

PUUC Childcare Policy and Protocol

Adopted by Standing Committee March 10, 2008

Part of our mission states that we "nurture a loving, inclusive, spiritual community where all ages celebrate together." Our parents and children look to us to provide children's activities and childcare for all church events and we would like to see more families present at church-wide events. Therefore, we, members of the RE Committee, choose the task of *organizing and assuring childcare coverage for all church events, when possible*. Additionally, the RE Committee *will recruit and maintain a list of people* interested in being called upon for this service. In return, we request cooperation and support from all committees who plan an event where childcare is needed in the following ways:

When an event is being planned by any committee within the church where childcare encourages wider participation, *the event coordinator is to get in touch with a member of the RE Committee or the Director of Religious Education* with a specific request for childcare as far in advance as possible. The committee who is planning the event is *to follow up with the RE committee or DRE a few days before the request date to confirm that arrangements have been made*. The DRE will also be pro-active in awareness of church-wide events and the need for childcare when possible and contact event coordinators if they have not contacted her first, again whenever possible.

There must be at least two childcare providers on all such occasions. Payment is suggested to be \$8 an hour, unless we have a community service volunteer. Expense vouchers for childcare are to be submitted to the office administrator for processing. We suggest a collection is donated once or twice a year to support Special Event Childcare.

While the RE Committee gladly accepts the responsibility for childcare as stated above, we feel that the responsibility and task of caring for children while they are involved with church related programming on or off site, belongs to all of us.

Peterborough Unitarian Church

Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures for Children and Youth

Policy Statement

Child Abuse means the non-accidental injury, sexual abuse (touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child or youth (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare and safety are harmed.

Peterborough Unitarian Church recognizes the reality of child sexual and physical abuse; its impact on children, families and society; and the need for a responsible means of addressing this issue. By overcoming the secrecy involved in this area and by providing a forum for possible problems and concerns, we will reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities.

We will achieve these goals through:

- Screening all church staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Supervising our children and those who work with them.
- Providing a specific process by which allegations of abuse are reported and investigated.
- Treating all persons with dignity and respect.
- Preventing those at risk of incident or accusation to refrain from participating in church activities

While the main focus of these policies is directed to those most directly involved in working with our young people, all members of Peterborough Unitarian Church carry a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social, and intellectual growth are encouraged. The congregation as a whole will be made aware of these policies and procedures, the screening process will be completed for every person working with our children and youth, and a statement about these policies will be included in the new member packet. We are committed to the care of our children and to the principles of fairness, and kindness that have long been part of our religious tradition.

Selection and Screening of Staff and Volunteers

This policy applies to all committees or groups that are part of The Peterborough Unitarian Church. It applies, as well, to any groups using our church buildings that are not renting space. For example, when District Youth Conferences are held in our church buildings, our expectation is that all adult advisers will have been through a screening process similar to the one described below. In this document, "child" shall mean anyone aged from infancy to 13 years and "youth" shall mean anyone aged from 13 to under 18 years.

Particular Requirements

Paid Staff and Youth Group Leaders.

(Minister(s). Church Staff, RE Staff. Jr. and Sr. Youth Group Leaders . Our Whole Lives and Coming of Age Leaders)

- Primary Screening Form updated at least every 3 years (requires 2 written references *prior* to beginning work with children, requested by PUUC)
- Criminal Records Request and Authorization Form
- Criminal records check updated every 3 years
- Code of Ethics Form
- Youth Group Leaders must attend regular training sessions facilitated by the DRE
- Youth Group Leaders must be at least 21 years of age
- Personal interview by immediate supervisor or supervising committee with written notes by interviewer kept on file

RE Teacher and Substitute Teacher Volunteers, Volunteer Nursery Helpers. and Adult Chaperones

- Primary Screening Form updated at least every 3 years (requires 2 written references requested by PUUC)
- Criminal Records Authorization Form
- Code of Ethics Form
- Must attend regular volunteer training sessions facilitated by the DRE

RE Parents, One-time Visitors to RE classes, Children's Moment Worship Leaders, and any other person scheduled to be working with children

- Secondary Screening Form
- Code of Ethics Form

Code of Ethics

For Adults and Older Youth Who are in Leadership Roles with Children/Youth

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 involved with young persons in their care. Therefore, leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth or adults which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. Leaders shall be informed of the Code of Ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this Code, appropriate action will be taken.

