

Policy-Procedure

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Los Gatos

Personal Safety and Prevention of Abuse

PURPOSE:

Our congregation is committed to creating and maintaining a church community in which all people can worship, learn, and be together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, and/or intimidation.

This policy outlines UUFLG's commitment and plan for creating and maintaining a safe congregational environment for members, friends, visitors, and others who participate in programs and activities associated with the Fellowship.

POLICY:

UUFLG is a safe congregation, an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, and/or intimidation. We agree to treat others with dignity and respect, regardless of age or other status.

Behavior that promotes discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, and/or intimidation will not be tolerated within our programs or in any Fellowship related activity or setting.

Possession and/or use of illegal substances, firearms, or tobacco is not allowed on the UUFLG premises.

We promote safe and reasonable use of the UUFLG premises. Actions that might result in harm to self or others, or create unsafe conditions, are not allowed on the property or in any of the facilities.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION:

1. New Member Orientation workshops will include a discussion of the Fellowship's Personal Safety and Prevention of Abuse Policy, including the status of any current Covenants of Right Relationship active in the congregation.
2. New Members will be informed that the use of controlled substances/illegal drugs and tobacco is not allowed on UUFLG premises. We do not allow firearms or other weapons, or fireworks on the grounds. Alcohol (limited to wine and beer) may be served at UUFLG functions, but its consumption is limited to those who are of legal age.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR ONGOING EDUCATION:

1. Bi-annually, the congregation's Policy of Personal Safety and Prevention of Abuse will be reviewed and included in the UUFLG Newsletter to remind the congregation of our commitment. The Minister takes responsibility for submitting this information to the Newsletter for publication in September and February.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS, ANSWERING QUESTIONS, OR MAKING PROPOSED CHANGES:

1. Those involved with UUFLG who have concerns or issues related to personal safety are asked and encouraged to share them with the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, a member of the Committee on Ministry, and/or a member of the Board. Incidents or occurrences deemed “unsafe” or of concern should be reported immediately.
2. Concerns about conditions that impact personal safety or potentially create unsafe conditions should be reported to the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, or the Building and Grounds Trustee of the Board. Request forms for building safety concerns are posted near the UUFLG office.
3. Concerns or questions about this policy, its implementation or revision should be directed to the Minister or a member of the Board.
4. In consultation with the Minister, a specific plan of action will be developed in response to the concern, question, or change request to respond to issues related to this policy.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

We seek teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors who promote a spiritual community that affirms the principles of Unitarian Universalist Association and who demonstrate personal integrity. We seek individuals who nurture, care for, respect, and support children and youth and who are worthy of our trust. All people engaged in programs for children, youths, and families at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Los Gatos (UUFLG) are responsible for knowing the possible impacts of their words and actions on the children with whom they work.

With the above purposes in mind, we have developed the following policies and procedures in regard to promoting and maintaining personal safety:

1. All teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors are interviewed in person by at least two members of the RE Committee. The selected candidate is approved for service by the Director of Religious Education (DRE), in consultation with the Minister.
2. Caregivers, mentors, and persons who have attended UUFLG for less than six months must complete an application and provide references.
3. All youth advisors, teachers, childcare providers, or caregivers who are hired into paid positions are required to successfully pass a Criminal History Background Check. UUFLG will process and conduct a background check, which may include fingerprinting, for paid staff. Records relating to background checks are maintained confidentially for access only by the Minister and/or members of the Religious Education committee.
4. If a once-active individual ceases participation in the UUFLG community for a period of time greater than six months, and then wishes to re-

