

Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church

# SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE STANDARDS

## FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Updated January 2013



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## **Introduction**

This policy outlines the safety and discipline standards for both staff and volunteers and volunteers that work with youth in the Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church (SMUUCH). This policy will be provided to parents upon enrollment of their child(ren) in a SMUUCH Religious Education Program or any time upon request.

## **Definition of Terms**

**“Active Visitor”**: Someone who regularly attends the church, but is not an official member.

**“Caregiver”**: Any adult responsible for a child at the church, not necessarily that child’s parent or parents/guardian. The Caregiver could be a grandparent or family friend who participates in the transportation to or supervision of a child’s religious education activities at SMUUCH.

**“Children/Youth/Youth”**: Used interchangeably throughout this policy and refer generally to all persons who have not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, unless a stricter age distinction is made for a particular section.

**“DCL”**: Director of Congregational Life at SMUUCH. The DCL coordinates basic childcare for church-sanctioned events.

**“DRE”**: Director of Religious Education at SMUUCH. The DRE oversees the delivery of children’s religious education programming.

**“IAP”**: Individual Action Plan. A plan to help a child succeed who may be struggling or have some unique disadvantage. These challenges could be physical, mental, behavioral, medical, etc.

**“RE”**: Religious Education. There is adult RE, but for the purpose of this policy, it will refer to any church programming for children.

**“SMUUCH”**: Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church

**“Staff”**: An adult that has passed a background screening and is employed by the church for the purposes of either Religious Education or Childcare.

**“Volunteer”**: Any adult who is voluntarily assisting in RE or Childcare. There are Lead Teacher Volunteers, Classroom Assistants, and Hall Helpers, to name a few.



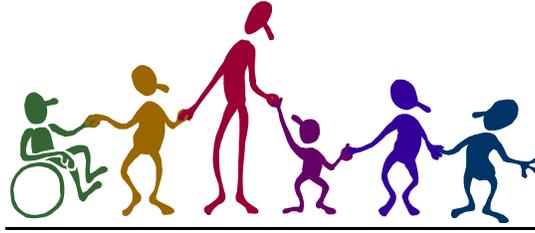
## Classroom Behavior

RE staff and volunteers are encouraged to establish behavior expectations (covenants) during the first class that they teach. RE staff and volunteers should post these “Classroom Covenants” on the wall of their classrooms and refer to them often. The teacher should always strive to provide loving guidance within a positive atmosphere of caring and sharing.

### Sample of Classroom Covenants:

1. Be considerate of others.
2. Wait your turn to speak. It’s OK not to speak.
3. Share.
4. Keep hands and feet in your own space.
5. Stay on task.

Within the general goals of the lesson, RE staff and volunteers should feel free to modify lesson plans to keep youth on task.

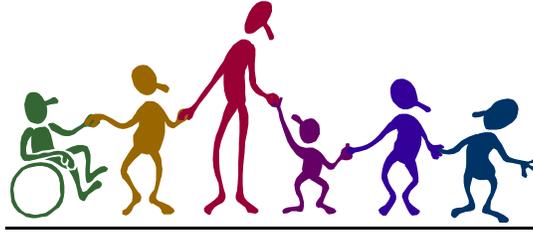


## Special Needs Children

As a welcoming community, we work to integrate all children into our religious education classrooms. During the enrollment process, SMUUCH asks parents/guardians to complete a checklist of strengths and struggles for each of their children to help RE staff and volunteers provide a nurturing and educational environment for each child.

If a parent/guardian is concerned about their child's ability to successfully participate in the classroom, they are encouraged to meet with the DRE to develop an Individual Action Plan (IAP). A concerned RE staff or volunteer may also request a meeting with the DRE and the child's parent/guardian. A child's name, identifying information or other personal or sensitive information should be handled carefully in an all electronic communication.

**Medical and disability-related information is confidential and will not be shared with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties without the consent of the parent/guardian.**



# Discipline Policy

SMUUCH requires RE staff and volunteers to treat children with respect and to foster a positive learning environment in the classroom.

