



ICUU

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF UNITARIANS AND UNIVERSALISTS
MANY VOICES, ONE GLOBAL COMMUNITY



Selected ICUU Youth Safety Policy

"We establish places in the world where we can feel safe. The most common such places are our homes and our religious communities. It is important, therefore, that these places, our homes and congregations, be places of justice and nurturance, be islands of hope in a world too often in despair. This sense of security in life, a security provided by religion, has been called a Sacred Canopy. That is, theologically religion provides a safe covering, an enclosure, a place where insecurity vanishes, at least temporarily." Reverend David M. Bryce from The First Unitarian Society of Westchester, MA

ICUU's various safety policies and procedures are designed to shelter our children, youth and adults under a sacred canopy. It should be recognized that most every event of youth participation may be unique and that no single policy fits all situation and that common sense and intelligence and compassion must always be applied – but always with the goal of maintaining the utmost safety and of children, youth, adults and all participants. The Policy is informed by the Unitarian Universalist Principles, the UUA resource on Responsible Staffing; Balancing Acts - Keeping Children Safe in Congregations by Deborah Haffner; The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities by Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Fredric Muir, Editors; and risk management guidance from Church Mutual.

1. Applicability

This Policy is designed to provide care and safety for children and youth up to 18 years of age and associated adult volunteers who are involved in ICUU sponsored events. When the events are sponsored by a third party, the same policies shall apply to the extent practicable and not inconsistent with policies set forth by third parties administering the events in question. When the policies are inconsistent, the more stringent policies are applicable and must be followed not inconsistent with the requirements of any ICUU liability insurer. ICUU events include, but are not limited to: religious education classes; off-site activities such as field trips; special trips such as weekend retreats, district or regional annual conferences; youth conferences or other conferences (such as social justice conferences), youth training and workshops.

2. Screening and Selection

Screening and selection of ICUU staff and volunteers working with children and youth staff and volunteers

Those working with children and youth at ICUU events will be selected and screened 1 as follows:

3. Eligible Volunteers

Volunteers must be at least 25 years old if working with high school youth. Staff and Volunteers must be at least 21 years old if working with junior high age youth.

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4. Background Check Required

Adults must complete a volunteer application and to consent to a criminal background check prior to service, and once every 3 years thereafter.

Background checks must be reviewed and maintained in confidence by ICUU.

5. Supervision Youth, Ratios and Prohibition on Corporal Punishment

An adult should not be alone with a youth out of sight of another adult unless that adult is a parent or legal guardian of the child or youth.

If only one adult is present, a door should be open or the classroom otherwise visible from the outside. All teen nursery staff under age 18 will be under the on-site supervision of an adult while supervising children or youth.

The minimum ratio of youth to adults should be as follows:

For groups involving youth from age of grades 7-12th the youth/adult ratio should be no more than 10:1

Corporal punishment shall never be used.

6. On-site Safety Practices, Sign-In/Sign-Out, Incident Reporting, Playground Rules Fire Safety

ICUU is committed to ensuring fire safety, disaster preparation and careful supervision by those who work with children and youth.

7. Transportation and Off-Site Events

Adult drivers acting as advisors or chaperones must be at least 25 years old with a valid driver's license (valid in all locations where driving is undertaken) and provide proof of insurance. Two adults shall be present while driving youth for trips longer than an hour in each direction. If circumstances require, two adults may caravan in separate vehicles and remain in contact with one another. One adult may drive youth as long as there is more than one youth in the car for trips of less than an hour in each direction. Vehicle occupancy shall not exceed the number of working seat belts and all occupants shall wear seat belts.

All drivers to a youth conference or other event should have the opportunity to sleep for at least eight hours on the night prior to departure from an event. Adults should take individual responsibility for getting adequate sleep to promote good judgment and clear thinking. At ICUU events or ICUU participating event, at no time shall children or youth leave the campus of a hosting institution except as part of planned, previously announced off-site activities under the leadership of the hosting institution. A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site and the proper ratio of adults to children or youth must be maintained. In the event of an emergency the on-site adult

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leaders may make exceptions. Youth participants should not drive themselves or ride with other youth participants to or from off-site events such as youth conferences. In the event a parent or guardian deems it necessary for their youth to drive or to ride with other youth participants the parent or guardian must submit a written permission form to ICUU before the event.

Adult advisors, sponsors or other designated driver must have in their possession a signed medical release form for all children and youth with whom they are traveling, and will be responsible, when necessary, for obtaining appropriate medical care for any child or youth in their care.

Prior to any off site event, permission forms and event registration forms will be completed and returned to ICUU before the event. Supervising adults on the trips or at events will also complete and return a registration form.

8. Accountability—Conduct, Boundaries, Communication

Parents and legal guardians are responsible for their dependent children and are required to ensure those children are in compliance with all policies and procedures herein. All adults, whether staff or volunteer, who work with children and youth at ICUU or ICUU participating events are accountable to demonstrate the highest level of conduct.

All adults and youth at ICUU or ICUU participating events will follow all local, state, and federal laws and the laws of the local country.

Youth and adults shall also follow these guidelines:

Have respect for self and others;

No sex or patently sexual behavior is allowed, including vaginal, oral or anal intercourse, prolonged and deep kissing, or heavy petting, etc.;

No weapons, violence or threats of violence;

No possession, distribution or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or pornography;

No smoking, in accordance with ICUU policy.