- establish a relationship in the church community with involvement and/or responsibility for children and/or youth, steps 1 and 2 may be required again.
5. Youth advisors, mentors, and sponsors must be 25 years of age or older and an active Member or Friend of UUFLG in good standing. Teachers must be at least 18 years of age. Caregivers and teaching assistants under age 18 must always be in the presence of an adult.
 6. Teachers, advisors, caregivers, mentors, and sponsors must review and sign a Code of Ethics on an annual basis. This is done at an annual training provided by the Religious Education committee. The Code of Ethics specifically prohibits verbal, emotional, and/or physical abuse and/or sexual involvement with children and/or youth. If there is an alleged violation of the Code of Ethics, it should immediately be reported to the DRE, who will take immediate and appropriate action. (The Minister, DRE, and paid staff are designated mandatory reporters by Child Protective Services/State of California Department of Human Services.)
 7. Supervision standards:
 - a. Child and youth classes are generally taught by a team of at least two people.
 - b. At church sponsored events, an attempt will be made to have both male and female adults present for events, activities, and outings.
 8. Training on preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting child and/or sexual abuse and/or harassment will be offered each year by the Religious Education committee, along with information on the UUFLG Safety Policy and other relevant information related to this topic in this congregation. All persons working with children and/or youth, whether staff or volunteers, are expected to attend this training.
 9. Paid staff members are strongly encouraged to attend and pass a Red Cross certified course in First Aid, including instruction in CPR.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS:

1. Church-sponsored childcare is provided by both paid and volunteer caregivers, as follows:
 - a. To infants, toddler, and/or preschoolers during Sunday church services;
 - b. To multi-age groups of children during church services and/or events, such as meetings, membership orientation classes, adult religious education classes, and/or adult-oriented social events.
2. Caregivers must be at least 18 years of age and shall be screened according to the procedures stated above (see first section of Safety Policy.)
3. Assistant caregivers may be under 18 years of age, but must be supervised by an adult and will not be left alone with children.
4. Appropriate staffing levels, allowing for the safe supervision of children and adequate coverage for the number of children in attendance, will be

- maintained in classrooms, during church-sponsored activities, and on field trips.
5. There shall be a minimum of two caregivers in all situations, at least one of which must be 18 years of age or older. The following exceptions may be made:
 - a. For small groups of children (numbering four or fewer), when childcare is provided on the church premises within hearing range of the parents/guardians present.
 - i. In this case, parents/guardians will make frequent checks.
 - ii. Parents will be informed if someone under age 18 is caring for their child.
 6. Caregivers shall have easy access to a telephone and first aid kit.
 7. Caregivers shall receive information about childcare and emergency procedures at the church. A summary information sheet for caregivers shall be readily available. Under the direction of the Director of Religious Education, each classroom will conduct a fire safety/evacuation drill on an annual basis and discuss the safety plan.
 8. If a teacher, advisor, caregiver, mentor, or sponsor becomes aware of or suspects abuse or has a concern about a child's safety or welfare, they will notify the Minister or the Director of Religious Education as soon as possible.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR YOUTH TRIPS, OVERNIGHTS, AND RETREATS:

1. Parents must sign permission slips when children and/or teens (under age 18) are leaving the Fellowship premises by vehicle, for overnights or on retreats. Activity leaders will compile a list of names, emergency contacts, medical conditions, and a parent-signed emergency medical treatment authorization to be kept with them at all times during the activity or trip.
2. If a child or teen does not have a signed permission form from their parent or guardian, that child or teen will not be allowed to participate in the scheduled event.
3. There must be a minimum of two adults with the group or the activity will be cancelled.
4. All drivers must provide proof of car insurance to the Director of Religious Education before the trip. When driving to and from field trips or other church-sponsored activities, children and youth must be accompanied by adults. Young people (under 18, even when licensed) are not allowed to serve as drivers for off-site activities or trips. All drivers and passengers must wear seatbelts and/or be in appropriate car seats/restraining safety devices as required by California law.
5. Children and teens on field trips, overnights, or retreats are required to follow the instructions of adult activity leaders in regard to emergency and safety concerns. Participants will respect property, activity rules, and each other during activities.

6. A first aid kit will accompany all groups taking field trips, on overnights or at retreats.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on May 8, 2008