## I. Classroom Behavior Standards

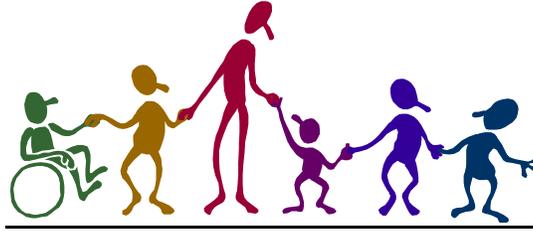
See the Classroom Behavior section of this policy. RE staff and volunteers shall communicate clear expectations to children via the “Classroom Covenants” posted on classroom walls. Age-appropriate discussion regarding the “Classroom Covenants” will be ongoing.

## II. Consequences

- A. A safe, nurturing environment is essential, with emphasis on teaching youth how to make good choices. RE staff and volunteers must model desired behavior for the youth. At no time will RE staff and volunteers employ physical or demeaning verbal discipline in managing classroom behavior.
- B. RE staff and volunteers will implement the following disciplinary protocol if a child behaves inappropriately. A child with an IAP may have an alternate plan. If the safety of the child or other children is a concern, the child may be removed immediately. Any inappropriate behavior and subsequent disciplinary action will be communicated to the parent/guardian.
  - 1. Verbally address the student who is misbehaving. Remind them of what is expected. Redirect younger children.
  - 2. If the behavior persists, the student will be reminded once more of what he/she is doing that is undesirable, and what is expected. Separation from the group may be appropriate. The student will be informed that if the behavior continues, he/she will be removed from the classroom and his/her parent/guardian informed.
  - 3. If the behavior continues, the student will be removed from the classroom and taken to the DRE and/or the parent. The DRE will determine whether the child may

return to the classroom or whether the parent must return to his/her parent or parents/guardian.

Asking every teacher to follow these same steps ensures that children develop a clear understanding of behavioral expectations and consequences. Any teacher who wishes to alter these steps for his/her classroom must first consult and obtain approval from the DRE.



# Child Safety

## I. Purpose

Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church is committed to creating an environment that protects children and youth from harm and promotes their spiritual growth.

The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures for:

- preventing abuse, harassment and neglect
- response to suspected or actual events
- follow up on events

## II. Prevention

Preventing harm (sexual misconduct, physical abuse and harassment) in our church community is the first level of care for our youth. Education, careful hiring, and safety procedures are concrete steps toward creating a safe environment.

### A. Education and Training

#### 1. Who May Work with Youth

Paid staff whose job requires interaction with youth.

Volunteers from the church congregation

- RE volunteers must attend SMUUCH for a minimum of six months in order to be considered for positions that put them into direct contact with children. This policy may be waived by the DRE and the Minister, in consultation with each other, when the prospective volunteer has been an active visitor, has childcare experience, or a similar situation in which references are available.

#### 2. Required Orientation

SMUUCH requires all RE staff and volunteer lead teachers to attend a training and orientation program before they are assigned to participate in classroom activities. The orientation will cover a broad array of SMUUCH religious education

procedures, including safety policies, curriculum training, and classroom management.

**3. Required Signed Code of Ethics Statement**

SMUUCH requires all RE staff and volunteer teachers in direct contact with youth to read and sign the SMUUCH Code of Ethics Statement.

**4. Teacher's Manual**

A Teacher's Manual will be updated annually and will include the updated church safety and reporting policies. It will be provided to all RE teachers.

**5. RE Staff**

Staff are required to receive abuse/reporting training from the State of Kansas through the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

**B. Hiring and Screening**

All persons seeking paid employment at SMUUCH who will have contact with the children and youth of our congregation shall complete all forms prescribed by SMUUCH and undergo a background screening. All background screenings and personnel forms will be kept confidential.

**C. Safety Policies**

**These Safety Policies apply to all church sponsored activities and events, both on and off church property. Off-site organizations and properties we work with may have their own policies which we will also be taken into consideration and adhered to by our participants.**

**1. Youth Protection**

- a. The purpose of Youth Protection is two-fold
  - o First this policy protects our youth from exposure to emotional, physical and sexual abuse through church contacts. Second, and of equal importance, it protects adults from accusations of abuse from activities with the youth of our church.
- b. Two-adult Rule
  - o No adult may be alone with an unrelated youth during any church-related event. At all youth classes, meetings and events, there should be a minimum of two adults (one over age 21), with at least one having signed the Safety Policy and Code of Ethics form.
  - o In some situations when a second adult cannot be available, the Director of Religious Education may still allow the program to continue as long as the door of the room the adult and youth are in remains open throughout the meeting and the hallway outside the room is actively monitored by at least one other adult. Church staff and volunteers are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.