RE Volunteer's Statement

I have never been the perpetrator of any physical or sexual abuse of another person. I have read and understand the above statement of position, expectations and actions.

Date

Name (printed)

Signature

This Code of Ethics was adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1986.

PUUC Childcare Volunteer Reference Form

Name _____

Address _____

Dear _____

_____ is being considered as a Volunteer for our children's Religious Education Program. Since we are a child-service program and are concerned with children's safety, we like to know our volunteers. _____ provided us with your name as a reference. All references are confidential. Please complete the following and return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Your Name _____

Your relationship to this person: _____

How long have you known this person? _____

What do you feel this person's strengths are in relating to children?

Do you have any concerns about this person working with children? If yes, why?

Additional Comments:

Signature _____ Date _____

Please feel free to call me, at the number above, if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Director of Religious Education

Confidential**Primary Screening Form for Children or Youth Work**

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This form is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs.

Date _____

Name: Last

First

Middle

Present Address

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone _____ Best time to reach you at home? _____

Work Phone _____ May the DRE phone you at work? _____

When? _____

How long have you live at your present address? _____

Cities and states where you have lived for the last 5 years

How long have you attended Peterborough Unitarian Church? _____

Are you a member here? _____

List (name and address) all other churches you have attended regularly during the past 5 years:

List all previous church and non-church work involving children or youth (name and address of each church/organization, type of work performed, dates):

List 2 references you have known for at least 2 years who are not relatives

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

List a 3rd reference who is a family member

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Do you have a current driver's license or other photographic identification?

____ Yes ____ No Please list your driver's license number _____

Have you ever been accused or convicted of a crime? ____ Yes ____ No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, you will be contacted by the DRE concerning the circumstances of the incident.

All of the above information I have given is truthful and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Peterborough Unitarian Church, I hereby release any person or organization providing a reference from any and all liability for damages on account of compliance with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of Peterborough Unitarian Church.

Signature _____ Date _____

Office Use Only:

Code of Ethics completed _____ Criminal Record Release

Authorization completed _____

References received: _____
Date _____ Date _____

Criminal Record Release Authorization Sent _____

Records Received: _____
Date _____ Date _____

Implementation Specifics

The DRE shall be responsible for overseeing completion of the appropriate paperwork for volunteers who work with the children and youth, and for checking references. The RE Chair or designate shall follow-up to ensure that the reference checks have been completed appropriately. If the applicant is not known, confirmation of identity will be requested. Anyone expressing interest in ongoing volunteer work with children in the church must first attend church services regularly for at least 6 months.

The DRE will include the secondary screening form in the annual RE registration form.

The Office Staff will designate on the membership database who has completed a screening form and which level of form has been completed.

The Personnel Chair or designate takes care of the paperwork and checks references for all paid staff and gives copies to the DRE to file.

When criminal records checks are performed, they will be initiated and reviewed by the Personnel Chair or designate and kept confidential in the fireproof safe by the Minister(s) and DRE.

The Minister(s) will see that an annual request for an updated list of known pedophiles from the police departments of NH, and any other state on our mailing list be made and check these against the PUUC mailing list.

Adults or youth who have legal charges pending or have been convicted of or pled guilty or admit to either child sexual or physical abuse will not participate in church activities. The Minister(s)/DRE will keep all screening information, confidentially and indefinitely.

Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

Training

Every participant shall receive a copy of the Safe Congregation Policy Statement. Staff and volunteers working with children and youth shall be trained to understand the following: the definition of child abuse; sexual and physical abuse symptoms; what constitutes inappropriate conduct; church policies that govern working with children or youth; the civil and criminal consequences of misconduct; reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct; and the rationale behind screening procedures.

