



PIEDMONT
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH

Safe Congregation Policy

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church

Introductory Statement for Safeguards for Children & Youth

The congregation of the Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church states in its covenant that "we share in a loving ministry each for the other; and thereby provide for our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being." We strive to achieve a consistently safe environment for all members through preventive measures, as well as educational strategies.

The following Policies and Procedures on Safe Congregation have been developed by the Safe Congregation Task Force and the RE Council. They were developed based on:

- Existing Church policies
- Policies recommended by the UUA
- Policy models provided by other churches
- The advice of people in social services, safety and education

Approved by The RE Council and Board of Trustees.

Date

Definitions of Terms

DRE.....	Director of Religious Education-or their designee
REC.....	Religious Education Council
Board.....	Board of Trustees
Safe Congregation Task Force.....	Appointed by the Board to review the policy; consisting of the DRE, Minister and at least one congregant or Board member
Safety Response Team.....	Appointed by the Board to manage all issues concerning the safety of the physical facility and to deal with issues surrounding the involvement of sex offenders.
Children.....	Ages birth to fifth grade
Youth.....	Sixth grade to high school seniors
Adult.....	Age 18 and up
Procedures.....	The documented methods that will be used to implement these policies. Procedures will be developed by the affected Councils.

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church
Safe Congregation
Program Administration Policy

1. The Director of Religious Education, Minister and Safe Congregation Task Force are responsible for the implementation of the Safe Congregation Policy
2. Membership involvement is critical to the effectiveness of the Policy.
3. The PUUC Board of Trustees approves the Policy
4. Annually the PUUC Board will appoint a Task Force to assess the effectiveness of the Policy. They will review all incident reports and comments and interview a sampling of staff, volunteers and parents as part of the assessment. As part of the annual report to the Board of Trustees, Director of Religious Education shall summarize the findings and any recommendations.
5. Important documents, including but not limited to, incident reports and background checks, identified by Safe Congregation Task Force shall be maintained in a locked file cabinet. Access to the documents shall be on a need-to-know basis as determined by the Director of Religious Education and/or the PUUC Minister.
6. Procedures will be developed by the Religious Education Council or other affected church body in order to implement these policies.

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church

Staff and Volunteer Recruitment and Training Policy

The following shall apply to all staff and volunteers who will work with our children and youth.

1. Each individual shall have been actively associated with the Church for a minimum of 6 months before they may begin working with children/youth. If a person has been active with the Church for less than six months but has been actively involved at another Unitarian Universalist church, or teaching youth, then after a background check and a check on her/his references she/he may work with the children/youth. Opportunities may be available for those with less time at PUUC as listed on page 12.
2. Each individual shall complete an application providing details for background checks, sign a release for background checks, give a summary of their qualifications, give two references, and sign a covenant stating that they understand and will comply with the Policy.
3. A background check shall be performed on each individual to the extent determined by the DRE. If a background check reveals something that the DRE determines to need further evaluation, the DRE will have the authority and responsibility to do so.
4. The DRE and RE Co-chairs shall assess each individual to determine how they may best work with children and youth.
5. A copy of Safe Congregation Policy shall be made available to each family, along with staff and volunteers, for self-study.
6. A copy of the Safe Congregation Policy shall be maintained in the Church office and at the PUUC web site for reference by all interested persons.
7. The RE Council shall provide Program training to staff and volunteers once a year and, as needed, based on their specific areas of responsibility.
8. Visitors wishing to observe Church classes or events will be exempted from these requirements provided they are accompanied by an approved staff member or volunteer.

Date Approved by Board:

