X. Religious Exploration Health and Safety Policies for Children and Youth

(Adopted by Board June 10, 2014)

A. Health and Safety Policies

The health and safety of our children and youth requires a partnership between parents and volunteers. This partnership is based on an understanding and affirmation of responsibilities and boundaries.

Parents are solely responsible for their children at all times, except when they are under the direct supervision of the religious exploration staff and/or trained volunteers during Religious Exploration programming.

All adults and youth will acknowledge the weight and seriousness of their responsibility while also understanding they are a part of a team which is both supportive and equally responsible.

Every adult and youth volunteer is required to review and sign “The Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth who are in Leadership Roles with Children and Youth” on an annual basis. It states;

*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.*

Those qualifications include knowledge of what is required for a safe and healthy environment. These policies address legal requirements and insurance obligations. They are also designed to help staff and volunteers provide a safe and healthy environment that fosters spiritual growth.

Procedures

The religious exploration staff, with support from the RE Committee, is responsible for the oversight of the following safety procedures:

First Aid
Each classroom will be equipped with a first-aid kit. There is also first-aid kits located in the kitchen in Drew House, the kitchen in the Church, the religious exploration office and in the downstairs bathroom in Judd House. The religious exploration staff will instruct teachers in their use, including the use of “Universal Precautions” to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

Each kit contains
Band-Aids
Gauze  
Tape  
Cold pack  
ACE bandage  
Gloves (latex)  
Tweezers  
Tick removing spoon  

There should be a good supply of paper towel in each location.

If you notice something is missing or running low please inform the religious exploration staff. Kits do not contain antibiotic cream, burn ointment or aspirin. No one but the parent of a child should administer any form of medication. If necessary, find the child’s parent immediately.

Shelves and furniture in classrooms will be cleaned regularly and checked for damage. Damaged items will either be fixed or promptly removed.

Candles

Burning candles is generally not permitted in classrooms. Each class is provided with a battery operated chalice for their use. Jr. and Sr. Youth may light a chalice at the beginning of class with adult supervision. The flame must be extinguished immediately following any opening ritual and must not be permitted to burn for the duration of the class or activity. Matches can be obtained and must be returned to the religious exploration staff.

Transportation

Guidelines for transportation to/from off-site events with children and/or youth:
- Religious Exploration staff will verify license and insurance coverage of drivers
- Drivers will insure that seatbelts are available for all occupants and worn at all times
- Travel arrangements and destinations of participants must be confirmed, especially if the terminal points and travel times differ from general plans.
- Drivers must plan to be awake and alert at all times
- If the driver is a youth, be aware of the current laws regarding new and youth drivers
- The parents of youth traveling with a youth driver must give consent to the adult from the church that is coordinating the event. The adults attending the event must also be aware of the plans.

B. Religious Exploration Volunteer Screening

All volunteer teachers must attend the UUCC for at least 6 months prior to volunteering. This provision can be waived by the Minister and Religious Exploration staff in consultation with each other, when the individual in question has been an active member with experience volunteering with children or youth in another UU church and can provide a reference from that church.

Youth who wish to provide childcare should be at least 14 years of age. This provision may be waived by the Minister and Religious Exploration staff, in consultation with each other, when the
individual in question has demonstrated competence, by successfully completed a babysitting course, for example.

New adult volunteers will:

a. Complete the “Be an RE Volunteer” form
b. Complete the teacher training and sign the “Affirmation by Those Working with Children and Youth”
c. Affirm the “Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth who are in Leadership Roles with Children and Youth” (adopted by the UUA in 1985)
d. Provide references

e. Agree to a criminal records background check.
f. Agree to Maine Child Abuse Record Search

Every year thereafter, adult and youth volunteers will reaffirm their commitment to the “Code of Ethics” as part of their annual training. Annual training will include a review of these policies and procedures.

