

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ST. LOUIS
SAFE CHURCH POLICY
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

In order to create an environment that is safe for children and adults, the following policies and procedures are best practices to be followed by the Religious Education (RE) Program. Exceptions to these policies and procedures, while necessary under some circumstances, should be avoided whenever possible.

1. Team Teaching - Two teachers will lead all children's and youth RE classes.
2. Classroom accessibility - All children's and youth RE classes have an open door policy. Classes and programs are always accessible to RE personnel and parents. Classroom doors are to have windows and will never be locked under regular circumstances.
3. Overnights and Trips - A minimum of two adults, one male and one female, will manage every overnight activity and on all trips involving children and youth in the RE.
4. RE Activities - All RE activities will be conducted on the church premises. The Religious Education Director must approve exceptions to this rule. Examples of exceptions may include class field trips, social gatherings of classes or youth group, youth attendance at district events. When there is an exception, parents must sign a permission form and medical release in order for their child to participate.
5. Mentoring Program - RE mentoring activities will take place on the church premises. Off site activities, such as field trips, will be conducted as group activities. Parental permission must be granted for a mentor and mentee to meet off site. This permission must be given to the Religious Educator. All offsite meetings should be conducted in public spaces (i.e. restaurants) and the mentor and mentee should meet at the designated site, rather than the mentor driving the mentee to the site.
6. Background checks - All children's and youth teachers, mentors, and advisors will be subject to a sex offender background check upon initial participation in the RE program.
7. Accused or convicted sex offenders - In the event that a person who has been formally accused, indicted, or convicted by a court in the State of Missouri, any political subdivision thereof, any other state, or any political subdivision thereof of a sex offense against minors or who is under investigation by said entities as a possible sex offender against minors will not be eligible to serve as a children's or youth teacher, mentor, or advisor. In addition such individual will also be prohibited from the areas in which children and youth RE activities are conducted. This includes social time in Fellowship Hall. If charges are dropped against a person who was formally accused of a sex offense he/she may be considered to serve in the Religious Education program as a volunteer.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH TEACHERS, MENTORS, AND ADVISORS

PREAMBLE

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. There are no more important areas of growth than 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 that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually or otherwise inappropriately involved with young persons in their care. Therefore this code of ethics is established.

EXPECTATIONS

1. All children's and youth teachers, mentors, and advisors will comply with the statutes, regulations, and rules of the Federal, State, and Local Governments, plus the regulations and rules of any applicable State Agency.
2. All children's and youth teachers, mentors, and advisors will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth.
3. All children's and youth teachers, mentors, and advisors will refrain from sexually harassing or engaging in any behavior with youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse or neglect.
4. When any children's and youth teacher, mentor, or advisor has reasonable cause to suspect that a child or youth has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, they shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Senior Minister or Religious Education Director. Nothing in this section will be construed as limiting the right of any children's and youth teacher, mentor, and advisor from making a report to the appropriate Federal, State, or Local Government authorities or applicable State Agencies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I have read and received a copy of the foregoing Safe Church Policy and Code of Ethics. I agree to comply with all of its provisions

I agree to allow the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis to obtain a background check prior to my activities as children's and youth teacher, mentor, or advisor. I understand that any information acquired through such a check will only be released to individuals who require this information in order to execute the duties of their Church office or position in the Church Administration.

Signature

Printed name

Date

CONSENT FOR BACKGROUND HISTORY CHECK AUTHORIZATION, WAIVER, AND INDEMNITY

I hereby give my permission to the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, a not for profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Missouri, to obtain information relating to my child-care/family-care/elder-care history record. The child-care/family-care/elder-care history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications and delinquent conduct committed as a juvenile. I understand that this information will be used in part to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the child-care/family-care/elder-care history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the child-care/family-care/elder-care history as received by the First Unitarian Church. If I dispute the record as received, it will be reviewed and any alleged errors will be investigated. I also understand that the child-care/family-care/elder-care history could contain information presumed to be expunged.

I, the undersigned, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, release and agree to indemnify the First Unitarian Church or St. Louis, and each of its officers, board members, employees, and agents and hold them harmless from and against any and all causes and actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever (including claim for negligence, gross negligence, and/or strict liability of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis) and any and all related attorneys' fees, court costs and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer/employee.

Signature

Printed name

Social Security # _____

Birth Date _____

Date

Information Required from Volunteer Drivers

I, _____, agree that First Unitarian Church of St. Louis may make a background check on my driving record in the state of Missouri and/or Illinois.

My driver's license number is: _____.

My date of birth is: _____.

My personal injury liability levels of automobile insurance meet state standards:

I agree to maintain these limits of insurance coverage or to notify First Unitarian Church of St. Louis if these limits are modified. Should the coverage be cancelled, I agree that I will no longer volunteer to drive for First Unitarian Church events.

Signed:

Signature

Date

(Please print name)

Copy of my driver's license is attached / on reverse /

For information only:

I plan to be driving for Religious Education _____

Care Team _____

Other _____

(pls specify)

ADMINISTRATION OF POLICY

1. To achieve efficiency and privacy for volunteers, all background checks will be processed by the Religious Educator (whether or not the check is for a Religious Education program).
2. Volunteers are asked annually for permission to obtain background and driver record checks. Permission for these background checks and the results of the checks will be kept in locked drawer in the church office. Background checks will be sought every three years for those who are active volunteers in programs that require said checks. They will be sought for all new volunteers before they may fully participate. In the event that there is an issue raised from a background check, the Religious Educator will discuss the issue with the minister and person in question. The Religious Educator and Minister will make the final decision about the person's suitability to participate as a volunteer.
3. Documents related to background checks will be destroyed (shredded) when they are no longer needed.