

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Hills Policy

Title: Safety of Children and Youth **Revision approval date:** 10/20/2015

Purpose: UUCNH intends to provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth in any activities it conducts or sponsors, in compliance with child safety laws. This policy establishes a code of ethics for adults working with children and/or youth in such activities and a set of requirements intended to support the goal of a safe environment.

Policy:

1. All adults who wish to serve as teachers, leaders of programs or activities, advisors, childcare workers, or in other roles with responsibility for children and/or youth in UUCNH activities shall:
 - a. abide by the “UUCNH Code of Ethics for Adults Working With Children and Youth”⁽¹⁾ and attest to this by signing a copy of this Code;
 - b. provide Pennsylvania criminal and child abuse background checks and child abuse background checks (must be updated every 36 months) and if not a resident of the state of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years, Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint clearances. Paid staff with a likelihood of contact with children and youth must have the FBI fingerprint clearance not matter how long they have lived in-state.
 - c. follow guidelines for identifying and reporting potentially dangerous or abusive situations as outlined by law, found at <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov>.

2. For all UUCNH activities involving children and/or youth, at least two (2) adults shall be present per classroom, group, or program. If the second adult is assisting in the classroom and not just an observer or a guest speaker, that person must have the required clearances on file with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development. Exception: a single individual, with the proper clearances, may provide childcare for a UUCNH function when only a small number of children are present.

3. For all UUCNH sponsored off-site activities for children and/or youth, parents must sign a field trip permission form in advance. Drivers must be over 25 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a valid driver’s license.

Guidelines for implementing this policy: The Director of Lifespan Faith Development is responsible for administering the process to implement this policy, including managing forms, requiring background checks, and maintaining relevant records.

Approved by the UUCNH Board of Trustees:

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Hills Procedure

Title: “UUCNH Procedure for Identifying and Reporting Potentially Dangerous or Abusive Situations”

Date: 9/10/15
DRAFT

Purpose: This procedure is intended to assist in providing a safe environment for children and youth in UUCNH activities. It will help adults working with children and youth to identify child abuse or potentially dangerous situations and know what steps to take to report it. Following this procedure is a requirement of the UUCNH Policy on the Safety of Children and Youth.

Scope: This procedure applies to all adults working with children and youth in any activities conducted or sponsored by UUCNH. Adults who become aware of child abuse through their engagement in the congregation should use this procedure.

Terminology:

Child abuse, according to the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
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Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.

- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

"Recent" is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date the report is made to ChildLine. Sexual abuse, serious mental injury, serious physical neglect and deaths have no time limit.

Mandated Reporters:

An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children is a mandated reporter.

When must a mandated reporter make a report?

A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

Must I report suspected abuse if I learn of the abuse from someone other than the child who was allegedly abused?

Yes. Nothing requires the mandated reporter have direct contact with the child in order to make a report.

How does a mandated reporter make a report if they suspect child abuse?

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

Do I need to notify anyone within my institution, school, facility or agency after I make a report?

Yes, after making the report to ChildLine, you are required to immediately thereafter notify the person in charge of the institution, school, facility or agency or the designated agent of the person in charge (Rev. Scott Rudolph or Greta Porter, Director of Lifespan Faith Development).

What if a mandated reporter fails to follow the law?

The penalties for a mandated reporter who willfully fails to report child abuse range from a misdemeanor of second degree to a felony of the second degree.

Can you report suspected abuse if you are not a mandated reporter?

Yes. Anyone who is concerned about the safety of a child is encouraged to make a report. Individuals who are encouraged, although not required by law, to make a report of suspected child abuse, can make a report to ChildLine by calling 1-800-932-0313.

Am I protected from civil and criminal liability if I make a report of suspected child abuse?

Yes, persons making a report of suspected child abuse are immune from civil and criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith.

If I make a report is my identity protected?

The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential with the exception of being released to law enforcement officials or the district attorney's office.

1. "UUCNH Policy on Safety of Children and Youth"
2. Allegheny County Department of Child Welfare website on reporting child abuse:
<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/childabuse.aspx>
3. <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/>