Every third year, volunteers will need to agree to submit to an updated Criminal Background Check and an updated Maine Child Abuse Record Search

C. Education and Training Policies

Education and training are critical for maintaining a healthy and safe Religious Exploration program as well as a healthy and safe environment for children and youth within the congregation at large. Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthy relationships. To that end the Religious Education program will provide the following:

   Procedures

The Religious Exploration staff and Religious Exploration Committee are responsible for:

a. offering age-appropriate sexuality education (Our Whole Lives) for our children, youth and adults on a regular basis.
b. providing a required annual training that includes a review of health and safety policies to anyone working with children and youth and
c. keeping the staff and congregation, including but not limited to, parents, volunteer teachers, youth advisors and youth working in the classrooms and nursery informed about these policies, reviewing and affirming them annually through the use of the following:

   i. Safety Procedures; including the Supervision and Safety Policies and the Emergency Evacuation and Fire Safety Plan that governs fire alarm and safe evacuation of classrooms.
ii. Posted copies of policies in classrooms and the nursery.
iii. Review of all program policies and publications.

**D. Supervision and Safety Policies**

At least two screened volunteers will be assigned to and will be present in each classroom and youth group activity, including in-church events or overnights, off-site retreats, conferences, and other church-related activities. One individual may be briefly alone with a group when the other must leave as dictated by common sense and necessity for such purposes as bathroom breaks.

When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings, or other church activities, no child or youth will be alone with one adult in a car.

All children must have a completed participant registration form on file at the church in order to participate in any off-site activity. This form will be signed by parents and reviewed by the Religious Exploration staff and volunteers to help ensure any special needs are noted as is appropriate within confidentiality guidelines.

Exceptions to the two volunteer policy are discouraged but may be approved by the Religious Exploration staff, Minister or Religious Exploration Committee in an emergency situation.

If there is a foreseeable reason a teacher, advisor, or other volunteer will be alone with a child or youth, the written consent of the child’s parent or guardian will be obtained in advance, (i.e. an adult mentor meeting with a participant in the “Coming of Age” program).

We all want church to be a safe place for our children and youth. However, before and after Religious Exploration class time, parents are solely responsible for the supervision of their children and youth, both inside and outside the building. At no time should a child be asked to watch another child, especially outside.

**Procedures**

The Religious Exploration staff, or a designated substitute, will check in on all classes during the course of a Sunday morning, to ensure compliance with policies and answer questions or meet needs which may arise.

All children under the age of 11 will be picked up from class by their parents as close to 10:30 for first service and 12:00 for second service as possible. They will not be released until parents arrive unless prior arrangements have been made with the teachers to walk them over to the church to meet their parents.

No children or youth will return to Drew or Judd House after class time without an adult.
Children in the nursery will not be released to a person other than the parent(s)/care giver or the family member who initially brought the child into the room. (Example, if a mother brings a child into the nursery, she cannot send her great aunt to come pick up the child.)

**E. Behavior Expectations**

All children and youth are expected to behave with respect towards each other, adults and their space. Each class creates a covenant stating shared expectations at the beginning of the year. Any child or youth who is being disruptive or threatening his/her own safety or the safety of others will be asked to stop the disruptive or unsafe behavior. If the child or youth cannot/will not, then the parent will be called from church to remove the child or youth from the classroom until the behavior can be amended. All efforts will be made by the Religious Exploration staff and volunteers to help children and youth know what the expectations are.

**Procedures**

Please feel free to report problems at any time to ask the Religious Exploration staff or Summer Coordinator for help.

If a child is being aggressive to the other children, the child care worker must report the incident immediately to the Religious Exploration staff, who will contact the child's parents to work out a solution.

Any problems that arise must be reported to the Religious Exploration staff immediately. It is extremely important that we know what is going on and communicate quickly with parents where needed. Please do your best to come up with a solution in the moment, but then report the incident so that we can look at it from all angles.