- c. Bathroom Escort and Assistance
  - o RE volunteers may escort children to the bathroom, with the condition that the volunteer does not enter the bathroom and that another adult is nearby with a view of the bathroom. Only SMUUCH RE staff may assist children inside the bathroom.
- e. Suspicions of Child Abuse
  - o Suspicions of child abuse (verbal, sexual or physical), or concern about a child's safety and well-being shall be reported immediately to the DRE, the Minister, and reported directly to the State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. (see Section III. Responding)
- f. Suspicions of Youth Self-abuse:
  - o Concerns regarding youth self-abuse (cutting, drug or alcohol abuse) shall be reported directly to the DRE and minister. If someone suspects a high probability of imminent danger, that person is encouraged to take immediate action, such as removal of car keys or contacting parents/guardians.

## **2. Biting, Hitting, and Other Injuries**

- a. Incident Report Form
  - o All incidents of biting, hitting or injury to either children or adults will be recorded on the church's Incident Report Form by the witnessing adult in charge and given to the DRE and shared with parent.
- b. Incident Response
  - o After the second incident of biting, hitting or abusive behavior, the DRE will meet with the parent/guardian and the child's teacher to develop a personal supervision plan for that student.
  - o If the behavior continues, the child may be suspended from RE classes.

## **3. Firearms, Illegal Drugs, Smoking and Alcohol**

It is our intent to provide a smoke free environment for our youth. Therefore, smoking is not allowed in the church buildings or in automobiles while transporting youth. Additionally, firearms and illegal drugs are prohibited at any church-sponsored events. Volunteers and staff shall not consume alcohol prior to or while caring for children. Underage drinking, smoking or drug use will not be tolerated.

## **D. Field Trips**

A field trip is any time a class or group leaves the church property.

### **1. Permission Slip**

A permission slip for each youth, signed by the youth's parent/guardian, assenting to the youth's participation in church-sponsored field trips, must be on file containing names, emergency contacts, and medical conditions. Permission slips

must be updated at least yearly. Trip leaders must have copies of these permission slips and a first aid kit with them at all times.

**2. Notification**

SMUUCH will notify parents and parents/guardians of upcoming field trips taken during a church service or normal Religious Education hours at least one week in advance of the trip.

**3. Adult Supervision**

There must be a minimum of two adults with each group of children on a church-sponsored field trip; however, the adult/child ratio may vary with age. Consequently, RE staff and volunteers should consult with the DRE regarding appropriate adult/student ratios for a given classroom or activity.

**4. Drivers**

Drivers must be RE volunteers, and therefore meet the same requirements and follow the same policies of RE volunteers. All drivers must be covered by a valid car insurance policy and obey traffic laws, including those pertaining to car seats and seatbelts.

**5. Adult Medical/Field Trip Form**

Each adult traveling on a field trip must have an Adult Medical/Field Trip Form on file with the church office. The leaders must have copies of these Adult Medical/Field Trip forms with them at all times.

**E. Building & Grounds Safety**

The purpose of Building & Grounds Safety is to provide minimum supervision and physical safety requirements.

**1. First Aid & Emergency Response Plans**

A first aid kit must be readily available in the RE classroom area. An emergency response plan and the location of the fire extinguisher must be posted near each classroom door.

**2. Teacher Training – First Aid & Emergency Response Plans**

A review of first aid skills and emergency response plans must be part of teacher training.

**3. Tornado, Fire & Disaster Drill**

SMUUCH shall conduct annual Sunday tornado, fire and disaster drills for youth RE classes.

**4. Adult Supervision Outside**

RE staff and volunteers must always provide adult supervision to youths when leaving the physical church building as part of program activities.

## **F. Travel / Overnights**

At the beginning of every youth travel or overnight program, the attending youth and adult chaperones will develop a covenant that will address agreed-upon behaviors and consequences. This covenant will be signed by all parties and displayed for the entire event. All of the following travel/overnight policies must be included in the covenant:

