

Trust with care policy  
**UNION CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH**

“to make sure the church is a safe place for everyone”



Union congregational church

United church of christ

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[www.unioncong.org](http://www.unioncong.org)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Glossary</b>                                    | <b>page 2</b>  |
| <b>Selecting<br/>Church Workers</b>                | <b>page 4</b>  |
| <b>Supervising<br/>Church Workers</b>              | <b>page 5</b>  |
| <b>Training<br/>Church Workers</b>                 | <b>page 7</b>  |
| <b>Reporting Procedures<br/>For Church Workers</b> | <b>page 8</b>  |
| <b>Responding to<br/>Allegations of Abuse</b>      | <b>page 10</b> |



## GLOSSARY

**Authorized minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

**Minister:** a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

**Ministry providers:** include, but are not limited to the following volunteer or paid ministries: Clergy. Youth Advisors, Learning Center Teachers. Musicians, SCEEP Tutors, Stephen Ministers, IHN Volunteers. Deacons, Parish Nurses. Confirmation Mentors, Childcare Providers

**Ministry recipients:** parishioners, counselees, students, employees and volunteers.

**Ministerial relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by the ministry.

**Sexual exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

**Sexual harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the other person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual;
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment .



## GLOSSARY

**Prohibited sexual harassment** includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse;
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body; gesturing; displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures; cartoons; posters or magazines.

**Sexual harassment** also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome—and using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, salary, work, learning, worship environment of another. It is not permissible to suggest, threaten or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

**Sexual misconduct:** any sexualized behavior within a ministerial relationship

**Sexualized behavior:** encompasses a broad spectrum of behavior including gestures and speech as well as physical contact, not limited to sexual intercourse. Sexualized behaviors that might be acceptable in an intimate personal relationship are not acceptable within the context of a ministerial relationship .

**Youth event:** an event at Union Congregational Church that is designed specifically for children under 18 years old. Examples are choir rehearsals, confirmation retreats, middle school and high school youth group meetings and outings. SCEEP tutoring sessions.



## SELECTING CHURCH WORKERS

Volunteers will be permitted to work with children only if the volunteer is a member or friend of the church.

Volunteers serving wider community programs are a special exception. Individuals volunteering for the Side Door, IHN, SCEEP, and UCWNS will be interviewed and trained by appropriate staff and a Special Program Covenant must be signed by the volunteer. References will be checked.

All applicants seeking employment or service in a volunteer ministerial relationship must complete an Information Form and agree to follow the rules and procedures of the Trust with Care Policy and Behavior Covenant.

The Director of Christian Education or the Minister of Christian Formation & Youth or designee will conduct interviews for ministerial positions as deemed appropriate and review the Information Form. The following conditions would require an interview:

- A volunteers whose references are unknown to the program leader or supervisor
- A volunteer whose Volunteer Information Form raises issues or concerns.

Volunteers must complete the Reference Contact Form, and the person conducting the interview may contact references provided by an applicant.

An agreement to follow the procedures of the Trust with Care Policy will be obtained from the applicant.



# SUPERVISING CHURCH WORKERS

## Policy and Procedures

### 1. Provide Adequate Personnel

Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or guardians.

### 2. Obtain Parental Permission

Children and youth participants under 18 years old must have parental or guardian permission for involvement in church programs or activities. In situations where church staff or volunteer workers have a legitimate reason to be alone with a child. (such as in a mentoring or counseling capacity) the church worker must obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian beforehand. Parental permission is also required for situations or activities where a supervisor is under eighteen years of age. Workers should attempt to obtain parental permissions in writing (as is practical) and should attempt to notify an appropriate church leader in advance of such meetings or situations.

### 3. Discuss Unacceptable Behavior Immediately

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships must be confronted immediately (see Glossary). Prompt warnings must be issued when appropriate, the parent or guardian of the child will be notified, and the situation will be monitored very closely. The adult church worker's services will be terminated immediately for continued violations of such warnings, or for a single violation of sufficient gravity.



## SUPERVISING CHURCH WORKERS

4. Insure Adequate Observability of Youth Activities

Where feasible, shatterproof windows are installed on the doors to all classrooms or other areas used by minors. Alternatively, the doors to such classrooms are to be left open during use so that persons passing by can observe inside. Learning Center supervisors or other church leaders will make random visits to all classrooms and periodically visit or inspect areas of church buildings that are isolated from view.

5. Observe an Overnight Rule

Special attention must be given to overnight activities that involve youth. All adult chaperones and supervisors must be approved in advance to work with youth. For overnight trips involving youth there should always be two adult chaperones and, for coed groups, the chaperones shall be male and female. For large groups of children there should be a ratio of one adult for every six to eight youth. All policies, procedures, and behavior covenants must be observed.

6. Use a Church Nursery Identification Procedure

Church workers must be able to identify clearly the child and the child's parent or guardian. Children should be released only to a properly identified and pre-authorized person.

7. Adopt Behavior Covenants (see attached)



## TRAINING CHURCH WORKERS

The following church workers will be required to attend sexual abuse training upon the acceptance of this policy and/or beginning service to the congregation and at regular five year intervals thereafter:

- Ordained ministers,
- Lay ministers,
- Office staff.
- Union Congregational Weekday Nursery School staff.
- Music program directors and volunteers,
- Youth group leaders,
- Confirmation mentors,
- Learning Center teachers,
- SCEEP tutors,
- Program childcare providers (working on an ongoing basis),
- Interfaith Hospitality Network volunteers.
- Parish Nurses.
- Deacons.



## REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH WORKERS

| Type of abuse or neglect | Physical Indicators  | Behavioral Symptoms  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| PHYSICAL ABUSE           | <p>Unexplained bruises and welts</p> <p>Unexplained burns</p> <p>Unexplained fractures</p> <p>Unexplained lacerations or abrasions, especially to mouth or genital area</p>  | <p>Wary of adult contacts</p> <p>Apprehension when other children cry</p> <p>Extremes of aggression or withdrawal</p> <p>Afraid to go home</p> <p>Report of injury by parents</p>  |
| PHYSICAL NEGLECT         | <p>Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress</p> <p>Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods</p> <p>Unattended physical problem or medical needs</p> <p>Abandonment</p> | <p>Begging, stealing food</p> <p>Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)</p> <p>Constantly falling asleep in class</p> <p>Alcohol or drug abuse</p> <p>Delinquency (e.g. theft)</p> <p>States there is no care giver</p>                                     |
| SEXUAL ABUSE             | <p>Difficulty in walking or sitting</p> <p>Torn, stained or bloody clothing</p> <p>Pain or itching in genital area</p> <p>Bruises or bleeding in genital area</p> <p>Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens</p>               | <p>Unwilling to change clothing for physical activities</p> <p>Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior</p> <p>Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge</p> <p>Poor peer relationships</p> <p>Delinquent or run away</p> <p>Reports of sexual assault</p> |

Source: State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services



## REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH WORKERS

Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected shall report it immediately (first verbally, then in writing) to the person who is leading or supervising the church activity. The report should include the type of abuse, the physical and behavioral indicators that are present or a description of the inappropriate behavior that was witnessed, including names, and dates. This reporting obligation covers suspected abuse, even if it is not known where the abuse may be occurring at Union Congregational Church or elsewhere.

The lead or supervising person must immediately contact the President of the Church and the Senior Minister with the report of suspected abuse. Any programming supervisor who receives a written report of child abuse or who is aware of child abuse must report such knowledge to the Senior Minister or a designated back-up in a timely manner. Failure to do so may result in discipline, including discharge. Any complaints by or against the Senior Minister for child sexual abuse shall be directed immediately to the President of the Church and the Head of Personnel. Any complaints by or against the Associate Minister or Assistant Minister shall be directed to both the Senior Minister and the President of the Church. At no time shall any person, staff or volunteer, attempt to conduct a detailed inquiry either through investigation or interrogation of a child beyond that information necessary to cause such a person to have reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected. The President of the Church and his or her designees and the programming supervisor shall gather the preliminary information. If they decide that the allegation of child abuse is of sufficient gravity as to warrant a report to the Division of Youth and Family Services, then they shall make the report to DYFS and activate the response Team.

DYFS' Office of Child Abuse Control (OCAC) operates a 24-hour seven-day a week hotline at 1-800-792-8610 to receive reports of child abuse and neglect



## RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- All allegations will be taken seriously
- Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. The Response Team will not release the names of minors or Team participants without the advice of counsel.
- Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities
- Adequate care will be shown for the well-being of all parties
- The victim will be respected throughout the process
- Adequate records will be maintained.
- A Response Team will be assigned by each new Leadership Council for the coming year. The Response Team will consist of three members of the congregation, one of whom serves on the Leadership Council, with both genders being represented.

One member of the Response Team shall be designated the spokesperson for the church and will speak in a discrete, informed, and diplomatic way. All members of the Response Team will follow our local Division of Youth and Family Services reporting requirements.

A clear position statement of our church regarding child abuse shall be developed for public use. This will include our policies and safeguards and can be released if an allegation of abuse occurs. This statement will describe all of the precautions we have taken and the policies we have implemented. I



## RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Should an allegation occur, the safety and confidentiality of all will be safeguarded.

- All efforts at handling the incident will be documented.
- The parents or guardian of any minor shall be notified.
- The allegations will be taken seriously, with appropriate investigations conducted. Care and support to the victim and the victim's family will be shown and pastoral care will be offered.
- The accused will be treated with dignity and provided support as deemed appropriate in the circumstances of the event. If the accused is a church volunteer, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- If the accused is a paid employee, the employee may be relieved of his or her duties and arrangements will be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- The incident will be reported immediately to the church insurance company, attorney and denominational officials.

### Bibliography:

Hammer, Richard. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, Christian Ministry Resources, Matthews. NC, 1993.

United Church of Christ Insurance Board, "Making Our Churches Safe for All," Rockville. MD

"Child Neglect and Abuse in New Jersey 1997-1998," State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services May 2000.



## UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

This Policy is an example of the highest hopes and expectation of our congregation. Our faith calls us to have the utmost respect for one another and for ourselves and to make sure that the church is a safe place for everyone.

The policy affects every member and employees of Union for the good. With the personnel policies, the policy against sexual harassment, and the vows of the congregation, it is a tool for helping us fulfill our ministry according to the highest standards. Adopted in 2002, it is reviewed regularly.

Resources consulted include the United Church of Christ, Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, forms and policies used by community groups, schools and scouts.

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Senior Minister</b>                 | Stephanie K. Weiner |
| <b>Minister of Christian Formation</b> | Leah Fowler         |
| <b>Director of Christian Formation</b> | Betsy Richardson    |
| <b>Congregational President</b>        | Armen Khachaturian  |