**F. Nursery Policies for the UUCC**

Two screened childcare workers must be in the nursery at all times. (If one needs to leave, make sure the other one knows where they are going, why, and that both understand that the second one will return within five minutes.)

Both child care workers in the nursery must be aware at all times of the number of children they have in their care.

Children older than four will not be allowed to hang out in the nursery without permission from the Religious Exploration staff or Minister. Older children have the game room and their classrooms as their space.

Only parents or caregiver and the Religious Exploration staff and Minister are allowed in the nursery. Please discourage others from coming in. If you have an insistent adult, let the Religious Exploration staff or Summer Coordinator know.

Nursery caregivers are required to read and follow nursery guidelines (see attached). *Pay for nursery care providers is $10/hour.*
G. **Nursery Guidelines (To be posted in Nursery Care at all times)**

Thank you for serving our youngest UUs by being present for them in the nursery. Your “job” is to play, read stories, and talk with your young charges. Have FUN!!

Please keep written attendance records so we can keep track of the number of children using the nursery.

The nursery will be staffed by one youth nursery care worker and one adult volunteer at all times. Please plan to arrive ten minutes before the start of service to meet parents when they arrive with their children. If there are no children in the nursery fifteen minutes after the start of service, volunteers are allowed to join the service, go to classrooms, or go home. Youth childcare workers will need to return for the second service.

Please plan to stay a few extra minutes at the end of service to tidy the room for next week’s children.

**Room**

Please keep the nursery door (or baby gate) shut at all times to prevent wandering/escaping children.

Wrap up all window cords to prevent children from harm. Feel free to open windows to allow in fresh air.

Keep your eyes open for broken furniture or anything that might cause a child harm. Remove the offending whatever, and let the Religious Exploration Coordinator or Summer Worship Coordinator know.

**What does not belong in the Nursery?**

Be aware of which items—both food and non-food—are considered choking hazards (anything about the size of a marshmallow or smaller). These do not belong in the nursery.

Never bring a sharp object or knife to the nursery. (If food items need to be cut, only do that in the kitchen area or out in the hallway, away from the children.) Little people have an amazing way of finding stuff they should not.

If war toys or violent toys show up, throw them away. We want our nursery filled with peace.

The art supplies should only be the toddler-friendly crayons and markers in the blue carrier. No scissors. Let the Religious Exploration staff know if you need new supplies.

**Diaper Changing/Bathroom Breaks**

Get the parent for diaper changing or bathroom breaks.

**Reporting Problems**

Please feel free at any time to ask the Religious Exploration staff or Summer Coordinator for help. If a child is being aggressive to the other children, the child care worker must report the incident immediately to the Religious Exploration staff, who will contact the child's parents to work out a solution.
Any problems that arise must be reported to the Religious Exploration staff or Summer Coordinator immediately. It is extremely important that we know what is going on and communicate quickly with parents where needed. Please do your best to come up with a solution in the moment, but then report the incident so that we can look at it from all angles.

**Confidentiality**

Please carefully read this section as it should serve as your guide for keeping in confidence things shared in the nursery. If any child says something that concerns you, please report this immediately to the Religious Exploration Coordinator.

It is important to honor the privacy of our children, youth, and adults by not thoughtlessly repeating all that occurs or is said during our interactions with each other. However, it is equally important to follow up on concerns that may need addressing by our Minister, Religious Exploration Staff, and Parents and Caregivers.

In Religious Exploration classes, for instance, it is essential to our faith development and spiritual growth to talk about ideas with as many people as we feel comfortable sharing concepts with. So we want to encourage our children and youth to talk about what they learned in their RE Classes. Often I say, it is ok to talk about ideas, but not people. If you must ask your folks about an issue brought up by an individual, do not mention their name. Say instead something like, “One of the kids in class said her mom fights with her ma a lot. It makes her sad. I get sad when you and Dad fight.” Etc.

