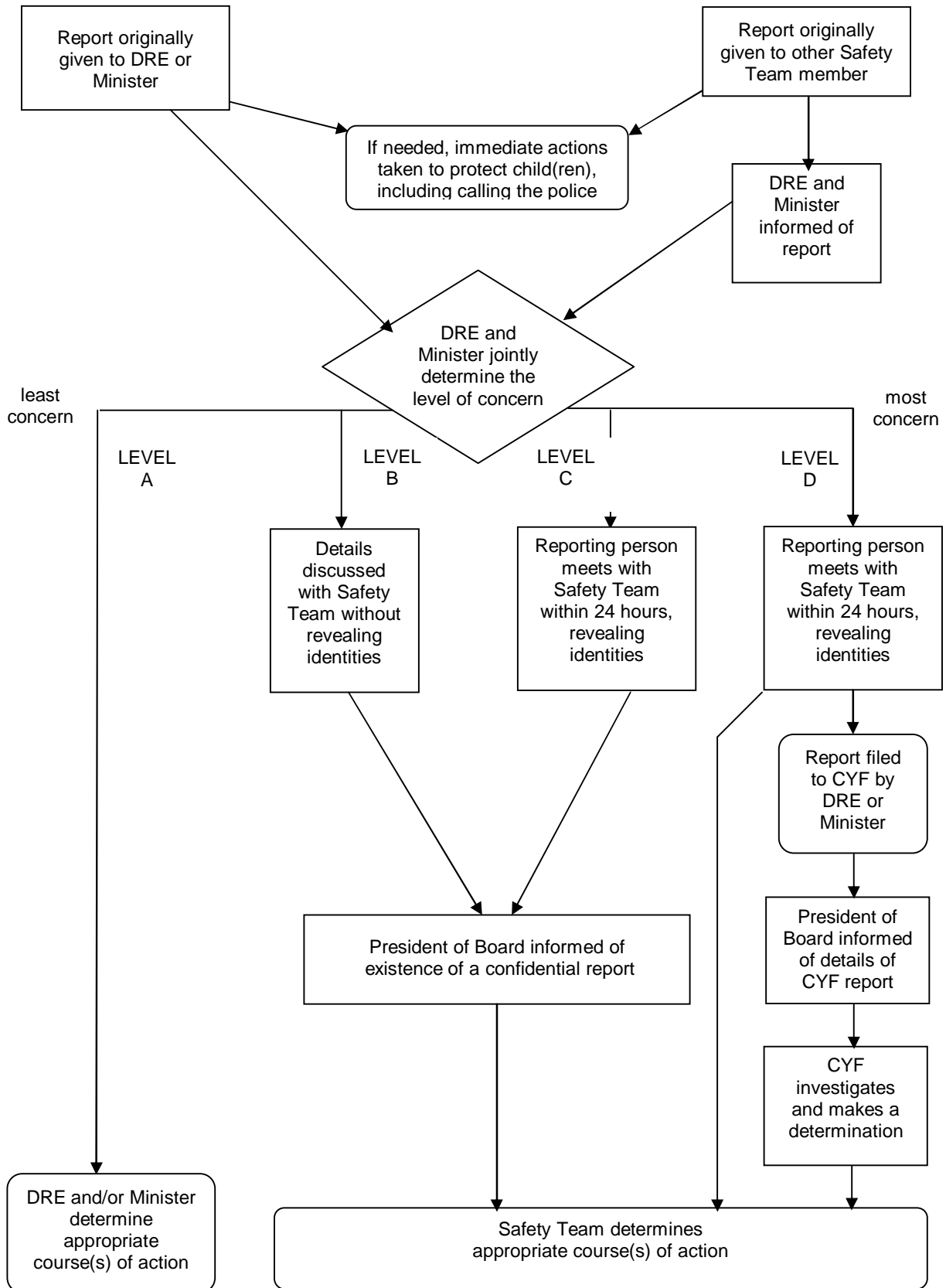
Signature

Date

Witness

Date

APPENDIX 8 PROCESS OF RESPONDING TO REPORTS



APPENDIX 9 RESOURCES

For a more comprehensive list of organizations that deal with sexual abuse, go to Stop It Now! at www.stopitnow.org

General Information about Child Sexual Abuse

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
936 No. 34th Street
Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98103
206-634-1903
www.cpsdv.org

ChildHelp USA – National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A Child
Hotline is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week.
National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
PO Box 1182
Washington, DC 20013
800-fy1-3366
www.calib.com/nccanch

Prevent Child Abuse America
Formerly National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse
332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60604
800-CHILDREN
www.childabuse.org

STOP IT NOW!!
PO Box 495
Haydenville, MA 01039
1-888-Prevent
www.stopitnow.org

(Their comprehensive resource guide includes a more extensive list of resources than are presented here.)