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church

Safety & Health of Children and Youth Policy

1. All children/youth must have a registration form filled out for them every year by their parent/guardian that lists any special needs/allergies/medicine/etc. Each classroom shall have a record of this information (typically in a notebook kept in the rack on the back of the door). The Director of Religious Education will ensure that this information is available in each classroom.
2. It is important to know if the parents will not be in Church and where they can be reached. This will be emphasized to parents on the Registration Form and in the newsletter and in posted signs.
3. Each classroom shall have 2 adults present. If there are not 2 adults available for a classroom, the teachers in conjunction with the DRE or RE Co-chairs shall combine classes or the class will attend worship service.
4. Children age 6 and below cannot be left without an adult, even for a moment. If the last adult must leave the room (e.g. to take a child to the restroom), all children must go along.
5. RE teachers should ask the supervising adult of visiting children whether the child (ren) have any special needs or allergies. Children who continue to attend but have not filled out a registration form should do so by their 4th visit.
6. First Aid kits shall be available to staff/volunteers in convenient, defined locations. Universal precautions will be used in the handling of any and all blood and other body fluids, including but not limited to diaper changing and injuries. Fire escape routes shall be posted in classrooms. Fire drills shall be held at least annually.
7. An Incident Report form will be filled out by the person most directly connected to an incident when there is an injury to a child or adult e.g. falls, bites. In the case of suspected child abuse or neglect, follow the Policy and Procedure for Child Abuse and Neglect. Incident Forms are available in the classrooms and from the DRE.
8. Staff and volunteers shall adhere to established safety and health rules, which shall be posted and explained to them as needed throughout the year.
9. Guidelines for teachers will be established for the handling of a disruptive child.
10. An inspection of Church grounds and buildings shall take place at least annually to assure that the physical surroundings are safe.
11. For any overnight Church/RE sponsored event for middle school or high school youth, such as a YouthCon, two adult chaperones must be present and awake at all times. No bedding or coverings shall be shared between the youth.
12. Any alcohol at Church events will be served by bartenders. Any alcohol before or after events will be in a locked cabinet or removed from Church premises. In addition see the Church Policy on Serving Alcoholic Beverages.

13. The playground will be supervised by teachers during Religious Education time. All other times (including but not limited to prior to, after worship and during social events, etc.), supervision of children on the playground is the responsibility of their parents. Use of the playground is limited to children age 12 and under. Middle school and high school youth will be provided an area to hang out and socialize.

14. Religious Education Volunteers shall follow the following guidelines concerning the use of social networking sites and email with minors: They may “friend” minors with the permission of the minor’s parent/legal guardian. All communication must be in an open and transparent manner and include at least one other adult. There will be no private chats or emails initiated by the adult. All correspondence must be appropriate in language and content, meaning no harassing or vulgar language, sexual innuendo or bullying.

PIEDMONT UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy & Procedure

In North Carolina, General Statute 7B-301 mandates that anyone who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected must report to the local department of social services. It is NOT the role of the reporter to prove if abuse or neglect has in fact occurred. The key word is “suspect”. If someone suspects, he or she must report.

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church Travel Safety Policy

1. Any PUUC RE sponsored trips that transport children from PUUC property require written permission from parents. Copies of the forms must be provided to the DRE to be filed. A sample permission form is provided for use. It also includes a place for parents to note special medical /allergy information.
2. Drivers must be least 25 years old, provide a current driver's license from the state in which they reside and demonstrate active automobile liability insurance, and be qualified to operate the vehicle that they will drive. This information will be kept in a locked file and updated on a yearly basis.
3. Individual seat belts will be worn by all occupants of the vehicle at all times the vehicle is in motion.
4. A check list will be provided for each driver/adult leader to ensure safety for the youth and children.
5. Safety precautions and behavior guidelines shall be reviewed with the minors before the trip and as needed thereafter.

GUIDELINES FOR INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS

As Unitarian Universalist we affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. As religious communities, we can provide compassion, support, and reconciliation to those who truly have indicated that they have changed and have taken responsibility for their actions. We believe in the healing power of involvement in a spiritual home. Sex offenders who have completed prison sentences and mandated treatment as well as registered with the state have according to the court system complied with their punishments. As faith-based communities, we can provide support and compassion with awareness and vigilance so that all are safe, as those who have sexually offended return to or join our church community.

No adult person who has been convicted of, or with an unresolved accusation of, any sexual misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any religious education or youth group activities. The response of PUUC to a convicted or accused sex offender's request to participate in congregational activities is a LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT. The message to the sex offender should be that they are both welcome to participate in adult worship, adult social, and adult educational activities and that they must covenant with the congregation to avoid all contact with children. Procedures for dealing with youth convicted or accused of sexual misconduct shall be dealt with in age appropriate ways.