Confidence or Secret

To keep a confidence is not the same as to keep a secret. Keeping information in confidence implies you are holding information that will come to light when the person who shared the confidence is prepared to share it with others (for instance, news about a pregnancy or an illness). Keeping a secret is keeping in the dark information that ought to come to light (for instance, abuse or lying).

When you become privy to information that you understand as being harmful to another person or indicates that a person is in danger, then this information must be shared with the Minister, Religious Exploration Staff or Parent(s). Our young person’s safety is primary. If you are unsure of what to do with information, please come to your Minister or one of our Religious Exploration staff members.

**Triangulation**

Conflict is inevitable. It can even be a helpful way to bring about positive change. But it needs to be handled with frankness, kindness and care.

One of the most common pitfalls within a community is triangulation. That is when someone pulls a third person into a conflict in order to complain to or try to lobby that person onto his or her side of the conflict. However, the very best situation is for two people in conflict to talk directly to each other.

Direct confrontation—or even earnest conversation—is not always easy. You, as a third party, can offer to accompany someone to talk with the person with whom he or she has a conflict. You can say something like: “I know you are nervous to confront Joe. I will go with you, but you need to do the talking.”

You can also suggest getting a neutral mediator to help resolve the conflict.
Check Yourself:
Even “good gossip” can get as warped as any telephone game message. Check yourself before you repeat information and stories.

Ask yourself:

- Is this my story to tell?
- Am I telling this story because it gives me power as someone “in the know”?
- Am I telling this story to titillate?
- Am I telling this story because I am uncomfortable knowing the information?
- Am I telling this story to get someone into trouble or out of trouble?
- Am I telling this story out of genuine concern and a need to seek help for someone?
- Am I telling this story to share good news and celebrate? But is it my good news to share?

Right Relations
To be in right relations with your community is to be honest, kind, frank, straightforward and thoughtful of your impact on the whole. To be in right relation means to think of the group first, and yourself second.

Confidentiality in RE Classes
Encourage your kids to talk to each other and to their families and friends about ideas that come up in RE Class. Discourage them from talking about others. We do not have any blanket agreements that “what happens in RE stays in RE.” Yikes, that would not be good. We want to encourage open, thoughtful conversation.

If you hear information in Joys & Sorrows or during class, or witness behavior that makes you concerned for the child or youth, please contact your minister or Religious Exploration staff. Together we will figure out what to do next.

You are not alone and we will work toward beloved community together.

Karen Fisk, former Director of Religious Exploration, UUCC, April 29, 2011

Nursery Policies
Two nursery care works (one adult volunteer and one youth worker) must be present in the nursery at all times. If one needs to leave (for example, to use the restroom or find a parent) make sure the other one knows where they are going, why, and that both understand that the second person will return within five minutes.

Both child care workers in the nursery must be aware at all times of the number of children they have in their care.

Children older than four will not be allowed to hang out in the nursery without permission from the Religious Exploration Coordinator.

Only parents or caregivers and the Religious Exploration Coordinator are allowed in the nursery. Please discourage others from coming in. This includes other youth and nursery care volunteers who are not scheduled for that service. If you have an insistent adult, let the Religious Exploration Coordinator or Summer Coordinator know.

Nursery caregivers are required to read and follow nursery guidelines (see attached).
Pay for nursery care providers is $10/hour.

H. Policy for Child Care for Events at the UUCC
(Adopted by the Board 1/9/12, Updated by the Board 1/11/16)

In accordance with our Supervision and Safety Policy and Nursery Care Guidelines, all events/meetings/classes that provide childcare or include children/youth must have two screened and trained adults or youth present at all times. A supervising adult will check in periodically.

For UUCC congregation-wide events and meetings (including newcomer dinners), the Religious Exploration Coordinator will be responsible for obtaining childcare. For all other events, the sponsoring group is responsible for obtaining childcare.