Information about Sex Offenders

Center for Sex Offender Management
8403 Colesville Road
Suite 720
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-589-9393
www.csom.org

National Adolescent Perpetration Network
Kempe Children's Center
1825 Marion Street
Denver, CO 80218
303-864-5192
www.kempecenter.org/about.htm

Safer Society Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 340
Brandon, VT 05773
802-247-3132
www.saferociety.org
(also treatment referrals)

For Referral to a Treatment Provider for an Assessment

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA)
4900 S.W. Griffith Drive, Suite 274
Beaverton, OR 97005
503-643-1023
www.atsa.com

National Council on Sexuality Addiction and Compulsivity
PO Box 725544
Atlanta, GA 31139
770-541-9912
www.ncsac.org

See also the Safer Society Foundation and the National Adolescent Perpetrators Network as well.

Support for Congregants

Parents Anonymous
675 W. Foothill Blvd.
Suite 220
Claremont, CA 91711
1-800-339-6993

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network
800-656-HOPE
www.rainn.org

Sexual Assault Recovery Anonymous
PO Box 16
Surrey, BC, V3S 4Z4 Canada
410-584-2626

Survivors of Incest Anonymous
PO Box 190
Benson, MD 21018-9998
410-893-3322
www.siaawso.org

Voices in Action
PO Box 13
Newtownsville, OH 45158
1-800-7-Voice-8
www.voices-action.org
(support for victims of incest and child sexual abuse)

Insurance Issues:

Church Mutual Insurance Company
3000 Schuster Lane
PO Box 357
Merrill, WI 54452
800-554-2642
www.churchmutual.com

APPENDIX 10 INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

(Please refer to Balancing Acts by Reverend Debra Haffner for references.)

STOP IT NOW! has a confidential toll free hotline for assistance on what to do if you are concerned about potential abuse but are unsure how to proceed: 1-888-PREVENT. Stop It Now! hotline staff will walk you through the options that are available and what might be done to get help for everyone involved.

Possible Signs of an Adult Being an Abuser

Do you know an adult or older child who:

- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection?
- 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)?
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions?
- Spends most of his/her spare time with children and has little interest in spending time with someone their own age?
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free or takes children on overnight outings alone?
- Buys children expensive gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors?

If you answered "yes" to some of these questions, talk to that person. If you are uncomfortable, but don't see these signs, be sure to trust your instincts and ask questions. For information and advice on how to talk to someone, please call the Stop It Now! Toll-Free Helpline at 1-888-PREVENT. *Reprinted with permission.*

If you answered "yes" to some of these questions, talk to the DRE. If you are uncomfortable, but don't see these signs, be sure to trust your instincts and ask questions of the DRE or Safety Committee members. For more information, contact the Stop It Now! Toll-free helpline at 1-888-PREVENT.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, PEDOPHILIA AND SEX OFFENDERS

Childhood sexual abuse is a pervasive and devastating social problem. It is important as we consider these issues that we learn the facts about child sexual abuse, pedophilia, and sex offenders, and that we separate them from the myths that are held in the culture. The information in this section will provide the reader with a rudimentary understanding; readers are encouraged to contact the organizations listed in the Resources.

DEFINITION

One sex offender treatment specialist defined child sexual abuse as “a sexual act imposed upon a child who lacks emotional, maturational, and cognitive development. Authority and power enable the perpetrator, implicitly or directly, to coerce the child into sexual compliance. The ability to lure a child into a sexual relationship is based upon the all-powerful and dominant position of the adult or older adolescent perpetrator, which is in sharp contrast to the child’s age, dependency, and subordinate position.” The abuse can be intrafamilial - between a child and a family member or person in the role of a family member - or extrafamilial - between a child and someone outside the family. Incest is a specific term for sexual contacts between persons who are prohibited to marry by virtue of their familial relationship.