Procedures for Previously Investigated Offenses or Charges

Anyone who becomes aware of child sexual or physical abuse charges made against an employee, volunteer, member, or attendee of the church should notify the Minister, the President of the Standing Committee or the RE Committee chair or the DRE. Of these, whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others. In the event that the charges involve a minister, the next points of contact shall be the President of the Standing Committee, the District Executive of the New Hampshire/Vermont District, or the UUA Department of Ministry. The Minister(s), the Board Chair, the RE Comm Chair, and the DRE shall: collect and review all pertinent facts regarding the incident or charges; review

the application and reference forms kept on the person; determine what, if any, actions need to be taken; and carefully document all meetings, conversations, information, etc. regarding this matter, and keep all this information as confidential as the circumstances warrant. *If the allegations have merit or cannot be disproved, actions to be considered shall include:* determining who in the church and the larger community should be notified, and means of notification; and/or reviewing the situation with our attorney. Suspending or terminating employment, volunteer duties or participation in church activities.

Procedures for an Uninvestigated Occurrence

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult volunteer worker and a member of the youth group or a child should be reported immediately to the DRE. If the DRE is not available, report at once to the minister or President of the Standing Committee. Anyone informed of an incident of child sexual or physical abuse (whether the abuse may have occurred during a church activity or not) shall: complete the Report of Suspected Abuse form included in all volunteer training packets or provided by the DRE; and report the incident to either a Minister, the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the DRE. Of these, whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others.

In the event that the charges involve a minister or DRE, the next points of contact shall be the Standing Committee President, the District Executive of the New Hampshire/Vermont District, or the UUA Department of Ministry.

New Hampshire state law, RSA 169-C, the Child Protection Act, states that any person who has reason to suspect that a child under the age of 18 has been abused and/or neglected must make a report to the Division for Children, Youth and Families immediately. This law also states that any person making a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability. In the presence of one of the above listed church leaders, report the incident to DCYF (1-800-894-5533). Keep careful written notes of the telephone conversation and the name of the person you speak with. A follow-up written report may be required by DCYF. While you will be required to provide DCYF with your name, they will keep your identity confidential if you wish.

The entire matter must be kept confidential from anyone other than the Minister(s). the Board Chair and the DRE until you are informed that an investigation has been completed. The Minister(s). the Board Chair and the DRE shall carefully document the handline of the incident. and report the incident immediately. as appropriate. to the child's parents. the church's attorney. the proper civil authorities. and the church's insurance company. Do not prejudice the situation. but take the allegations seriously. The Minister(s). the Board Chair and the DRE shall reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. In the event that knowledge of the incident becomes public, the Minister(s) and the Board Chair shall designate a spokesperson for the church. The spokesperson shall use the text of a prepared statement to answer the press and to convey the incident to the congregation, taking care to safeguard the privacy of all parties involved. The Minister(s). the Board Chair, and the DRE shall determine how to address the incident within the congregation. While civil authorities are investigating the reported incident. this committee shall determine the appropriate actions to be taken regarding the accused as specified herein under "Procedures for Previously Investigated Offenses or Charges."

Procedures for Working with and Caring for a Person Against Whom Allegations Have Been Made

Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a paid staff person or a volunteer, that person shall be suspended from participating in all church activities. This is true for an incident that allegedly occurred either within or outside the realm of the church. Suspension will continue pending the outcome of the investigation by the appropriate authority. Regardless of where or under what circumstances the alleged incident takes place, if a paid staff person is involved and convicted, or a legal charge is brought but not acted upon for reasons that leave too many questions unanswered, it may be considered as job related and affecting job performance. Reinstatement of a paid staff member or volunteer will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the Standing Committee and Religious Education Committee.

Monitoring of Policies and Procedures

While complete enforcement of policies may not always be possible, screening procedures, reference checks and initial training must always be enforced.

The Standing Committee will conduct an annual review of the prevention program. Ministry leaders can report on the prevention efforts. The Standing Committee will assess how well the program has met its goals.