1. A minimum of two adults are required for all overnights. Chaperones must be at least 21 years old.
2. On overnight trips, youth must sleep in a room with adult supervision, but at no time should one student and one adult (unrelated) share a room by themselves.
3. Prior to overnight trips, the DRE will hold an informational meeting of parents/guardians and all chaperones that will address and confirm procedures including but not limited to sleeping arrangements, mode of travel, physical safety and youth protection issues.
4. Sexual relations will not be permitted, will be reported to the DRE immediately, and may result in the youth being sent home to parents/guardians.
5. Use of illegal substances of any nature will not be permitted, will be reported to the DRE immediately, and will result in the youth being sent home to parents/guardians.
6. Violent or offensive behaviors, including those that violate our faith's Seven Principles, will not be permitted, will be reported to the DRE immediately, and may result in the youth being sent home to parents/guardians.
7. Youth are not permitted to leave the travel site or church grounds unsupervised at any time during church travel or lock-ins. Any youth violating this rule will be reported to the DRE immediately, and may result in the youth being sent home to parents/guardians.

## **G. Medications**

SMUUCH has established the following medication protocol:

1. If a youth has a medical issue that may require the administration of medication at church, the parent/guardian must meet with an RE staff or volunteer to complete an Action Plan BEFORE the child may be left in any SMUUCH care. Completed Action Plans will be kept on file in the youth's classroom and the DRE's office.
2. Medication will be kept in the possession of the parents/guardians, unless they give the youth permission to self-administer. Medications must be in their original container.
3. In the case of a medical emergency, the first adult to respond shall call 911 immediately, while another begins lifesaving measures as appropriate. A third

adult shall be sent to summon the child's parents. Additional intervention steps, as identified by the child's Action Plan, or parent/guardian, will then be followed.

### **III. Responding**

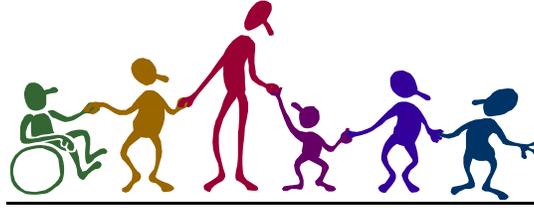
While the primary focus of this policy is on RE staff and volunteers, all church members and visitors are encouraged to follow the following protocol. If someone observes or reasonably suspects child abuse, harassment, or neglect, they have an ethical and legal obligation to report it to the State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services office through their hotline at 1-800-922-5330. They should also report it to the Director of Religious Education or the Minister so that a response plan can be developed.

1. If a youth makes a report to an RE staff member or volunteer, that person should:
  - Provide an appropriate setting - take the youth out of the classroom; stay with the him/her.
  - Listen carefully.
  - Believe the story - affirm his/her courage; be comfortable with silences and fears. Maintain a calm, neutral demeanor.
  - The hearer must not ask investigative questions, but is encouraged to write notes on what is said with names dates, times, etc.
  - Be honest. Don't make promises that you cannot keep; offer hope.
  - Keep the entire matter confidential, apart from reporting to the DRE, Minister, and State of Kansas.
  - Contact the Minister or DRE so they may develop a response plan.
2. The youth of this church are also required to adhere to the Child Safety Policy. A youth who does not adhere to this policy may, at a minimum, be prohibited from attending SMUUCH Religious Education activities.
3. The Minister and the DRE will gather necessary information and develop a response plan for the situation. This plan will be put into writing, be specific about the situation at hand, and include clearly delineated action items, time frames, and responsibilities. This plan must address the interim safety and peace-of-mind of all parties during the investigation by the state, including the alleged victim, the accused, and the reporter. The response plan will be designed first and foremost to address the needs of the victim.

### **IV. Long-Term Follow Up**

The Minister will provide support to both the victim and the alleged abuser as needed, as well as to other church members immediately affected by the incident.

Support may include helping the accused person access the appropriate professional, community, and church resources. It remains the mission of this church to recognize and support the integrity and inherent worth and dignity of that person.



## Code of Ethics Statement

### For RE staff and volunteers, Advisors, Classroom Volunteers and Event Volunteers



Each teacher must complete a Code of Ethics Statement, which is kept on file with the church. A copy of the statement appears below for your records:

### Shawnee Mission UU Church Code of Ethics Statement

Adults are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that adults be qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable youth to develop a positive sense of self and responsibility. The relationship between young people and adults must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.

As a volunteer teacher, advisor, classroom or event volunteer, I agree to:

- Understand and abide by the Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church classroom youth discipline policy;
- Understand and abide by the Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church Children and Youth Safety Policy.

My signature below indicates that I have received copies of the policies cited above and agree to abide by them. In addition, I agree to a background check if deemed necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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