For UUCC events and meetings that are not congregation–wide events, congregation-wide meetings, or do not include children, a parent has the option of arranging care for their own children on church property at a church sponsored event at their own risk and own expense. The UUCC however discourages this practice and encourages all parents to work with the meeting organizers and youth advisors to arrange for childcare in accordance with the supervision and safety policies and nursery care guidelines.

We encourage the use of childcare to provide greater options for all members of our congregation to participate in the important and valuable opportunities our church offers.

Please note, “youth” are defined as people ages 13 to 18. For childcare, we recommend youth 16 or older. At the Religious Exploration’s discretion, youth under age 16 may be selected to be childcare providers if they have had formal training in childcare or commensurate experience.

Procedures

The RE Committee and Religious Exploration Coordinator will build and maintain a list of potential childcare providers available to all UUCC groups wishing to employ providers. This list will consist of recommended youth and adults who have had criminal background checks and have had an annual orientation for work as a childcare provider or classroom facilitator; in addition, youth must have provided references able to verify their suitability as childcare providers.

Requests for child care for a church-wide event will be submitted to the Religious Exploration Coordinator. The Religious Exploration Coordinator will assist with securing two child care workers for church wide events (i.e., harvest feast, annual meeting, newcomer dinners) and submit request for payment to the church Treasurer. Childcare for church wide events will be paid from the RE budget.

Individual committees and groups may obtain a list of childcare providers from the Religious Exploration Coordinator. They are responsible for arranging for child care and submitting request for payment to the church Treasurer. It is the responsibility of the program or group requesting childcare to pay for these services from the committee budget. If youth are employed or volunteer, the group is responsible for checking in with the youth over the course of the event.

All groups wishing to provide childcare will be required to read the Supervision and Safety Policy, Nursery Care Guidelines and Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation (See
Religious Exploration Health and Safety Policies) and sign a statement that they understand the responsibilities they take on as a group when providing childcare for our congregation. (See Appendix I)

I. Youth Overnight Policy

Together, the youth, the Youth Advisor and the Adult Leaders/Chaperones will create a covenant for the overnight. (Below are listed the elements of the covenant that must be included for safety and to emphasize group responsibility.)

There will be a set time for lights-out and sleep. Adults will remain awake until all youth are asleep.

If there is an unexpected change in the group dynamics or the physical setting that prompts concern, the group will shift to two adults at a time taking shifts to stay awake the entire overnight period.

A youth who needs to leave the immediate area during the night (bathroom or any other reason) will wake two adults; the "immediate area" will differ among locations and will be determined prior to lights-out.

Parents and youth participating in the overnight will be required to attend a short meeting before departure during which all will hear the covenant and sign it as a binding agreement, knowing that consequences for violating the covenant can result in a parent being called to come pick up the youth.

All parents and youth will co-sign a permission slip and agreement for right relations (that is, adhering to the covenant) for the overnight.

The Youth Advisor will go through the policy for covenanting for overnights with the adult leaders before departure.

Parents will fill out and sign a participant registration form that the Youth Advisor will carry with her at all times.

Safety Checks for Overnights Away and at Home

Procedures:

A. The Youth Advisor will meet with the adult leaders/chaperones to assess the place we are going and the youth involved to pinpoint any potential difficulties or things to be aware of. For instance, there may be one youth particularly introverted who will need extra attention, or a new couple within the group who will need to be reminded our experience is a team experience, not a date. Health concerns, allergy and food choice, and impulse issues will also be kept in mind.

B. The Youth Advisor will find out if the place we are staying has a safety policy. If it does, we will work to meet its policies as well as our own; if it does not we will follow our own policies.

C. The Youth Advisor will ensure that all adult leaders/chaperones have met the requirements of our Safe Congregation Policies, which includes being known to the church
for at least one year, and having been properly screened through the RE volunteer process described in Section VI.B.

D. The Youth Advisor will check all adult leader/chaperone’s licenses, registration, and insurance before driving. The adult leaders/chaperones will make sure all people in their vehicle have properly put on their seatbelts.