Sexual abusive behaviors range from nudity, disrobing, exhibitionism, to oral, anal, or vaginal sex.

Child sexual abuse can include:

- Touching a child’s breasts, genitals, and anus.
- Having any type of intercourse with a child.
- Encouraging a child to watch or hear adult sexual acts.
- Using an object, instrument, or body part to penetrate a child’s genitals or anus
- Having a child touch another’s genitals.
- Using a child in erotica.
- Showing erotic or pornographic materials to a child.
- Photographing a child in sexual poses.

PREVALENCE

Sexual abuse of children is very common. According to a number of studies, between 17 and 25 percent of women report that they were sexually abused before the age of 18, and 10 and 15 percent of men were sexually abused before the age of 18. In a national study of adults aged 18 to 59, about 12 percent of the men and about 17% of the women reported that they had been sexually touched as children.

WHO IS ABUSED

The prevalence of childhood sexual abuse is remarkably high, and the facts often run counter to the assumptions that many people have. Both boys and girls are sexually abused, but abuses against girls predominate. Experience with childhood sexual abuse does not vary by ethnicity, race, social status, or education background of the parents.

One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn age 16. Children under the age of 12 account for half of the juvenile victims of forced sexual offenses. Young people under age 18 make up over two thirds of all sex crime victims. Girls predominate as victims of sex offenses. 82% of all juvenile sex crime victims under the age of 18 are female. One of every seven victims of sexual assault reported to law enforcement agencies were under the age of six. Nearly five out of every six sexual assaults of juveniles occurred in someone's home, not a public place. Most children do not tell anyone the abuse has taken place. In a study of adults who remembered being touched sexually as a child, only one quarter of the women and one in six of the men remembered that they had told someone about this sexual contact with an older person.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE OFFENDER TO THE VICTIM

Many people believe that children are sexually abused by strangers or known sex offenders. The reality is that strangers account for a small proportion of the abuse.

Children know their abusers well in 90% of the cases – they are parents, family members, neighbors, clergy, coaches, and teachers. Family friends and relatives are the primary offenders; family friends are more likely to offend with boys and relatives to offend with girls. One in seven girls is abused by a father, step father, or mother's boyfriend, although only 3% of boys are abused by people in these categories. One quarter of offenders of victims, ages 12 through 17 are family members. Only 7% of offenders of juveniles are strangers to their victims.

PROFILE OF THE OFFENDER

The public image of the sex offender is a strange middle-aged man lurking at a playground eyeing potential victims. The actual profile of the offender is someone well known to the child, someone who may be a teenager, and for boys, more likely to be female than another male. The percentage of adolescents that inappropriately touch children is rarely addressed in congregational policies or screening.

Girls are primarily touched by men, while the boys are touched more often by women but also by men. The risk to girls is greatest from adult men (63%), followed by adolescent males (28%). The risk to boys is greatest from adolescent women (45%), followed by adolescent men (25%) and then older men (38%). Ninety-six percent of all offenders in sexual assaults of all ages reported to law enforcement agencies were male. Adults were the offenders in 60% of the sexual assaults of victims under the age of 12. Forty percent of the offenders of children under the age of six were other juveniles under the age of 18. Sixteen percent of juvenile offenders were under the age of twelve. Six percent of the offenders who sexually assaulted juveniles under the age of 18 were female,

with 12% of the offenders with victims under six were female.

TREATMENT AND RECIDIVISM

As noted above, most sex crimes against children are never reported, and most sex offenders do not come to the attention of law authorities. Eighty-four percent of sexual abusers are never reported, and the National Crime Victimization Survey found that two thirds of sexual assaults against persons 12 and older are not reported to law enforcement.

Nevertheless, since congregations need to know how to respond to people who have been convicted of sex offenses, this information is offered to clarify many of the myths around treatment and recidivism.

Although state laws and practices vary, in many states convicted sex offenders who are serving time in prisons are not granted parole until they have successfully completed a sex offender treatment program. And once granted parole, states generally require the person as a condition of their parole to participate for a length of time in a treatment program for sex offenders. State laws do vary, and congregations will want to find out what treatment is available in their county jails and state prisons as well as parole requirements for treatment.