Boundaries Due to the inherent power imbalance between adults and minors: adults will assume primary responsibility for setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. While adults and youth may develop a healthy mentor/mentee relationship, care must be taken to discourage the reality or appearance of an inappropriate or exclusive relationship.

Communication: Recognizing that the means of communication, especially electronic communication, are changing rapidly and can sometimes lead to personal boundary issues, ICUU upholds the principle that parents/guardians are the first point of contact

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for communication with children and youth, and the final arbiter of how their child or youth should receive communication from adults. No adult shall ask a child or youth for their contact information at a ICUU or ICUU participating event. No adult may share their contact information with a child or youth without prior parent/guardian approval.

General Education and Training: Prior to the beginning of tenure, all paid staff working directly with youth and all volunteers working with children and youth on an ongoing basis are required to attend an orientation to this safety policy and on Mandatory Reporting of suspected abuse or neglect. The training may utilize any materials or professionals deemed appropriate by ICUU. In lieu of orientation, volunteers may arrange to meet individually with ICUU to cover these materials. Safety policies and procedures will be explained by ICUU. Afterwards, volunteers and staff will sign the statement found at the end of this policy signifying that they understand the Policy, their own accountability for safety practices, and agree to comply with its provisions. Work may not begin until this orientation has taken place and the signature form has been turned in.

9. Child Abuse Education and Prevention, Reporting and Response

These provisions are adopted to assure that children and youth are safe at ICUU or ICUU participating events. It is important for every person to take child abuse and neglect seriously and to be able to recognize when it happens. Abuse and neglect may be physical, sexual or emotional.

Physical abuse includes: Cases in which a child exhibits evidence of a skin bruising, bleeding, malnutrition, failure to thrive, burns, fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, tissue swelling or death, AND There is not a justifiable explanation for the condition or death.

Sexual abuse includes: Criminal sexual contact, incest or criminal sexual penetration Sexual exploitation (acts such as allowing, permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or obscene or pornographic photographing, or filming a child for obscene or pornographic commercial purposes)

Neglect includes: The abandonment of a child by a parent, guardian or custodian. The failure of a parent, guardian or custodian to provide a child with proper parental care and control or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being. When a child is physically or sexually abused and the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm.

Parental inability to discharge their responsibilities to and for the child because of parental incarceration, hospitalization, or physical or mental disorder or incapacity.

Education and Prevention A high quality sexuality education program is one of the best methods for sexual abuse prevention. Every child from the age of three onward can learn "No, Go, Tell" — say no to the abuse, leave the situation as soon as possible, and tell a

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parent or care-giver if someone tries to hurt them or asks them to keep a secret about touching.

ICUU, within its means and resources, will provide resources and information to families on sexual abuse prevention.

ICUU has established a Safety Response Team.

Other Team members may be appointed by this Team as needed. Each member of the Team will be aware of his or her responsibilities under this Policy and will be prepared to take prompt and appropriate action in the event of an incident of alleged abuse. All Team members will be fully informed about the incident. If the accused person is a Team member, the remaining Team members will decide who will take on the responsibilities below.

The primary purpose of the Safety Response Team is to ensure a report of abuse or neglect is made through official channels; share information about appropriate resources; be openly available to discuss concerns regarding situations that have felt uncomfortable but may not constitute neglect or abuse; and help individuals clarify the source of their discomfort and to delineate possible means of resolving the problem.

The Safety Response Team has neither the legal authority nor the expertise to determine guilt or innocence. While charges are being investigated, the Team will work to protect and support all involved parties in a way that allows ICUU to function in a safe atmosphere.

Procedure to Report Abuse: If a person knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, that person shall make a report immediately to notify ICUU and the appropriate authorities will be immediately thereafter be notified.

Reports of abuse shall be documented in writing on an incident report form by the person making the report or by the Safety Response Team. When reporting, reporters should be prepared to provide the following information, if it is known: child's name and birthdate, parent's name, Church address (if applicable), Church phone number, brief synopsis of what happened, offender's name, name and home address of the child and the child's parents or other persons believed to be responsible for the child's care, any pertinent information of concern with regard to the child's well-being, and where the alleged neglect or abuse took place.

The person who discovers information which gives reason to believe that a child is the victim of abuse or neglect should refrain from trying to obtain further information to confirm or disprove the belief.

Procedure for Reporting Inappropriate Behavior that Does Not Rise to Abuse or Neglect:

If a person knows or hears of inappropriate behavior that does not meet the definition of neglect or abuse above but is nevertheless inappropriate, that person shall report the

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behavior to ICUU Safety Response Team. If the Safety Response Team concludes that the inappropriate behavior does meet the definition of neglect or abuse, the Safety Response Team shall encourage immediate reporting to the local authorities. If the Team agrees the behavior does not rise to the level of neglect or abuse, the Team shall address the matter with the people involved, using the appropriate resources, to bring the people involved back into covenant and right relations.

Procedure for Responding to Reports of Abuse or Neglect:

Following an allegation of abuse in connection with ICUU or ICUU participating activities, the following steps will be taken: As soon as possible, the Safety Response Team will be engaged, and, as appropriate, will contact an attorney. Other than notifying the Safety Response team, the situation is to remain confidential. Release of information could interfere with successful prosecution, result in unwarranted damage to reputation of the accused, or endanger the child. ICUU officers shall be responsible for contacting the civil authorities, as appropriate, and ICUU's liability insurer and shall document all efforts handling the incident.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Date: _____

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