**Policies for Covenanting for Overnights**

When creating the covenant with the youth and adult leaders, the Youth Advisor must be mindful of including certain elements for group responsibility and safety. The listings need to be very explicit, making our expectations of each other very clear.

Because we respect each other and value the experiences we share, we understand that we are accountable for the success of our journey. It is up to each of us to understand the expectations of this covenant and to call each other to follow the expectations we have agreed on together.

Respect for all (which includes honoring personal space and verbal boundaries, and taking care of the physical space we are occupying)

No exclusive behavior (we are participating as a team, representing Unitarian Universalism as well as our own faith community and concerned youth)

No sex, sexualized behavior, sexual harassment, or exploitive behavior

No alcohol, drugs, illegal behavior

Set lights-out/sleep time honored by all

A policy for electronics will be decided on by the group, with the goal of non-exclusive behavior being most important to our group experience

All will exercise personal safety which includes staying with the group and refraining from risky behavior (if any of us find ourselves in an uncomfortable or risky situation—for instance, being isolated with another youth or with an adult—we will state our discomfort, get out of the situation, and tell an adult leader and/or the Youth Advisor)

All will take good care of selves, paying attention to eating properly, getting enough water/liquid, getting enough rest and down time, and speaking up if your personal needs are not being met. All are welcome also to look out for each other, asking an adult chaperone for help if needed.

All will pledge to be a part of the group, the team, open to the opportunities of new experiences, paying attention to personal and group safety

Youth and adults will operate as a team, listening carefully to each other’s needs, and all deferring within reason to the plans the group has made

Youth and adults will adhere to the schedule and rules of the event/adventure in which we are participating

Consequences of breaking covenant depend on the seriousness of the breach and can range from a verbal warning to phoning parents to come pick up the youth. Procedures for decisions about consequences will start with adults but may go to a youth council for decision.
All youth and parents, Youth Advisor and adult leaders/chaperone will sign covenant as a binding agreement.

**Procedures for Overnights**

For sleeping times, adults will sleep by doors. We will make decisions about gender-specific sleeping areas according to the needs of the group. (Expectations are that all will sleep, as sleep deprivation is detrimental to health and to the good spirits of the group as a whole.)

The adult leaders and/or the Youth Advisor will carry at all times a charged and working cell phone. The phone number for this cell phone will be shared with all parents and youth.

Participant registration will include two emergency contact numbers, permission to administer health care if needed, insurance information, allergy and health concerns information. The Youth Advisor will have permission slips at all times. Both parents and youth will have signed the participant registration from which will also state consequences for not following covenant.

Adult chaperones will be in charge of keeping track of their assigned youths, and youth will be in charge of keeping track of their assigned adult chaperone. Group will check in with each other as a whole periodically throughout any adventure.

**Supplies for Every Overnight**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Aid Kit</th>
<th>General</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band-Aids</td>
<td>Sewing kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotic cream</td>
<td>Scissors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tylenol, Advil</td>
<td>Spare t-shirt, jacket, sweat pants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benadryl</td>
<td>Umbrella(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ace bandage</td>
<td>Gloves and hats (sun hats, too)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period supplies</td>
<td>Water bottles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunscreen</td>
<td>Flashlight</td>
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**Religious Exploration Forms (See Back Pockets)**

**Family Registration Packet:**
- Religious Exploration Prospectus
- Be an RE Volunteer
- Participant Registration
- Notice regarding the policies and procedures “Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation”

**Teacher Packet:**
- Religious Exploration Prospectus
- Teacher’s Handbook
Religious Exploration policies and practice (Section IX)
Volunteer Form
Notice regarding the Policies and Procedures “Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation”
Affirmation by Those Working with Children and Youth
References Form
Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Who are in Leadership Roles
Background Information
Authorization Release of Confidential Substantiated Maine Child Abuse and Neglect Records Information