STEPS TO TAKE

1. The minister shall meet privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The minister shall check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. (If the minister is the one being accused, this manual and these steps do not apply. Instead, the President of the Board should be contacted immediately and the president should contact the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA and/or the District Executive serving the congregation.) If the person is a member of the congregation and has a partner who also attends the church, then the minister shall reach out to the partner as well. If the minister determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, the person should then be asked to meet with Safety Response Team. The Safety Response Team shall consist of the minister, the Religious Educator, and up to at least three members of the congregation who if possible have professional expertise with this issue.
2. The individual shall be asked to sign a release form so that the minister can contact his/her sex offender treatment provider and/or current therapist. Ask if those people are members of ATSA, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. The therapist and, if applicable, the parole officer shall be asked for their professional assessment of the likelihood that the sex offender will re-offend and whether additional restrictions beyond the standard Limited Access Agreement ought to be placed on the person's participation.
3. If the offender refuses permission to contact the therapist or refuses to go for an assessment, the congregation shall refuse participation in any congregation activity.
4. If the assessment indicates that the person has completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is not at high risk for recidivism, the Safety Response Team shall develop a Limited Access Agreement. If the professional assessment indicates that the person is at high risk for re-offending, involvement in the faith community shall be denied until treatment is successful at reducing the risk. If the Safety Response Team recommends that a Limited Access Agreement be in place they shall then set up "a small group, consisting of approximately five persons, including the minister, persons who have agreed to offer pastoral support for the offender, and accompany them in worship and other church activities,

someone with expertise or experience in this field, and someone to represent the wider church community.

5. The group shall acquaint itself with any therapeutic program the offender has undergone or will continue to be part of. The group shall meet the offender, their probation officer, and other appropriate people so that clear boundaries can be established for the protection of children and youth and to reduce the likelihood of false allegations or suspicions. This group will operate alongside other agencies in a multi-agency approach to the offender's rehabilitation. If the person has a partner in the community, that person shall be involved in developing the Limited Access Agreement as well.
6. All persons with past histories of sexual offenses shall be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement. Upon entry into the congregation and depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to sign one annually. If the offender refuses to do so, they shall then be denied access to congregational functions and church property. An offender who refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement will know that if they enter the congregation or its property, they will be asked to leave by a member of the Response Team or the Board of Trustees. If the person further refuses, the local police will be called for assistance.
7. The Response Team will meet at least quarterly with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns.
8. If the minister or the Religious Educator changes, as well as the chair of the Board of Trustees, it is important that the departing person inform the new person of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved.
9. Copies of files including Limited Access Agreement information shall be treated with care, and kept in a secure file drawer.
10. If and when legal questions arise, the minister and/or Board President should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice informed by local and state statutes that apply.

REASONS FOR EXCLUDING A PERSON FROM ALL CONGREGATION ACTIVITIES

- Refusal for the minister to contact the treatment provider and parole officer.
- Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for Repeat offenses.
- Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

Once an individual decides that they can comply with these conditions, the process will begin again to reassess the individual and see if they can be welcomed into the life of the congregation anew.

DRAFT LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT – CONFIDENTIAL

Introductory Paragraph in cases of allegation:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Safety Response Team. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the participants in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Minister, the Religious Educator and the members of the Response Team (or other appropriate congregational entity.). It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Introductory Paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:

Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our

membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

Please do not talk with children.

Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.

Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.

If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.

Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature Date

Witness Date

Minister Date

Director/Minister of Religious Education Date

Board Chair Date

CHECK LIST FORMAT

Introductory Paragraph in cases of allegation:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Safety Response Team. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect the participants in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Minister, the Religious Educator and the members of the Safety Response Team. It will be kept in a locked file in the office

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The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your

participation.

- Worship services No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Coffee Hour: No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir: No () Yes ()
- Adult meetings without children in building: No () Yes ()
- Have a key to the building: No () Yes ()
- Intergenerational church activities No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Intergenerational group outings such as ice skating, baseball games, etc:
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Alone in building with minister or other staff: No () Yes ()
- Access to church computer: No () Yes ()
- Social activities in other member's homes with children present:
No () Yes () With support person* No () Yes ()
- Other:

_____: No () Yes ()
 _____: No () Yes ()
 _____: No () Yes ()

*A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where children and youth may be present.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITION IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property. I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

 Signature Date

 Witness Date

 Minister Date

 Director/Minister of Religious Education Date