

First Unitarian Church, South Bend
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Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Policy

Purpose: To prevent child abuse, and standardize the procedure for reporting suspected child abuse.

Created by: RE Committee

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date Approved: February 12, 2025

Date Previously Approved: April 8, 1996

Volunteers working with minor children will be asked to sign a statement verifying they have read and subscribe to the attached Code of Ethics concerning appropriate behavior with children, and will be required to undergo a background check. In addition to agreeing with this code, employees paid to care for minor children will be required to report any convictions for physical or sexual abuse of a minor, as part of the required background check.

Any person learning of a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect should not conduct any investigation themselves. Instead, they should notify a member of the DREAM Team (Directors of Religious Education and Mindfulness), minister or President of the Board, who:

1. Makes a report to Child Protective Services (574-236-5322 or 1-800-800-5556), and
2. Produces a written report for church records. This report shall include any direct statement of victim(s), dates, times, etc., and any observations made by the report's producer.

The minister of the church is expected at all times to abide by the policies of the UU Ministers Association regarding appropriate sexual conduct, as well as Indiana law, which requires any and all citizens to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Under Indiana law, failure by any person to report suspected abuse can lead to conviction of a misdemeanor.

A copy of this policy and the attached Code of Ethics will be included in RE communications sent electronically or through U.S. Mail.

Code of Ethics

For Those Working with Children and Youth

Those who teach and/or lead our children and youth play a key role in fostering their spiritual growth and character development. It is therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable our children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Therefore, those who teach and/or lead our children/youth will:

- Provide nurturing care and support to all children/youth.
- Work to help children/youth develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence.
- Respect the selfhood of each young person, including the absolute right to privacy of their own mind and body.
- Not engage in any behavior with young people which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- Not engage in behavior or language which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- Not engage in any sexually harassing behavior, nor any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children/youth.
- Not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of children/youth.
- Not consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of their responsibilities.
- Any mentoring relationship will progress only with the prior knowledge and consent of parents or guardians, and after notifying the DREAM team, minister or Board President of said parental consent.

Leaders shall be informed of the Code of Ethics, and of their legal obligation to report suspected child abuse, and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of those working with the children and youth at First Unitarian Church, South Bend.

Name Printed _____

Signature _____ Date _____