Particular Requirements

Field Trips, Youth Gatherings, Vehicle Rides, Sleepovers

- Permission slip and medical release form for each child
- Proof of 100/300 auto insurance for every driver when a drive is necessary
- Every person transported in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt

Senior Staff meeting alone with a child

- Permission slip for each child

Other Staff/Volunteer meeting alone with a child

- Written approval of Senior Staff
- Permission slip for each child

Implementation Specifics

Two appropriately screened adult supervisors will be present at all times in Sunday School and youth group classrooms and during any church sponsored activity involving youth.

Building will not be open to children or youth for any activity until 2 adults are present.

An RE liaison will be present in the big RE room during Sunday School to provide supervision for children going to the lavatory or removed from class for disciplinary purposes.

All Nursery "Kindergarten children will receive a claim check number, as will their guardian, to be matched for pickup.

Other classes will not be dismissed until service has ended.

Church functions providing childcare require two trained supervisors, an open door and the presence of adults in the building.

Windows will be unblocked in all Sunday School classrooms, including the Nursery.

Reporting and Responding Procedures

Child Abuse means the nonaccidental injury, sexual abuse (touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare and safety are harmed.

Confidential

Secondary Screening Form

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities. Adults who have been convicted of either child abuse or neglect should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth. All adult volunteers are required to have regularly attended Peterborough Unitarian Church for a minimum of six months prior to working with youth or children. Adult volunteers must observe the "two person" rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without an adult partner. Adult volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor.

Please answer each question. Your response will be kept fully confidential. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with youth or children?

_____ Yes _____ No

Have you ever been accused or convicted of a crime?

_____ Yes _____ No

I have read the above policy and agree to observe the safeguards listed.

Date

Name (printed)

Signature

Confidential

Report of Suspected Abuse

Child Abuse means the non accidental injury, sexual abuse (touching and non-touching), exploitation, neglectful treatment or the maltreatment of a child (from birth to 18 years) by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare and safety are harmed. If you are in a situation where a child/person discloses information that causes you to suspect abuse, here is what you need to do:

1. Listen carefully,
2. Provide an appropriate setting. If, for example, a child begins to reveal possible abuse during a RE program, have the building supervisor or another adult take over your supervising responsibilities, and take the child out of the room but stay with him/her with another adult present (or at least aware and visible)
3. Believe his/her story and affirm them for their courage; be comfortable with silences and tears.
4. Be honest with the person telling their story. Don't make promises you can't keep but offer support and hope.
5. Again, you need to listen carefully. If possible, write notes on what is said at that time. If it is not possible to do it then, follow-up with your notes immediately after, so you have the person's story as accurately as possible. Include all details offered. [Remember, however, that you are recording, not investigating] If you ask questions, they should be open-ended, for example, "And then what happened?" or "How did you feel?" Be sure to indicate in your notes your name, the victim's name and the time and date you received the story. Your notes will enable you to make an accurate report. You will need them if you are asked to testify later on.
6. If you feel the child is in imminent danger, report immediately to the DRE, minister, President of Standing Committee or Chair of the Religious Education Committee. If you feel that it is safe to allow the child to go home with the adult scheduled to pick him/her up, do so, but do not mention the incident to the supervising adult at this time. Then make your report to at least one of the church leaders listed.
7. Of these, whoever receives the information shall be responsible for reporting to the others. In the event that the charges involve a minister, the next points of contact shall be the Board Chair, the District Executive of the New Hampshire/Vermont District, or the UUA Department of Ministry.
8. New Hampshire State Law. RSA 169-C. the Child Protection Act. states that any person who has reason to suspect that a child under the age of 18 has been abused and/or neglected must make a report to the Division for Children, Youth and Families immediately. This law also states that any person making a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability.
9. In the presence of one of the above listed church leaders, report the incident to DCYF (1-800-894-5533). Keep careful written notes of the telephone conversation and the name of the

person you speak with. A follow-up written report may be required by DCYF. While you will be required to provide DCYF with your name, they will keep your identity confidential if you wish,

10. The entire matter must be kept confidential until you are informed that an investigation has been completed.

Your Name _____

Date and Time _____

Victim's Name _____

Story exactly as it is told to you:

Minister and Phone _____

Standing Committee Pres. and Phone _____

DRE and Phone _____

RE Chair and Phone _____