

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock [UUFR]



CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

UUFR seeks to provide a safe and welcoming environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect both the children/youth and adults from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior.

Definitions:

- Child: An individual from birth through Primary School grades K-5
- Youth: An individual from Middle School grades 6-8 and High School grades 9-12
- Staff: All paid positions that would interact with children and youth.
- Volunteer: All individuals who volunteer in the Religious Exploration [RE] program in any way.

Due Diligence:

This Child/Youth Protection Policy is intended to help our fellowship as much as possible to make UUFR a safe and caring place for our children and youth. All staff and regular volunteers are required to read, and sign a form stating that they have read, this Policy. All staff and regular volunteers are required to have a background check and complete the Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children on-line training module. In the event of an unforeseen RE staffing emergency, UUFR will use its best efforts to meet the requirements of the policy as far as possible.

Policy & Procedures:

- **Six Month Rule** - Only persons affiliated with UUFR (Member or Friend) for a minimum of six months, will be considered for work with minors as a regular volunteer. At that time they must complete a Volunteer Information Form and be interviewed by the RE Director.
- **Screening** - All employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above will be required to sign an authorization for a national background check by independent contractor: SENTRY LINK. This check will be limited to criminal and sex-offender registries and will be paid for by UUFR. The results will be shared with the candidate and kept on file at UUFR in a locked Administrative Confidential file. Access to this file will be limited to the Minister and the RE Director. Re-screening will occur every three years.
- **Rule of Three** - When there are children/youth and adults present in the same room, there should be a minimum of three persons present (two adults and one child/youth or one adult and two children/youth). At any time that an adult is having a private conversation with a child/youth, they should be in plain view of other adults/children/youth. When that is not feasible, the door to the room shall remain open to allow access and easy viewing.
- **Open Door Policy** - Parents, staff or volunteers are welcome to visit and observe the RE classroom at any time.

- **Restroom Procedures for Primary school age children** - A staff or volunteer shall accompany any primary school age child to the unisex restroom facilities, wait at the door until the child exits, and then accompany the child back to the classroom. The staff member or volunteer will remain in the hallway with the outer door ajar and will only enter the restroom if help is requested by the child. When more than one child is escorted to the bathroom, and the adult or helper is inside the bathroom, the children shall be kept inside until everyone has used the facilities and then all should leave as a group.
- **Parental Permission Rule** - children/youth who participate in the RE program must submit a UUFR KIDS Registration Form, completed and signed by the parent or legal guardian. A separate consent form must be signed by parent or legal guardian in order to participate in activities away from UUFR property.
- **Adult Volunteer Participation** while in the presence of minors:
 - No smoking or use of any tobacco products.
 - Must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at any time.
 - Must not use any verbal or physical discipline that humiliates or demeans any person.
 - Must report any questionable behaviors to the UUFR-RE Director or Pastor.
 - As required by mandated reporting laws, staff and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a minor—whether on or off Church property. Volunteers are to comply with the following regarding suspected abuse by an adult:
 1. Inform the RE Director or Pastor immediately
 2. The volunteer and RE Director/Pastor together will call the hotline for social services.
 3. Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline: 1-804-786-8536
- **Transportation** - the following rules apply when transportation by a staff member or an adult volunteer is being provided for children/youth for designated church activities:
 - The designated leader of the event must know the driver.
 - The driver must be at least 25 years old (for church insurance coverage).
 - The driver must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated.
 - The driver must have proof of insurance and sign a document committing his/her insurance as primary to UUFR's coverage.
 - The driver and vehicle must comply with all state and federal regulations regarding transportation of children, which include appropriate car seats for young children.
 - A copy of the valid driver's license and proof of insurance must be filed with the RE director and will be kept in the locked Administrative Confidential file

Any action that is inconsistent with our policy will result in removal as a volunteer or participant in any present or future activity.

